

Weekly Devotional Guide – April 5th – April 10th

Monday, April 5: *Mark 6:14-29* -- What do you do when God's message leaves you puzzled?

Heavenly Father, Your Word is true and reliable. Over 400 Old Testament prophecies were accurately fulfilled by Your life, death, and resurrection. That is proof that no one could have manipulated what happened. What is written in Your Word is trustworthy and true. Your crucifixion was a horrendous and traumatic event for Your followers. They were clearly distraught and so afraid that they were hiding. That wouldn't have been so if it was a charade. The empty tomb discovered by the women on Sunday morning was unexpected, even after You told them it would happen. Not only was the large stone, that was secured with seals, moved away from the entrance, but it was tossed aside, which no group of men could have done. The linen cloths and the expensive spices were neatly left in the empty tomb, what thief would have had the time and been so considerate? The Bible records events where You had been seen by many, even more than 500 people at one time. You even ate with Your followers to prove that You were physically alive. The once fearful and cowering disciples boldly risked their lives and all they had to proclaim the news that You had risen. They began preaching in Jerusalem, in the very same city where You had recently been buried where the people could have gone to the tomb to validate the news for themselves. The fact that Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, was specifically named would have exposed fraud immediately if it were not true because he was still alive and would have refuted any inaccuracy. Because of their preaching on the resurrection, Your followers were beaten, persecuted, and even killed, but their testimony never changed. Why would they go through all of this for a deliberate lie? Thank You, Lord, that the evidence is so clear and available for anyone to examine. I know that I can trust in Your Word. But it is more than just believing in the historical events, I know that You are alive today. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The same power and energy that raised You from the dead now live in me. I know that You are alive because I feel You in my soul, I see Your hand working in my life, I hear Your voice in Your Word, and I am guided by Your Spirit. I praise You, my risen Lord and Savior. Give me the conviction of the disciples to boldly proclaim the truth of Your Mercy and Grace to those I come in contact with. Assist all people to see, trust and believe in what You have done for them out of Your great love for them. Let them accept Your gift of Grace and You as their Redeemer. Amen

Tuesday, April 6: *Mark 6:30-44* -- How has Jesus fed you when you were spiritually hungry?

Lord, I wish I could say that I am always spiritually full, but I am not. I get caught up in the busyness of life, keeping up with work, caring for family, household responsibilities, church, friends, and then there is the news and digital devices... I am exhausted and there is no time left. This past year I have found myself drained and in a spiritual starvation mode. There seemed to be an open void distancing me from You. I was depressed and anxious about what was going on. I was finding it hard to give and do because my spiritual energy was low. I couldn't give what I didn't have. You told Your exhausted disciples to "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place" That was a good word for me too. Nearly always I start by reading the Bible and listen to You speak. It is harder to hear You when I am deprived, so I cried out to You and sat in silence. I waited with an open heart for You to stir up a hunger that would lead me back to the satisfaction of the soul. And out of my obedience, You were faithful. Thank You that You are there when I get up early and spend the quiet before the day with you. You have directed me to videos and books of faithful people who are on fire for You and desperately in love with You. I listen to videos throughout the day. and when I run out, I listen to worship and praise music to soak into my soul. The more I take in, the more I crave Your Spirit and the clearer Your voice is to me. I feel stronger in my convictions and my trust in You has again flourished. Worship on Sunday is also a critical part of building and maintaining my spiritual health. Not just to worship and be fed the meat of Your Word, but also to serve. Prayer and action go hand in hand. A healthy spirit will generate outward actions of love. That activity comes out of my relationship with You. I take great comfort that You can do a lot with the little I have to offer. What I have, I offer to You and I trust that You can multiply it and meet the needs of others. Thank You for driving me back into Your Word. Thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You for Your heavenly food that nourishes my soul. Let the abundance overflow to feed others. Amen

Wednesday, April 7: *Mark 6:45-56* -- Who is Jesus revealing himself to be?

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exhausted disciples to "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place" That was a good word for me too. Nearly always I start by reading the Bible and listen to You speak. It is harder to hear You when I am deprived, so I cried out to You and sat in silence. I waited with an open heart for You to stir up a hunger that would lead me back to the satisfaction of the soul. And out of my obedience, You were faithful. Thank You that You are there when I get up early and spend the quiet before the day with you. You have directed me to videos and books of faithful people who are on fire for You and desperately in love with You. I listen to videos throughout the day. and when I run out, I listen to worship and praise music to soak into my soul. The more I take in, the more I crave Your Spirit and the clearer Your voice is to me. I feel stronger in my convictions and my trust in You has again flourished. Worship on Sunday is also a critical part of building and maintaining my spiritual health. Not just to worship and be fed the meat of Your Word, but also to serve. Prayer and action go hand in hand. A healthy spirit will generate outward actions of love. That activity comes out of my relationship with You. I take great comfort that You can do a lot with the little I have to offer. What I have, I offer to You and I trust that You can multiply it and meet the needs of others. Thank You for driving me back into Your Word. Thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You for Your heavenly food that nourishes my soul. Let the abundance overflow to feed others. Amen

Thursday, April 8: *Mark 7:1-23* -- Have you ever had a conflict between your religious obligations and your obligations to your loved ones?

Lord Jesus, I owe You everything. You gave me life and then because I messed it up, You redeemed me through Your death and resurrection and gave me eternal life. All who I am and all that I have is Yours. You are the number one priority in my life. I want to worship You and serve You and actively live out my gratitude for Your grace and mercy. You have also given me a husband, family, and friends who I love and share life. I need to manage my obligation to You and to my family. The Pharisees discounted the obligation to the family with their obligation to the law. Obligations to religious law are worthless when I don't honor You with my heart. There are seasons in life where my religious obligations may need to change. Sometimes I need to make choices about what I commit to and how I serve both You and my loved ones. There are times when my service to You is to serve my family especially when they are sick or need my care and attention. In all seasons, let my love and dedication to You be a witness as I share my faith, my service, and worship with those I love. Let me find opportunities to merge my responsibilities as a mother, a grandmother, a wife, and a friend where we can serve and worship You together. Help me to covet my time with You. Help me to not overcommit my time in other areas where it pushes You out of my life. Guide me to handle conflicts in obligations that please You. Life is full of choices and time is limited. May the priority in my life be to actively serve You with all of my heart and to share that love with those I love, in each season of life. Amen

Friday, April 9: *Psalms 40* -- How do you account for David's recurring problems?

Heavenly Father, King David was Your chosen one. He was a man after Your own heart. But yet throughout his life, he suffered from many troubles and tragedies. After he was anointed King, David was the victim of Saul's jealousy. David was not spared from troubles. It was as if he was being tested, conformed, transformed, and trained as he ran and fought for his life. I can anticipate that there will be troubles in my life too. Lord help me to see when You are transforming me. Allow me to learn what You want me to learn, and grow from adversity and troubles. Once he was made king, David was celebrated and successful in battle. It has been said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. King David became complacent in his duties. He stayed home from battle and was idle. The devil utilized that idle time to tempt David with the wife of one of his soldiers. He used his authority to have his way with her and she became pregnant. Lies cause more lies. Finally, David had Bathsheba's husband killed. Lord, help me to not be complacent and idle. Keep me active in my faithfulness to You. Keep me from pride, and selfishness. Do not let the devil have a foothold in my heart. David did not confess his sins until he was confronted by the prophet Nathan. Even though David repented and You forgave him for his grievous sins, Nathan told him that he would always have trouble. David suffered multiple heartbreaks throughout the rest of his life. Holy God, you are just. Although You forgive, You do not take away the consequences of our sin. I thank You for Your forgiveness and grace that I did not deserve. I realize that You carried the weight of my sins on the cross. When You were resurrected, I was set free from the penalty of my sins. Thank you for the Christian people that You have placed in my life who can recognize when I am off track and help guide me back to the path of faithfulness. Like David, let me reach out to You in worship and praise even through troubles and despair. Great are You Lord. You are my help and my deliverer. Amen

Saturday, April 10: *Ecclesiastes 2:1-16* -- How does a passage like this help you focus on what is truly important?

Solomon had the ability to dote on himself with any pleasure he desired. He had power, riches, houses, gardens, and had an abundance of possessions but it didn't bring him satisfaction. He had a harem of 300 concubines in addition to 700 wives but instead of thriving from healthy relationships, they were meaningless. He could eat, drink and go wherever he

chose, do whatever he wanted, but instead of fulfillment, he felt like he was chasing after the wind. Solomon was focused on his own pleasures and possessions. Selfishness and pride will never bring meaning, satisfaction, and fulfillment to life. Most people in the world today may not have the riches of Solomon but have access to more things than at any time in history and want more. We are not thankful for what we have but want what others have worked for. Relationships are broken and respect for other people has waned leaving way to jealousy, fear, skepticism, distrust, and anger. More than any time in history, selfishness has left people empty. Feeling that life is meaningless has sent suicide rates skyrocketing. When our focus is on ourselves, we can never fill the void in our soul that belongs to You. Holy God, help me to take my focus off of myself, my things, and my future. Shift my priority on growing my relationship with You before anything else and You will provide me with what I really need. Fill that hole in my soul with Your Spirit so that I am content in Your love. Show me how when I share Your joy, peace, and love with those who are in despair I have greater peace and joy. Unite us in Your love. Your Replace anxiety with trust, emptiness with fulfillment, and selfishness with generosity. Lord, thank you that in Jesus, I find the answer to the anxiety of meaninglessness. Thank you that in You, I find true peace and purpose in my life. Amen