

Daily Practices

Week of 8/16/21 - 8/20/21

DAY 1 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:18-23

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **19** And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” **20** Immediately they left their nets and followed him. **21** And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** Immediately, they left the boat and their father and followed him. **23** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

DEVOTIONAL: Jesus’ invitation to these four potential disciples was the same. It was an invitation to follow him. Jesus pursued these brothers and invited them into his life without any conditions. They didn’t have to earn their place with Jesus. They just had to respond, and respond they did. Seemingly without question, they dropped everything and began following Jesus. Whatever they saw in Jesus, they could see a life that was more fulfilling to live by following. The same invitation that Jesus gave to his disciples, he gives to us. Jesus invites us to follow him in his mission to redeem creation. We can’t earn our place with him, but we do have to respond to his invitation. How are you doing at following Jesus today? Are you following? Or are you out in front trying to forge your own path?

RESPONSE: Take two minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit’s prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

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DAY 2 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

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SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 29:4-6

4 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: **5** Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. **6** Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.

DEVOTIONAL: Following Jesus doesn't mean that we reject everything around us. In fact, Jesus wants us to follow him and stay engaged with his mission by acting as a light in the city around us. Part of how Jesus wants to redeem creation is for his disciples to seek the flourishing of the city around us. Much like the people of Israel in this passage, we too are living as exiles in our city. We can learn a lot about God's heart for the city through what he says in this passage. God wanted them to build houses, plant gardens, and enjoy the fruit of the land. He wanted them to build families and plant their roots in the foreign city despite being citizens elsewhere. Today, we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, but we live here right now. In order to reflect the kingdom of heaven in the here and now, we should live like heaven in our earthly home.

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DAY 3 // DAILY PRACTICES

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SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 29:7-9

7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. **8** For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, **9** for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord.

DEVOTIONAL: Sometimes it is easy for Christians to be so heavenly minded that they don't pay attention to what's going on around them. It's good to look toward the future heavenly kingdom. However, God also wants us to seek the flourishing of the city around us right now. We should pray for the city. We should seek the good of our neighbors. Any other counsel contrary to this mindset should be rejected. Cities are places filled with people who bear the image of God. We shouldn't try to get away from the city, but should press into the city in order to see Jesus transform it. That sounds great, but requires a disciple of Jesus to live in tension—tension between assimilating to the culture or withdrawing from it. Both are very real temptations. We assimilate when we stop upholding the gospel as true or we withdraw when we distance ourselves from people different from us. How are you tempted to assimilate or withdraw?

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DAY 4 // DAILY PRACTICES

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SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:41-44

41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, **42** saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. **43** For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side **44** and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

DEVOTIONAL: Luke records this scene just a few days before Jesus gave up his life for us. Jesus came upon the city, and while overlooking it, he broke down weeping. He had been doing his ministry in and around the region, but ultimately he knew the hearts of those who lived there. He knew that they were about to reject him. He knew that they did not receive him as they should have. Because of that, their ultimate fate would be destruction. God wants to see the city flourish. He wants people to turn to him in order to experience the life that they were meant to live. It should break our hearts, just like it broke Jesus' heart to see when people reject him. But our heartbreak shouldn't come from a place of arrogance. In fact, seeing people reject Jesus should motivate us to serve others sacrificially just like Jesus did. Jesus gave his life for the people that rejected him. We are called to follow his example to love the city sacrificially as an example of God's love.

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DAY 5 // DAILY PRACTICES

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SCRIPTURE: Revelation 21:9-27

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” **10** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God... **22** And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. **23** And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. **24** By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, **25** and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. **26** They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. **27** But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

DEVOTIONAL: The human story begins in a garden, but it culminates in a city. The apostle John records the vision that God gave him regarding the new heaven and new earth. He records the people of God, as if they were adorned like a bride, descending as the new Jerusalem. All of humanity will be together reflecting the glory of God in complete perfection. All of the pain and sin that fill this world will be wiped away leaving a perfect paradise where we can commune with God and each other as we were meant to do. This vision of the city should give us hope for the future and it should give us perseverance in the present. How does this vision of the future city motivate you today?

RESPONSE: Take a few minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit’s prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

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