

An Unlikely Faith

June 14, 2020



Daily Devotionals

As an individual or as a family, use these daily devotionals and reflection questions to connect with Jesus each day this week.

Each day, there will be a thought stemming from Scripture along with 2-3 questions. Our hope is that as we journey together through the book of Joshua, we'll be able to come out the other side knowing how God wants to take new ground in and through our lives, groups, and church.

Be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, passages, and each of the questions. If you are a part of a life group, let these devotionals stir your thinking and be the foundation for your group conversation.

Additionally, we've added a section to each day called "Evening Reflection + Prayer." This section of the daily devotionals is intended to help you reflect on your day with God in prayer to notice where he was active in your life. If you are unable to do those in the evening, simply make them a part of your morning devotions while reflecting on the previous day.

Our prayer is that these devotionals, questions, and reflections will help you love God, love people, and make disciples.

Day One // A Miraculous Crossing

Can you even imagine it? Walls of water surround you on every side as far as you can see. Can you imagine all the fish and sea creatures swimming up to the water's edge just to catch a glimpse of the million-plus people traipsing across the dry, dusty ground at the bottom of the river? Unbelievable!

Today we want to spend some time stepping *into* the story of this week's text. Our creativity and imagination are God's gifts to us. Allow the Holy Spirit to paint a picture in your mind as you dig into the Scripture for this week.

Find a comfortable spot to read through all of **Joshua 3**. Take a moment to be still before God, inviting him to speak to you through his word.

As you read or listen to the text for the first time, close your eyes and allow the scene to come to life in your mind. Allow yourself to create a picture in your mind of what it would have been like. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? Let it come to life in your imagination.

Read or listen through Joshua 3 thinking of those questions.

Take some time to visualize what the scene was like as if you're right in the middle of the scene. Allow God to bring the story to life. The people we read about in Scripture were real people who walked the earth and had feelings and thoughts much like ours.

As you read or listen a second time, begin to imagine the scene as if you were right in the middle of it. You're not just an observer anymore, but a participant in the story. Consider these questions as you read:

Who are you in the story?

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What do you smell?

What's your position?

Who else is there with you?

What are you feeling?

What's the mood of the crowd?

What questions do you have?

What fears do you have?

Read through or listen to the text a second time, considering the questions above.

What's your response to all you experience?

What are you noticing from your responses?

As you notice your response, how do you sense God inviting you to respond in your own life?

What are his invitations from this story to you today?

Write a prayer in response to God.

Evening Reflection + Prayer

Quiet yourself. Ask God to make his presence known around you. Remind yourself of his goodness and grace to you.

Pray: God, fill me with your merciful love. Guide me as I review my day with you.

Hour by hour, review your day, lingering in the important moments—thanking God for the good gifts you find throughout your day and asking God’s forgiveness for the times when you weren’t the person he has called you to be. Slow...sense his healing mercy wash over you.

As you reflect on your day, how did your contemplation of the Scripture carry forward into your day? How do you sense God’s presence in that? As you reflect on your day, where were the moments when your contemplation of the scripture could have carried forward and impacted those moments? Hold these moments before God and invite him to help you sense his presence and word throughout your days.

Consider the day ahead of you. You will enter unknown territory. What is ahead of you that causes anxiety, dread, or curiosity? Ask God for his grace to be evident in these unknown places.

Day Two // Way Maker

If you've been around a toddler lately, chances are you've heard them say, "I do it myself!" I remember hearing that phrase a lot when my daughter was small. Her strong-willed personality longed for independence even when it was too much for her.

There are times we come up against a new situation—and it's just *hard*. We stare down unknown territory and don't have the capacity to face it on our own. Thinking we can do it ourselves can lead to serious problems.

The Israelites faced so many unknowns as they approached this new land God promised. They were not only staring down the Jordan River at flood stage with no way to cross over, but they were also aware of the current people inhabiting the land who weren't going to easily give it up.

Read Joshua 3:1-4.

In this passage, we see an important command from the Lord to the Israelites. The ark of the covenant represented the dwelling place of God among them. This golden box reminded them of God's presence right in their midst. The orders the people were given involved keeping their eyes on the presence of God and following wherever it went. The rationale given in verse 4 says, "you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before."

The command essentially means keep your eyes on the presence of God so you will know which way to go. In other words, follow God's lead and he will show you where to go.

Isaiah 30:21 says, "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" When we fix our eyes on Jesus, inviting him to lead the way, he will show us which way to go.

The Israelites weren't given the entire map. They were just told to follow the ark. They didn't know what the whole journey would look like, but they knew God would lead.

Spend some time reading through **Joshua 3:1-4** and **Isaiah 30:21** and then reflect on the following questions:

- Where do you see God's presence in your life? What does it look like to follow his lead?
- When in your life have you allowed God to lead you into a new situation that was difficult to face? How did you see him work in that situation?
- Where in your life are you facing unknown territory that you need God to lead? What would it look like to just follow his presence in that situation instead of trying to make your own way?

Take some time to pray, thanking God for the times he has led you. Ask him for the courage to follow wherever he leads. Ask him to grow a greater awareness of his presence around you.

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As you reflect on your day, when were the moments when you noticed God’s presence with you? Were there any moments when you sensed him whisper, “This is the way. Walk in it.”? How did that feel? When were moments when you were distracted from noticing his presence? How did that feel? Look back through your day and see that God loved you the same in every moment. How does this feel? Speak your gratitude to God for this.

Consider the day ahead of you. Ask for God’s grace to help you notice his presence, his directive whispers, and his love for you throughout your day.

Day Three // Consecrate Yourselves

Have you ever had a special plate or tool you set apart from common use, or only used for special purposes? Maybe it's a celebration plate that's only "allowed" to be used on holidays or maybe it's a pen that's only used for writing in your Bible. It's not used for anything else. It's set apart and given a special purpose.

The word "consecrate" isn't a word we throw around in everyday, ordinary conversations, but it's a word that's important in Scripture. We see the command in Joshua 3. Before the people follow the ark into the Jordan, Joshua tells them, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you" (**Joshua 3:5**).

The Hebrew word *qadash* used here means "to set aside, to consecrate or to make holy." The verb carries the understanding of "setting aside for religious purposes." Joshua invited the people to set themselves apart for God's purposes before they followed God into the land. They were not to look like the world around them.

At times, the word "holiness" can carry baggage or a meaning that isn't congruent with Scripture. It's important to remember "holiness, in the absolute sense of separateness and moral and ethical excellence, is the attribute of the Lord God alone (Exod. 15:11; Lev. 20:3). For people to be consecrated they must be 'set aside' to God and 'be holy'; that is, reflect God's moral and ethical character."¹ While we make the choice to participate in the process, only the Holy Spirit can bring about holiness in our lives. It's not something we can attain on our own. It's a supernatural work of Christ in us.

While it's true that only Christ can bring about our holiness, we're participants in the process. We choose how much we engage with the things of this world and how much we lean into God's kingdom.

So, what does it look like for us to be consecrated, set apart, holy, and does this matter to God now? I Peter gives us some important insight.

Read I Peter 1:13-21 and reflect on these questions:

- What does it look like to "not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance" (**I Peter 1:14**)? Is there an area of your life where you need to be more alert and fully sober? Take a moment to confess that to God, inviting him to help you make the necessary changes.
- **I Peter 1:15** says, "But just as he who called you is holy [set apart], so be holy [set apart] in all you do." What would it look like to be "set apart" in all you do? What would it take? Are you willing to do that?
- Notice in verses 19-21 that Christ's sacrificial work as the spotless lamb is what enables you to be holy. Take a moment to write a prayer of thanksgiving to him for his redemptive work in your life.

¹ Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, [*Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained*](#) (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 40.

Evening Reflection + Prayer

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Hour by hour, review your day, lingering in the important moments—thanking God for the good gifts you find throughout your day and asking God’s forgiveness for the times when you weren’t the person he has called you to be. Slow...sense his healing mercy wash over you.

As you reflect on your day, were there moments when you sensed an ease and a freedom in being set apart to be used by God to serve and honor him? How does this impact your thoughts of holiness and of God? Were there moments when you sensed a striving out of your own efforts to be good, or right, or serve God? Hold this striving before God, receive his love, and ask him to replace your striving with his humility, rest, and trust. Surrender openly to the holy work the Holy Spirit is doing in your whole being.

Consider the day ahead of you. Ask for the curiosity and humility to notice what God desires holiness—being set apart for his service—to look like in your life.

Day Four // Memorial Stones

We tend to forget what we don't remember. Profound, I know. Maybe it's completely obvious, but what we don't purposefully remember gets lost or forgotten. God knew this about us and knew how remembering changes us.

Read Deuteronomy 6:10-12.

The Hebrew word for "forget" in this passage is *sakah*. It means "to forget, ignore, overlook, be unmindful, not remember information or to lose sight of its significance."² When we are unmindful, we forget and lose sight of the significance of what God has done. We overlook his provision in our lives and begin to give ourselves credit for things we simply did not do.

We see this incident in Joshua 3-4 is clearly not an accident. It's a miracle of God. God asks them to do something significant so they would remember.

Read Joshua 4:2-7.

God essentially says, "Tell the story of what I did for you. Talk about how I delivered you. Share how I showed up. Describe what the water looked like—how miraculous it was! Pick up the stones, stack them up, and then have a conversation about what I did among you."

You see, in Hebrew culture, remembering was not just a mental activity. Remembering was an action for them—remembering crossed their lips. The Hebrew word for "remember" is *zakar*, which means "to think about, meditate upon, pay attention to; remember, recollect; mention, declare, recite, proclaim, confess."³

The *talked* about what happened. They proclaimed what God had done among them—for them. These stones were an invitation to mention it, recollect it, recite it, *declare it*. This moment was to have significant impact not only on those who experienced it firsthand, but on the generations to come.

Take some time to slow down and reflect on the following questions:

- Where have you forgotten the work of God in your life? Is there anywhere where you are in danger of believing you built what you have? Take a moment to confess this reality to God, inviting his forgiveness and guidance.
- How do you typically remember (in the Hebrew sense of the word)? Do you share your story with others? Do you take time to remember what God has done and talk about it? Why might this be an important part of your relationship with God? What could change about your life and your perspective if you took time to remember in this way?
- What is one part of your story that would be important for you to share? Who can you share it with? Is there a trusted friend or family member, maybe even your children, that you could share it with today? Take some time to do just that.

² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed., DBLH 8894. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 1997.

³ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, edited by Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1999), electronic ed., 241.

Our own remembrances must be spoken and declared. They must be so engraved on our hearts that we cannot help but speak them. May God engrave his story on our hearts. His story is definitely one worth telling.

Evening Reflection + Prayer

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Pray: God, fill me with your merciful love. Guide me as I review my day with you.

Hour by hour, review your day, lingering in the important moments—thanking God for the good gifts you find throughout your day and asking God’s forgiveness for the times when you weren’t the person he has called you to be. Slow...sense his healing mercy wash over you.

As you reflect on your day, what are the moments and ways that you remembered to remember what God has done in your life? How does this impact your faith? Were there moments when you forgot to remember God’s faithfulness in your life? What was the impact? Recount God’s faithfulness now in the form of a prayer of gratitude to him. Ask him what else he wants you to remember and recount.

Consider the day ahead. Where might it be important to remember to remember? Ask God for his grace to remember his faithfulness and for the opportunities to share your story with others.

Day Five // Spiritual Practice—Stones of Remembrance

Your story matters. Your story matters and there is no other exactly like it.

It matters that you take time to remember it. Not just in your mind, but in the Hebrew sense of the word. It matters that you would *zakar*—think about, meditate upon, pay attention to; remember, recollect; mention, declare, recite, proclaim, confess⁴—your story. We're not just to file our stories away in our minds, but to proclaim what God has done and recite it in conversations.

It's important to recognize where God has shown up in every chapter, at every plot twist. He writes the best stories. We just have to stop long enough to notice them.

Today may be just the beginning of a greater work for you. I invite you to step into it with courage. It may be easy. It may be difficult. Either way, it will be worth it.

God instructed the Israelites to choose memorial stones or set up altars of remembrance throughout their history. He did this so they would talk with the next generation about what he had done. Through this remembrance, he reminds us of who and whose we are. He demonstrates his relentless love in the ways he shows up over and over again in our stories.

Before you begin, read through **Psalm 77:11-15**.

Take some time to prayerfully write out your memorial stones today. What have been the most significant events in your life—filled with both joy and pain? Walk through the years of your life and draw out your most important memorial stones.

For each of these events, answer these questions:

- Why was this significant?
- What did I learn about God in this moment?
- How was God with me in this moment?
- How did this transform me and make me more like Christ?
- Is there work I need to do to heal?
- Was there a scriptural truth God etched on my heart in this season? If so, what was it?

As you begin to set up your memorial stones, remember this may take some time. Be kind to yourself, asking God for his grace and for patience. Share your work with a trusted friend or your life group community. If you are having trouble finding God in it, ask for help. It often takes others to help us see the hand of God in our own lives.

Begin writing your memorial stones. Write them out as story in your journal. Draw them on paper. Gather rocks and write significant words or phrases on each that represent a part of your story. Just begin. God's grace is sufficient. There will be nothing that will surprise him. He's been there all along...loving you anyway.

⁴ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, edited by Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1999), electronic ed., 241.

Prayer:

Almighty God, you are writing my story. You've been writing it all along. You have a plan for my story and that plan is good. You've ordained all my days. You've done so out of love for me. Thank you for that truth. Help me to remember and speak about what you have done—to tell your story. Amen.