

Devotions: **8/17 to 8/22**

Monday: Listen

This morning's scripture is Matthew 17:5 – “While he (Peter) was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Along with James and John, Peter received a special revelation. Jesus briefly revealed His glory to these three disciples on a mountaintop, His clothing and face glowed with a supernatural brightness. Suddenly the two greatest Old Testament prophets appeared and talked to Jesus. Peter may have been thinking about the Feast of Tabernacle when he offered to put up three shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. But before Peter finished speaking, God interrupted him with praise for His Son and instructions to listen to Him

We often should feel a kinship with Peter, for we sometimes forget that a big part of prayer is listening. Sometimes we pray while we are driving, walking, or doing household chores. Other times we enjoy a dedicated time of quiet, concentrated prayer. Even then we are often focus on making sure that we include all the right elements: Did we offer praise and thanksgiving? Confess everything? Included all our requests and needs? A more important question: Did we spend time listening for Jesus's voice?

Prayer is a two-way conversation, not a monologue. Jesus wants to speak to us and calm our fears, offer guidance, and assure us of His loving presence. We can miss His voice if we are solely focused on our own agenda. But Jesus knows us intimately; He also knows what our day holds. So when it comes to prayer, we should be glad to let Him dominate the conversation. So take a step in faith. Pray and ask Jesus what He wants to say to us, then listen for His voice.

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Tuesday: Intimacy With Him

This morning's scripture is Ephesians: 3:16-17 – “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner

being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,”

Christ is the Creator of the universe, yet He chose to make His humble home in our hearts. It is there we know Him most intimately; it is there He speaks to us in holy whispers.

Christ knows this is more than we can fathom, that Someone so great and majestic would choose to live in someone so small and sinful. Our minds almost recoil at the thought of His perfect holiness living in us. It is a thought we do well to struggle with. That shows Him we have some understanding of the absolute purity of His Being. Nonetheless, be assured that our sinfulness cannot taint His holiness. The influence goes the other direction: His righteousness purifies us! Delight in this blessed transaction, gratefully receiving His goodness.

Though we are indeed an exceedingly humble dwelling for Him, the One who also inhabits the highest heavens, He is living in our hearts because He deeply desires intimacy with us. We are weak: easily distracted by the noise of the world. Yet He wants to help us hear His gentle whispers in our hearts. We need stillness, outer and inner. Find a quiet place, where the noise of the world is minimal. Then focus our minds on this loving command: “Cease striving and know that I am God.” Be still, let go, and relax in His Presence while He communes with each of us in holy whispers.

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Wednesday: Heaven

This morning’s scripture is Revelation 21:23 – “The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.”

Our prayers are not cries in the dark. On the contrary, they rise to God’s kingdom of eternal Light. Call to Him and He will answer us, and show us great and mighty things. Mankind has long been plagued with eyes that do not see what is most important. Many people fail to see the most obvious things: He can perform

miracles before their very eyes, yet they see only mundane occurrences or at best coincidences. Only the eyes of our hearts can see spiritual realities.

One of the things He searches for among His children is a teachable attitude. When we come to Him desirous of learning wondrous things which we do not know, He rejoices. A good teacher takes pleasure in a student who really wants to learn, who puts forth extra effort to discover as much as possible. He is the Teacher of teachers, and He delights in our desire to learn amazing, unsearchable things from Him. Our openness to His teaching has a wonderful result: He helps us understand at heart level the hope to which He has called us, the riches of His glorious inheritance in which we share. We can look forward to living rapturously with Him in the Holy City, where the Glory of God provides Light.

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Thursday: Control

This morning's scripture is Ephesians 3:20-21 – "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Entrust your loved ones to Christ. They are much safer with Him than in our clinging hands.

Sometimes we confuse loving others with rescuing them. When loved one has a problem, we often feel responsible to come up with a solution. Then we plunge headlong into problem-solving mode, as if we're obligated to provide sound advice. He wants to help us feeling responsible to fix people since that is His role not ours.

It is His prerogative to bring about change in people's lives as He chooses. We can be part of the process, but remember that He is the Author and Director of the drama. We need to follow His script rather than creating our own. Do not usurp His role in people's lives, no matter how much we long to help them.

When we feel compelled to rescue a loved one, take a good look at the quality of our love. Learn from Him, because He has all authority in heaven and on earth: He could rescue or control anyone at will. Yet He intentionally created people with the capacity to choose good or evil. He wanted them to be free to love Him, or not. Love that has no choice is not real!

Prayerfully release our loved ones into His protective care. Restrain our urges to solve their problems. Instead, use our time and energy to listen to them and pray for them. Trust in His Love and His infinite wisdom. He can work changes in our loved ones' lives beyond anything we might ask or imagine. As we release these precious ones to Him, linger awhile in His unfailing Love, for them and also for us.

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Friday: Adversity

This morning's scripture is Matthew 6:10 – "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as *it is* in heaven."

When we pass through the waters, God will be with us. He wants us to trust in His protective Presence even while deep waters of affliction are rising around us. Remember that we are precious in His sight and He loves us. He will never, ever abandon us! Though we may lose sight of Him, He is constantly aware of us and our circumstances. When we cry out to Him for help, He is already fully apprised of our situation. So we don't need to take time telling Him what is happening or what we think He should do. In the midst of emergencies, short pithy prayers are extremely effective: "Help me, Jesus!" "Show me Your way." "Your will be done."

Do not be overly concerned about our feelings during emergencies. The most important thing is that we turn to Him, trusting that He is indeed with us. When we cannot sense His Presence, it is enough to know that He loves us with compassionate, unfailing Love. If our hearts are sinking under waves of panic, don't focus on those feelings. Instead, look up to Him! As our souls clings to Him, His right hand will uphold us, keeping us safe in turbulent waters.

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Saturday: Transformation

This morning's scripture is Romans 8:6 – "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."

As the Holy Spirit controls our minds and actions more fully, we become free in God. We are increasingly released to become the ones He created us to be.

Freedom through surrender sounds like a contradiction doesn't it? Yet when His Spirit is controlling our thinking and behavior, we feel more alive, more real, more content! He encourages us to pray, "Holy Spirit, think through me, live through me, love through me." This is a prayer of surrender. Nonetheless, even though we may pray this way, our desire to be in control can sabotage us.

In His kingdom freedom comes from yielding to His perfect will. Because He is infinite and we are not, His will may appear to be anything but perfect. Still, He wants us to trust Him, even when we cannot understand what He is doing. The Holy Spirit will help us in this as we invite Him to control our thinking. He lives in the depths of our spirits and knows us better than we know ourselves. His work in us can liberate us to become more completely the one He designed us to be.

God is pleased when we ask His Spirit to live and love through us. This is the collaborative way of living He had in mind when He created mankind. The more we collaborate with Him, the freer we become: free to live exuberantly, to love extravagantly, to know Him in ever-increasing intimacy!

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