

# Light *of the* Word

*HOW KNOWING  
THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE  
ILLUMINATES OUR FAITH*

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Five-Day Devotional

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# Five-Day Devotional

I PRAY THAT THIS FIVE-DAY DEVOTIONAL would open your heart and mind to God's presence through his Word. Each devotional should take between ten and fifteen minutes. Each devotional starts and ends with a short prayer.

## ***DEVOTIONAL 1: HIS VOICE***

*Lord,*

*This world is so noisy, and we can easily drown in the commotion. We pray that you would still our hearts and allow us to take in your peace. We need your presence to guide us today. And we need your voice to guide us, because sometimes the road is curvy and the path is dark. Please speak to us now through your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### **READ JOHN 10:1-18, 27-30**

God's voice needs to be the loudest in our lives; otherwise we will never live the lives that God intended for us. We will spend countless hours in futility, chasing after the wind—or, even worse, falling headlong into dangerous terrain and harming ourselves. But if we listen to the voice of our loving Father, he will guide us into life and life abundantly.

Hearing is an art that needs to be developed. Babies learn the voice of their caretakers over time. As God's children, we need to do the same. Before babies can speak, they listen. Before we can speak power and healing into the world, we need to listen to our Heavenly Father's voice.

In John 10, Jesus tells us the parable about the Good Shepherd. He is telling us that he speaks to his beloved. He is not silent, and he is not elusive. But we live in a fallen world, and there are many competing voices. And some of those voices can be filled with anxiety, unrest, and even panic.

When my family and I were in Israel, we visited a place called the Temple of Pan, who was the god of the fields and shepherds. This temple sits atop a rocky mountain, and you can still see the vestiges where mass animal sacrifices took place. According to legend, Pan had the ability to create panic in his enemies by creating a frightening sound. His name is where we derive terms like *panic* and *pandemonium*.

Pan isn't worshipped as a god anymore, but this spirit still lingers. The enemy, the devil, is the force behind all evil in every age. If we don't listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, we can easily allow the proverbial voice of Pan to enter into our lives.

Go back and reread these verses, highlighting the parts that God is stirring in your heart. Take out a piece of paper and jot down a few words from these passages that God is speaking to you. Keep that paper in your pocket or somewhere close, and refer to these verses a few times today.

Some questions to ponder:

1. Where do you need to hear God's voice the most today?
2. What do you think he is saying to you through these verses?

Jesus,

*Thank you for being the Good Shepherd. You laid down your life for us so that we can be yours forever. Thank you for protecting us, providing for us, and directing us. Would you speak through this passage to every one of us? Speak, Lord, for we are listening. In your name we pray, Amen.*

## **DEVOTIONAL 2: NATURE**

Father,

*Thank you for loving us perfectly! There is no love like yours. We pray that you would give us a passionate love for your Word and that it would change our lives completely. May your Word cleanse us, strengthen us, and fill us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

### **READ PSALM 19**

**(IF POSSIBLE, GO OUTDOORS FOR THIS DEVOTIONAL.)**

***A Love for the Word.*** Josh McDowell writes, “Christians have always believed that God reveals himself in two books: the book of Scripture and the book of nature.”<sup>1</sup> If you are outside, take a moment to look around. Where might you discern God’s presence? Where is his beauty especially vibrant today?

Nature testifies to God’s presence (Romans 1:20) and causes mankind to ponder the Almighty who created the seas, forests, mountains, and all that surrounds us. The universe, as far as we can see, testifies to our great God. Look up and look at the clouds. Scripture tells us that the clouds are the dust beneath God’s feet (Nahum 1:3). Nature has a way of making atheists into agnostics!

As believers in Christ, we are not agnostics. But prior to making my second confession, I would label myself a Bible agnostic. Not

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<sup>1</sup>Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 405.

an agnostic in general (since I knew that *God* existed), but a Bible agnostic because I wasn't sure if the Bible could ever verifiably be accepted as God's undeniable Word.

In my Bible agnosticism, I generally engaged with the Bible as a self-help tool. I focused on the solution to my problems rather than on the Lord. If I felt anxious, I wanted peace. If I needed direction, I searched for passages on wisdom. If I was sick, I asked for healing. But I failed to *really* interact with, understand, and worship the One behind these blessings. I was much more interested in the blessing than the "Blesser."

But then the stories in the Bible opened my eyes to his *glory*. His power, compassion, and lovingkindness became more real. And my prayers no longer stalled at "give us our bread," but landed at "for yours is the kingdom and power and the glory forever." He knows what we need, and he certainly wants to provide for us: any father would, but our Heavenly Father does the most. But before we ask, let's remind ourselves whom we're asking. Let's spend today meditating on who he is, rather than what we can get or what we need. No doubt his very presence will speak into our greatest need.

Take a moment to ponder the attributes of God. Which aspects of his personality do you appreciate the most in this season of life? Go back to Psalm 19, especially verses 7-9. Write out key words from these verses on a piece of paper, and ask the Lord to reveal to you a part of himself that you need most. Wait for him to speak. He will, even if it's not obvious right away. Return to Psalm 19 often throughout the day.

Some questions to ponder:

1. What do you think God wants you to learn about him during this season of life? How might he be speaking through nature?

2. When might you schedule time tomorrow to spend time with the Lord in prayer and reading the Word? Put it on your calendar!

*Father,*

*All the hosts of heaven indeed testify of you. Yet, we know that they are but shadows. We look forward to the day we will see you face-to-face in all of your brilliance. Until then, help us to enjoy the world that you gave us. And renew us and restore us through a gentle breeze, beautiful sunset, or any other aspect of your creation that you choose. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

### **DEVOTIONAL 3: WATER INTO WINE**

*Heavenly Father,*

*Providing manna from heaven and water from rock are just two of many examples of how nothing is too hard for you. For those of us who might feel hungry or parched—hungry for peace or parched for love—we pray that you would meet us on these pages of Scripture and remind us that you are a miracle worker today as always. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

#### **READ JOHN 2:1-11**

The miracle of Jesus turning water into wine fascinates me. Plain water was turned into the best and most exquisite wine. When we offer God our time, it's like bringing water. When we go to church, attend a Bible study, or open the Scriptures, they're all like bringing water. These activities, also known as spiritual disciplines, aren't magical in and of themselves. But God will take these ordinary offerings and make them into something divine.

No matter what, no matter how busy we might get, let's prioritize our relationship with God above all things. Make time in your schedule until this matter is firmly settled in your heart and

mind. No relationship can thrive without time and commitment—our spiritual lives are no exception.

I know that not everyone’s schedule affords large quantities of time. One of the best pieces of advice I received as a new parent was to use the “cracks of time” for meaningful worship. When the kids were infants I was so sleep deprived and tired; I felt like a zombie for a couple of years. Then the toddler years intersected with my return to full-time work, which left me beyond exhausted. I didn’t have an entire hour to devote to my devotionals, but I did have five or ten minutes—the cracks of time in my day. Sometimes I even had a bit longer.

Somewhere between the servants drawing water and the headwaiter tasting it, the water had turned into wine. Somewhere between our devotionals and everyday living, God will turn our offerings into life-giving and life-sustaining nourishment. May we come in faith boldly, expecting our Heavenly Father to feed us well so that we can thrive in the areas where he’s placed us.

Some questions to ponder:

1. How does reading this Scripture passage reassure you that God is able to do exceedingly above what we can imagine or think?
2. How does this passage also remind you that God’s miracles are according to his time and will?

*Lord,*

*It’s so wonderful that your very first miracle was at a wedding. You turned water into wine, and we pray that you would take our offerings and do the same. Though meager, we know that you never cast out those who come to you in spirit and in truth. May we bring you the best that we’ve got because you are so worthy. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## **DEVOTIONAL 4: LIKE THE BEREANS**

*Heavenly Father,*

*Would you give us the tools that we need to understand the Scriptures? Please help us to seek out the right types of commentaries, Bible studies, and books that will help explain the truth of your Word. And we pray that you would transform our minds and hearts as we spend time with you in prayer and the Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

**READ ACTS 17: 1-13,  
FOCUSING ESPECIALLY ON VERSES 10-13**

The Bereans were thought to be especially “noble.” They were awarded this title because of their “great eagerness” to receive the Word and because they examined the Scriptures daily to see whether these teachings were true.

Some Christians don't believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures because they lack faith. And, yet, the Bible is the only place where they can receive the faith to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12). If you're in this place, the best thing to do is imitate the Bereans—open the Bible and bring your doubts and questions.

No amount of reading *about* the Bible can ever convince us that it's God's Word. We must read it and experience it for ourselves. That's perhaps why the psalmist said, “Taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8). We can rave all day about the delicious meal that we've had, but we can never chew, taste, and digest the food for another person. There is a world of difference between reading a phenomenal Yelp review about a great local restaurant and actually going and tasting their cuisine. And God invites us to feast on his Word so that we can enjoy him and be strengthened for the journey ahead.

The Word of God is an acquired taste for many of us though. It is sweet, it is beautiful, it is breathtaking. But our sinful senses don't readily discern all these elements. When we're used to ice cream and chips (Brian calls me a chip-aholic because I *love* potato chips), we have to train our taste buds toward better food. Our family recently did a forty day sugar fast to spend some time asking God for direction regarding some important decisions. When we ended that fast, I realized that sugar is cloyingly sweet. My taste buds had been rewired, and I had to ask the barista at the coffeshop to make my drink less sweet than normal. I would not have made that adjustment had my taste buds not been rewired.

Maybe some of us need to go on a spiritual food fast. Instead of reading the news or email the first thing in the morning, we can read God's Word before anything else. Before we head to bed and end the day with social media, we can end it in the Scriptures. We can do this for forty days and see how God rewires our spiritual taste buds. Along the way, let's ask the Holy Spirit to do a miracle in our hearts and give us a greater love for God's living Word.

Some questions to ponder:

1. What are your main concerns about the Scriptures? How might you investigate this area in both a scholarly and prayerful way?
2. Do you keep a prayer journal? If not, consider starting one. Write out your questions and prayer requests and see how God answers them in the coming weeks.

*Father,*

*Help us to articulate our questions to you. Sometimes our thoughts are so jumbled they're hard to express. But you know them all. You know us better*

*than we know ourselves, so please bring clarity and light to any places of confusion. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### **DEVOTIONAL 5: MAKING THE SECOND CONFESSION**

*Father,*

*If any doubt still lingers as to the veracity of your Word, would you please allow us to see your Truth clearly. Holy Spirit, open our hearts and minds to the Scriptures, and may they be more real than anything we can touch or see. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.*

#### **READ JOHN 1:1-14**

By the time I was even aware of my doubts about the Scriptures, I was already considered a mature believer in the church. I felt like I couldn't simply go to my pastor and say, "I don't really know if I believe that the Bible is God's Word." No doubt I would have been asked to step down from my position as a Bible study leader (or at least take a break until I figured things out). I also feared being fired as a Sunday school teacher (and I really liked spending time with those cute kids!). To be honest, I thought doubting God's Word was the same as doubting my salvation; nothing could be further from the truth, but that's what I thought. And my doubts about the Scriptures became my staunchly guarded secret.

Mostly, my disbelief was largely undetected even by me, except when I paused long enough to hear the Holy Spirit's conviction. Those moments of quiet were few and far between, and my life was busy enough to brush aside this issue. I lived like this for quite some time. But life's tough questions needed firm answers, and these questions came fast and hard after I became a parent.

My second confession came when a vortex of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual problems converged, and I could no longer live in my own strength. I had always thought getting married and having kids was the promised land. Marry the love of your life, have kids, live in a suburb, have an incredible group of friends, and live happily ever after. Josephine's birth ushered me into this realm, but I soon discovered that my promised land looked like hell—or at least like some kind of purgatory.

Looking back, I probably had postpartum depression. Anxiety filled my heart and soul, and fear engulfed and consumed me. I tried mommy-child classes, but they weren't for me. I tried taking her to the park, mall, and anywhere you can push a stroller. That took about an hour (and I hate the mall), and there were still nine hours left before Brian would come home to rescue me. He was then in a medical fellowship and worked insanely long hours, so I was home alone with Josephine a lot.

I could go on and on about my dreams turning into a nightmare, but I think you get the point. All this, later coupled with my petrous apex diagnosis, caused a full-fledged panic attack. That's when I turned to the Scriptures. I don't mean reading one chapter a day. I mean, I got big poster boards and wrote verses that I hung up on walls (like a second-grade school project). This was before Bible apps, so I bought a CD of the entire Bible and played it constantly (I wanted to drown out my own voice and replace it with God's). I memorized Scripture and ruminated on the verses throughout the day. I signed up for Bible studies on freedom from fear. I listened to as many sermons as I could.

I didn't turn to the Bible because I believed it was unquestionably God's Word. I turned to it because I was desperate. And because I was desperate, I didn't have the time or energy to play

church with God. My prayers became mostly terse utterances, if not downright monosyllabic. “I’m drowning.” “I’m so scared.” “Where are you?” “Help.” I came with my authentic, broken self, and God had mercy on me.

I pray that your life is a lot less desperate than mine was back then. But I also pray that you’re desperate enough to run to the Scriptures. Please remember that his mercies and love await you. If you want to spend time with Jesus, there is no better way than to be in the Word. Jesus inhabits the Scriptures, because he is the Word. He is waiting for you and longs to spend time with you today.

Some questions to ponder:

1. Where are you the most desperate for God’s presence in your life right now?
2. Go back and reread verse 9. What questions do you have for God today? How might his light illuminate your path in your current situation?

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds to the truth of the Scriptures, and help us to live out your laws of love and grace every day. Anoint us and fill us anew so that we can love you with all that we’ve got and love others as ourselves. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*