



Sunday:

Sunday School – 9:30 am

Worship – 10:45 am

Wednesday:

The Rock Wednesday – 6:45pm

BIG EVENTS:

{NEAR}

Classy Christmas – NEXT WEEK (dressy snazzy or tacky)

Refuel – MLK Weekend 2016

{FAR}

DNOW – March 11-13 (tentative)

Summer Camp – June 2016

Main Idea:

The Hope & Prayer

The hope of this devotion book is to provide the opportunity for students and adults to spend time with God in His Word and through prayer. There are many great devotion books available to us and we are thankful you have chosen to journey through God's Word with this particular one. We hope and pray that students and adults take this opportunity seriously and become intentional in the time they devote to Him each day. We believe if this happens our walk with Him will strengthen.

The Plan – ABIDE 2015/16

This year we are going through the most beautiful story in the world on Wednesday nights. The story of the Bible is one of romance, jealousy, envy, pride, grace, mercy, power, humility and so much more. There is no way we could ever hope to cover every detail but we do seek to cover the high points on Wednesday and fill in the in between during the week through our devotions.

It is so important that you get on dive into these devotions with us as we seek to know what the Bible is all about and see how it helps us to know our God and follow Him.

Each devotion has a date so if you happen to miss a day or two the best thing to do is jump in on that date. We've set up the devotion to where you can use Saturday and Sunday as catch up days.

Above all we want you in the Word of God. We realize this is the best one but still it's a devotion written to gather the people of God around the Word of God. We hope and pray you'll join us as we dive into the story of the Bible this year!





Brought Back...

The beginning of this section of Scripture finds a huge shift in what we have known about the story of the Bible so far. God's people, who have been exiled, are brought back from the land of exile. This is good news. After 70 years of being away from home and normal hopelessness could have set in and people would have no doubt wondered, "has God forgot us?" After all it was God who sent them into exile through the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Will he leave us here forever? Has he forgotten us? Did God lie?

Questioning God sometimes seems normal in the life of the follower of Christ.....I think God is ok with our struggle and honest confusion before him from time to time.....that said, there is never room or need to question the promises of God. He has never broken a promise he has ever made. Period. Let that sink in!

God sent his people into exile to experience his judgment for their half-heartedness toward him.....but he promised he would bring them out. Ezra shows that promise being held by God as he does just that and brings his people out of exile and back to their homeland. God keeps his promises.

Notice **Ezra 2**..... "Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. (**Ezra 2:1-2**)

Notice God doing just what he said he would.....

Read Ezra 1-6 and notice how God brings his people back from exile and the response.....

Do you doubt God? Do you think his promises are untrue?

He keeps them all. Rely on this.....he will be faithful!



Take a minute and read Ezra 4-6.....try to follow the story of Ezra and what God has done with his people since he brought them back from exile....

We see in these chapters of Ezra that once the people return from exile they are commissioned to build a temple. This is a big deal. The temple is where worship happens, the Spirit of God dwells, people meet with God in the temple.

It makes sense that temple building would be priority number one upon return from exile. The temple is built and people begin to worship and it might be easy to think that all was back to normal.....but it wasn't.

The people of God quickly slip back into disobedience of God and living in ways that did not honor God nor reflect his holiness. What you see in these chapters is that worship in itself did not change the people. Going to the temple did not change anybody by itself.....they people still had the same old problems.....

As important as the temple in Ezra is, it only points us to the greater need for the final dwelling of the presence of God that would come finally and reside with people fully.

What does it mean for the presence of God to come and why do we need that? How does Christmas point us to see that need even more clearly?

The people of God need God to change their/our hearts. We need lasting change that is not possible through going to the temple, attending a church service, or any other work-based effort. We need lasting change.

Christmas shows us that Jesus came to dwell with his people all the time and forever. He does not reside at a temple but rather will come to us and take residence in our lives and give us a new heart that will love him and serve him.....he comes to us and gives us what we need.....

Think today about the Truer and Better Temple.....Jesus!

Saturday – catch up or reflection

Saturdays are meant to use as catch up days or extended times of reflection where we revisit some truths of God's Word. Did you miss anything, hurry through or simply miss a day? Use today to ensure you didn't miss one thing or possibly just go deeper in His Word. We offer 5 days but of course the goal is that each day we are spending time with Him, in His Word.

What does it mean to Reflect?

By reflection we mean thinking a little more on what we've seen or read throughout the week. A good way to do this is by asking some questions:

1. What sticks out from your time in the Word?
2. What are some things I need to continue to dwell on?
3. What did I learn about God this week?
4. What did I learn about myself this week?
5. What is something I need to work on in the future?
6. What would make my time in the Word better?

If you desire to read something new we'd encourage you to read through Psalm 119

Sunday is a day of rest so enjoy the day of worship!



Bring the Book.

Read Neh. 8:1-8 and do some observations.....

-notice how the Word of God is treated, received, and acted on.....

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:1-8)

This a wonderful passage about the power of God's Word! Did you notice the intensity with which people wanted to hear it, have it explained, and then acted on it??

3 Questions:

1. Do I long to hear God's Word?
2. Do I worship in light of God's Word?
3. Do I seek to understand God's Word when I hear it?

Neh. 8:1-8 models proper interaction with God's Word.....let do the same!



Confession

In Ezra 9:5-15 we get a peek into what true confessional prayer looks like. Ezra realizes that his people have sinned against God in not dealing with their marriages in a pure way. Ezra realizes this and prays to God on behalf of the people. His prayer serves as a model to teach us what it looks like to confess our sins before Jesus who is faithful to forgive.....

Do you remember the 1 to 1 method from this fall? We want to use this method to study this passage today. It's good to work it out and also use while reading the Bible with other folks. Great tool to eventually lead a Bible study yourselves.

Read Ezra 9:5-15 and ask the following questions as you think through these helpful "picture illustrations".....



Eye:

- what do you see?
- what sticks out?
- what are things we have to talk about?

Question Mark:

- what is hard to understand?
- if you could ask the author a question?

Heart:

- what is the main idea?
- what is the heart of the passage?
- what is the one thing God is teaching us?

Arrow:

- what do we do from hearing this passage?
- how do we apply the truths that this teaches us?
- how do I behave in light of the truth of this passage?

Who can you begin reading the Bible with in this 1 to 1 style?



Brought out.....

We have seen God do some awesome things in the Book of Ezra and Neh. God had brought his people out of exile and continued his plan with them in spite of their sin and failures.

This is just the picture of God in his dealings with us through the gospel. God brings us out of our sin to know him, love him, and serve him. He delivers us from the slavery of our sin. These two pictures point us back to how God has dealt with his people in the past and forward to how he continues to deal with sinners today.

Notice how the New Testament talks about God's "bringing out" and "delivering" of us!

He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. (2 Corinthians 1:10)

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, (Colossians 1:13)

Lets also look back at the Old Testament to see this idea of God's "bringing out" and "delivering" of us!

And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. (Deuteronomy 6:23)

And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:8-9)

In the gospel of Jesus we see God sending his Son to die for our sin so that he could bring us out of our old lives to know Him.....he does this when he delivers us from our sin! What a cool picture of this we see in what we have read this week.

Let us never lave the gospel.....always remembering it, preaching it to ourselves, and sharing it with others, and worshipping God because of it!



--- REFUEL – MLK WEEKEND (15 Student Spots left)---

SIGN UP at the wall in the back.

Keep in mind that you are not officially signed up until you've paid a deposit.

The first 45 deposits will get the 45 spots.