

# called to multiply\_

## DAILY DEVOTIONS



### Week 5 - Day 1 - Time is Running Out

*Everyday disciples of Jesus have been commissioned. They are on a mission to multiply disciples of Jesus. They are committed to growing God's kingdom by sharing the good news about Jesus and discipling those who respond. This Plan explores the urgency of our mission and the opportunity we have to reap the harvest that God has planned.*

*Please note that this Plan offers more than a daily reflection on Scripture. It is designed to forge everyday disciples who are aware of God's presence and hear God's voice throughout the day. Please try to build the lunchtime meditations and evening reflections into your routine, as well as the morning devotions. Before each session, pause to be aware of God's love and presence.*

### MORNING

#### Scripture: 2 Peter 3:8-10

<sup>8</sup> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

#### Devotion

Many of the early Christians had a strong expectation of Jesus' imminent return to earth. As persecution of the church increased, it seemed to them that Jesus would fulfil His promises, rescue His people, and hold their rebellious world accountable. They were motivated to endure because they believed that Jesus was about to intervene. But when Peter was writing this letter almost 40 years after Christ's resurrection, things were getting tougher for the church and there was still no sign of Christ coming back to rescue and judge. Consequently, "scoffers" (3:3) were making fun of the Christians' hope in God's power to intervene. These doubters were attacking God's sovereignty and trustworthiness. Well, here we are almost 2000 years later, and still Jesus has not returned. Perhaps you too wonder what God is doing. This Scripture gives us some insights.

The seeming delay of Christ's return is not because he doesn't care or is powerless to do anything. No way. He has intervened before, and He certainly will do so again. Jesus' wonderful (for Christians) and catastrophic (for our world) return and judgment are on the horizon (3:10). There is no doubt about that. But Peter tells us about the Lord's heart. He just loves those rejecting him so deeply that He wants them all to be saved. That's why Jesus waits. It's because God longs for your friends and family and coworkers and neighbors to receive him.

This deep desire for lost people to be saved drives God's plan for His world. It's His priority. We might see rebellion, arrogance, and evil, but the Lord mostly sees broken and separated people who need his salvation. He is incredibly loving and patient. His passion is for more people to be saved. This passion becomes the passion of everyday disciples of Jesus. Time is running out. "The day of the Lord will come like a thief" (3:10). Our friends, family and neighbors need Jesus before it's too late.

### **Prayer**

Lord, please place Your heart for the lost in me. Keep reminding me of why I'm on this earth. I pray that the lost people around me will see your grace in my life and will be drawn to repent of their living without You. I'm not sure when You will say, "Enough is enough," but, like You, I desperately want those You have put in my life to be with us forever. Please use me Lord.

### **Today's Bible Focus**

**"Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to repent."**

### **LUNCHTIME (or when you can make a moment during the day)**

1. Meditate for a short time on today's Bible Focus. Let it seep into your heart.
2. Look and see what is happening around you from God's perspective and listen to see whether God is whispering anything to you.
3. Pray for any not-yet Christians God has placed on your heart.

### **EVENING**

1. *Remember:* Repeat today's Bible Focus.
2. *Reflect:* Reflect on the day and thank God for what He has said and done.
3. *Repent:* Check where you have neglected or disobeyed God during the day and ask for forgiveness and freedom.
4. *Release:* Name any concerns or fears on your mind and release them to Jesus.

## **Week 5 - Day 2 - Time to Reap**

### **MORNING**

#### **Scripture: John 4:35-38**

<sup>35</sup> Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. <sup>37</sup> Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."

#### **Devotion**

There evidently was a well-known proverb in Jesus' day that said, "It's still four months until the harvest" (4:35). This saying meant, "Don't try to rush the harvest. You have plenty of time." That makes a lot of sense. I'm no farmer, but I know that you must give crops space to ripen well before they are harvested. You must get your timing right. Similarly, in life, we need to be careful not to rush things. There is time for everything.

It was still early in Jesus' ministry and probably he was being urged to take His time. There was no rush to build His kingdom. He was only 30 (young for a Rabbi) and seemed to have time on His side. Anyway, they were in Samaritan territory, and you couldn't expect a Kingdom harvest among heretics. This reasoning sounded wise, but those quoting the proverb had their timing completely wrong. It was harvest time. The crops were ready and the reapers had much work to do. The harvest was ripe. Jesus knew that He was in the middle of a reaping season.

But is this true of your context? I suspect that it is, but you probably need to pray that through yourself. However, I can guarantee that there is some crop to be harvested around you. As the brokenness of our world becomes more apparent, people are desperate for truth and life. Open your eyes and look. There are not-yet Christians whom God and others have sown into and who are now ready to explore and enter belief in Jesus. I'm sure there is still lots of sowing for you to do, but you wouldn't want to be sowing when you should be reaping. As Jesus said, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (4:35).

#### **Prayer**

Thanks for the opportunities I have to sow You, Jesus, into the lives of people around me by my lifestyle, actions and words. May I be faithful in sowing. But please open my eyes to those who are ready to explore and encounter You. Please give me the courage to be a reaper as well as a sower. May You use me to help someone join Your forever kingdom. Grow my boldness as I witness to You and Your grace.

#### **Today's Bible Focus**

**"Look at the fields - they are ripe for harvest!"**

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## **Week 5 - Day 3 - The Process of Conversion**

### **MORNING**

#### **Scripture: Romans 10:13-15**

<sup>13</sup>For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” <sup>14</sup>How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup>And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

#### **Devotion**

In this Scripture, Paul spells out the process of conversion. Although the timing of the five stages varies, it tends to happen in a set order. Paul starts at the end and works backwards. I will reverse Paul’s order to explain the process.

1. Someone needs to be sent. As we have seen already, that someone is actually every disciple of Jesus. We all have been commissioned to share the good news about Jesus with the people we know. 2. The sent person needs to preach to the not-yet Christian. Paul is not talking about preaching a sermon but sharing the truth of the gospel. The sent person must tell them about Jesus. 3. They need to receive the message. The truth of the gospel has to cut through their previous beliefs and doubts so that they hear it, not just with their ears, but with their heart. 4. They must believe the good news about Jesus. They have to accept that the gospel is true and relevant to them. 5. They need to personally cry out to Jesus in repentance and faith. That’s the process. Every one of these steps must occur for someone you know to be saved.

Sometimes these stages happen in quick succession, but usually, they take considerable time and the sent ones have to be patient. But the process of conversion starts when disciples of Jesus recognize that they have been sent to share the gospel and they take their calling seriously. In His grace, God chooses to give us a significant role in His miraculous conversion process. It’s such a precious privilege to be sent by Jesus to bring the good news. In God’s eyes and maybe in the eyes of some of your friends, you really do have “beautiful feet” (10:15) as you go with the gospel to those who need to hear.

#### **Prayer**

Forgive me when I see my role as a preacher of the gospel to be an obligation rather than a privilege. I do long to kick off the process of conversion for many by sharing Your good news. Please may Your grace envelop me so that I live in the wonder of your good news and please place in my heart a passion for the gospel. I want to be someone with “beautiful feet.”

#### **Today’s Bible Focus**

**“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”**

#### **LUNCHTIME (or when you can make a moment during the day)**

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### **EVENING**

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## Week 5 - Day 4 - Playing Your Part

### MORNING

#### Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:5-8

<sup>5</sup> What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. <sup>6</sup> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. <sup>7</sup> So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. <sup>8</sup> The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour.

#### Devotion

I understand what Paul is getting at here when he talks about planting and watering. Gardening is one of the areas in which Deb (my wife) and I have distinct roles. Deb loves to plant (as long as I dig the holes), and I love to nurture the plants by watering, fertilizing and pruning. I suspect that my role is more taxing, but the arrangement works for us, as we each get to do what we enjoy.

The Corinthian church was divided over who was their most significant leader. Some idolized Paul who planted the church and others admired Apollos who nurtured the new converts. It was an issue of considerable debate and was dividing the church. In this Scripture, Paul uses a gardening analogy to show that such disputes are stupid. Paul and Apollos were just following their callings and using their gifts to joyfully serve. Neither of them should be regarded as important. They were faithful and would be rewarded by God for this (3:8). But when it came to significant influence, it was God who changed lives and grew the church (3:7).

Similarly, disciples of Jesus may have different roles in the conversion process. While we all need to share the gospel, some of us are best at sowing the seed, some of us are best at reaping (the evangelists), and some of us are best at encouraging and nurturing new converts. Don't get hung up on what others can or cannot do. Just be thankful that God gives you a part to play and praise God as He works through you.

#### Prayer

I thank You that multiplying disciples is a team process. We all use our gifts to build Your Kingdom. I really appreciate the things that I can do to help people believe in and follow You. Please help me to play my part well. I want to give it my best shot. But when it comes to the crunch, I know that this is Your work and I'm glad just to have a small part.

#### Today's Bible Focus

**“Only God makes things grow.”**

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### EVENING

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## Week 5 - Day 5 - Powerful Witnesses

### MORNING

#### Scripture: Acts 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup>Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup>He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

#### Devotion

Jesus’ disciples were attracted by the hope of an earthly Jewish kingdom. They wondered whether the departure of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit would be catalysts for the establishment of this new Jewish kingdom in which they would have significant roles. This was very attractive to the disciples, and they wanted to know if their moment had arrived.

But Jesus had much bigger plans for His Kingdom. It was going to engulf all nations “to the ends of the earth.” These Jewish boys who had travelled no further than where they could walk probably had no idea what the ends of the earth meant, but Jesus did. His kingdom would be worldwide - accessed by every people group on earth.

This kingdom would not spread through military might or charismatic leadership but through “witnesses” - ordinary people sharing their experience of the grace of God revealed in Jesus. Witnessing remains Jesus’ method of growing His Kingdom. He is building a Kingdom of huge influence both now and forever, and it is spreading through the witness of ordinary people like you and me. Of course, the early disciples couldn’t do this by themselves, and neither can we. We can’t change the lives of our family and friends, let alone people in other ethnic groups. But with God’s Spirit, we become incredibly powerful witnesses and Kingdom builders.

#### Prayer

I must admit, I feel pretty ordinary when it comes to sharing my faith. But then, so were Your disciples and look how You used them. Please empower my witness Jesus. May the simple things I say about You be enlivened by Your Spirit so that they touch the hearts of the people around me. You can work and have worked in great power through everyday witnesses. Please use me.

#### Today’s Bible Focus

**“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”**

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## **Week 5 - Day 6 - Different Reactions to Jesus**

### **MORNING**

#### **Scripture: Luke 8:36-39**

<sup>36</sup>Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. <sup>37</sup>Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. <sup>38</sup>The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, <sup>39</sup>“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

#### **Devotion**

I may have given the wrong impression. It would be easy to think from the devotions this week that ripe fields mean that everyone is just waiting to hear about and respond to the good news about Jesus. However, as this reading brings out (and you already know), the presence and power of Jesus are both attractive and disconcerting. The man whose life had been dominated by demons welcomed Jesus' work in freeing him and offering him a new start. On the other hand, the locals struggled with events they saw as dangerous and wanted Jesus as far away from them as possible.

This is often the case. Some people will welcome the good news about Jesus and others will be threatened by it. Keep praying that people's eyes will be opened to the love and power of Jesus, but don't expect that this will always produce a positive response. The reactions of our friends are not under our control. If the Gerasenes rejected Jesus Himself, then it's likely we will sometimes find the same response when we witness about the Jesus we love.

But this shouldn't stop us. Jesus' instructions to the delivered man were explicit. Despite the negativity in the region, he was to tell everyone he knew about what Jesus had done for him. The people God has placed around you may not always appreciate God or the church, but they can't deny your experience of Jesus. You may not be able to answer all their objections, but you can share about how much Jesus has done for you.

#### **Prayer**

It would be so good if everyone could know Your love and experience Your grace. But I live in a world that is often suspicious, cynical, and even antagonistic towards You. Please help me not to become defensive, but to appreciate what You have done and are doing for me. Help me to keep lovingly sharing this good news with those around me no matter how they react.

#### **Today's Bible Focus**

**“Go home and tell how much God has done for you.”**

#### **LUNCHTIME (or when you can make a moment during the day)**

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