

Weekly Devotional Guide – May 3rd – May 8th

Monday, May 3: *Mark 11:1-11* -- Have you ever misunderstood Jesus' purpose. Praising him one day and despairing the next?

Holy and Mighty God. I know that all things work together for good for those who are called according to Your purposes. I trust You and have faith in Your plan but sometimes my heart is fickle. Life is a roller coaster of emotions. There are the mountain top experiences and then there are the deep valleys. I thank You for those times when I truly hear Your voice, when something in the Bible jumps out at me or when I recognize Your hand in a situation or answered prayer. Those are the times when my heart sings with praises. Often during those times, the devil tries to steal my joy. I can quickly lose focus on the good and everything comes crashing down around me. It's during those high times when something breaks, I get into an argument, I get hurt, or I am blindsided by something horrible in the news and my joy gets short-circuited. I go from praising to disappointment and feeling let down and I question what You are doing. Lord, help me to recognize that even it feels like You have failed to meet my expectations, that You have a bigger purpose. I can rest in the truth that You are always good, but Your ways are not my ways. Even when I have expectations in life that feel unmet, I pray that I can allow You to make a triumphal entry into every area of my heart today. Lord, reign in me with peace and love. Amen

Tuesday, May 4: *Mark 11:12-26* -- Why was Peter amazed? Should he have been?

It must have been amazing to be following You. Always watching for the unexpected and soaking up Your teaching moments. That day was filled with the unexpected for Peter and the disciples. In this passage, the cursing of the fig tree seems to be related to the cleansing of the temple. The fig tree looked desirable as the leaves were full, but there was no fruit. Those in the temple who were in positions to facilitate sacrifice and forgiveness were instead corrupting the church for their own profit. The fig tree was symbolic of the barrenness of the temple rituals they used to conceal their focus on selfish motives instead of faith and worship. They deceived just as the fullness of the leaves were deceiving. You predicted judgment to both due to the lack of fruit. I ask You Lord to examine my heart and my motives. Make them pure. I pray for the power of faith and prayer to grow fruit in my life and in the life of the church. Help me to have faith in You and not doubt, so that I can move mountains for You. Let me serve not to look good to others or for my purposes, but to expand Your kingdom by showing kindness and sharing Your love with others. Heal my heart so that I can forgive what others have done to me just as You have forgiven me. Let me grow in faith and bring me close to You. Lord. You are the main thing. Let me shed distractions and remain focused on my relationship with You. Allow me to hear Your voice and follow Your guidance in faith to grow desirable fruit for Your kingdom. Thank You for giving me the power of faith and prayer to change lives for You. Let all that I do and say bring glory to You, my God. I pray in Your name. Amen

Wednesday, May 5: *Mark 11:27-33* -- Why doesn't Jesus answer the question directly?

Jesus, You spoke and acted with God-given authority. You listened to the voice of Your Father and spoke the very words of God. You are the unique Son of God who spoke with the authority of God himself. There are people who do amazing things because they are confident that they walk in Your authority. Jesus, I don't want to be a meek and quiet Christian, I want to hear Your voice and confidently act with Your authority. I know that listening to You is the key. To do that I need to spend time with You. I know that I will meet opposition when I speak of Your truth. The priests of Your time on earth are similar to the people today who are adversarial and look for ways to trip people up so they can be destroyed. You saw their hearts. Your response to them challenged their authority by giving them a question that they couldn't answer. You exposed their motives and deceitfulness through their lack of authority and faith. Lord, I want to be able to respond in love and share Your Word in a way where people will recognize that I am speaking for You. I don't want to be afraid. I don't need to please people; I need to please You. Let me walk with the boldness of Your Spirit today and confidently speak and act in Your authority as I stand firm in following Your Word. Help me to walk in a close relationship with you, hear your voice, and speak your words with authority. Amen

Thursday, May 6: *Mark 12:1-12* -- In what ways is Jesus the capstone to your life? In what ways is he not?

In the vineyard parable, You called out Israel's leaders for killing Your prophets. You predicted that they would also kill You, the Son of the vineyard owner. They saw Your holy life, miraculous works, witnessed Your power over demons, and Your life-giving words. Yet because You did not fit the pattern they had in mind for a Savior, You were rejected. They couldn't see that God was using their rejection through Your death and resurrection as the cornerstone, the most important stone in the building of Your kingdom. The cornerstone is the key to the rest of the structure that is placed strategically so the rest of the building might take its alignment and form based upon it. If removed, the entire structure could collapse. Lord, You are the Cornerstone of my life. I pray that everything I do aligns with You. You are my firm foundation. Without You I am nothing. Without You, I have no hope, and life is meaningless. Lord, Jesus, help me stand boldly on Your foundation. Let my faith be the mortar that binds me to You. You are my strength and I lean on You for support. Allow me to provide support for others as I share my faith as a mortar to bind them together with all the saints into Your Kingdom. You are the foundation that makes my faith even stronger and will make the Church stronger. Your kingdom is strong, mighty, and eternal. You are the love, guidance, and foundation for which I stand. Amen

Friday, May 7: *Psalms 44* -- How does the author of this Psalm see God related to his problems?

History has a way of repeating itself. You did mighty works for the nation of Israel. You made a covenant with them and blessed them. But they did not keep their part of the covenant and You allowed enemies to conquer them. Lord, America was originally founded on a covenant with You. They committed this nation to You and You have blessed it with victory, with freedom, and with prosperity. Forgive us Lord for not fulfilling our part of the covenant. As a result, things have changed. You have rejected us and humbled us. Although millions still honor You, this country has moved away from You and You from it. It has become challenging to proclaim that You are Lord without retaliation. But I know that You will not leave me or forsake me. You have heard my prayers and You will again show Your love and power to the people in this country. As I face the challenges of today and of the future, I thank You for the victories you have given us. I do not rely on my own strength for the future but instead, put my trust in you. O Lord, my King, and my God rise up and help us; redeem us because of Your unfailing love. Amen

Saturday, May 8: *Ecclesiastes 4:1-6* -- Do you often see yourself in the role of the oppressed or the oppressor?

Lord, we live in a self-centered culture. It is contrasted from those who hunger for riches and grab power at the expense of others with those who are capable of work but just want others to provide for them out of their laziness. Both are selfish and both lead to ruin. Many are envious of the success of others and want what they have now, without realizing the time and effort that it took to achieve that success. That is foolishness and chasing after the wind. Let me not envy the success of others but be industrious with the skills, abilities, and opportunities that You have provided. Help me to live my life in balance. I pray that I focus on You and what You did for me before I consider what I have or have not. Allow me to lead others through Your love and not for my selfish gain. Allow me to be satisfied in my work and contribute to what I do without being consumed by it. I pray that I may enjoy the blessings of work and relationships. Give me endurance and Your peace as I am oppressed under the hands of those who try to steal what I have earned. Although You were a king You had compassion on the multitudes, fed them when they were hungry, healed diseases, and gave them the hope of salvation through Your word. Lord help me to be more like You. That is true success. Amen