

JOURNEY  
THROUGH JOHN

40  
DAYS  
*of*  
JOHN

A LENTEN DAILY DEVOTIONAL

*by the pastors of First Presbyterian Church of Nashville*

WEEK 3

## SUNDAY

Take time today to reflect on the readings from this past week, reread some of the most meaningful passages, or catch up on any devotionals you missed. Rest in the grace of God that is freely and extravagantly given today and every day.

## DAY 11

### MONDAY, MARCH 9

#### READ

John 6:22-59

#### REFLECT

The aroma of fresh baked bread arouses images of comfort, nourishment, and security. Every culture has its main stay of unique bread: baguettes, pitas, naan, challah, matzo, tortillas, biscuits, focaccia, and even pre-sliced American white bread. Bread was the staple food for first century Palestine. It was even the utensil for eating. One would tear off a piece of bread and use it to scoop up the meal. Bread was essential symbolizing our need for sustenance and nourishment.

In this passage, Jesus states the first of seven “I am” (ego eimi) declarations in the Gospel of John: “I am the bread of Life.” “I am” is the covenant name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. With the use of these statements, Jesus is identifying with God and describing attributes of God. Earlier in this chapter Jesus miraculously fed the five thousand with food that will perish. Now he wants to give the spiritual bread that brings eternal life: himself. The crowd cannot understand this spiritual side, seeking instead the physical bread or signs of wonder. Because Jesus does not oblige, the crowd starts to leave him.

#### RESPOND

What are we seeking today? Are we seeking comfort or wonder? How can we seek Jesus, the spiritual nourishment that does not perish? Who do you seek?

#### PRAY

*Holy God, draw us to yourself, that we might seek you with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. Make us hungry for your presence that satisfies the longing heart. Amen.*

## DAY 12

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

### READ

John 6:60-71

### REFLECT

Jesus is heading in to some deep waters. The “hard sayings” (v60) that now worry his disciples circle around his impending crucifixion. Jesus is God’s Son who has taken on our flesh so that we might be rescued from sin and death. But salvation isn’t something we simply receive from Jesus’ dying on the cross. Salvation means an actual participation in his death, “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (v54).

No wonder many of his followers are grumbling and beginning to count the cost. Here’s an important gospel truth to remember: The faithful grasp of the teachings of God’s Word often lead not to “church growth” but its opposite. “After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him” (v66). We shouldn’t be surprised when the church constricts at moments of clarifying the call to discipleship.

Our passage ends with both Peter and Judas remaining with him. Peter makes a right confession and, though he has some detours along the way, will commit fully to following Jesus. And there is Judas who is described as the devil. Jesus’ call is indiscriminate. His company will always include those who believe and those who betray. To believe is simply to come to the point where complete reliance on him, the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood, is our only hope in this world and the next.

### RESPOND

Consider the “hard sayings” sayings of Jesus. What parts of the gospel do you find comforting? What part of the gospel story afflict you in your comfort?

### PRAY

*Lord Jesus, the Word made flesh, thank you for taking on our humanity. It is the only way we can take on a new and perfect humanity that fits us for life forever with you, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## DAY 13

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

### READ

John 7:1-31

### REFLECT

*“The one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.”*

Many people who encountered Jesus drew conclusions about whether or not he was the Messiah based on their flawed ideas about who God was. But as we continue to read through John’s gospel, we are learning that Jesus is turning that around. He is the One who leads people to the Father and gives them true insight into who God is and what he wants for us.

We too often make this same mistake. We shape God into our own image and seek to fit Jesus into a mold of our own creation. When Jesus doesn’t behave the way we expect him to based on our assumptions, our faith is shaken, our frustration kindled, and we feel lost. Lent is a time for us to reorient ourselves to who Jesus REALLY is as it is revealed to us in Scripture. We are invited to lay aside our faulty, selfish ideas of God and become reacquainted with the God revealed to us in Jesus’ ministry, life, death, and resurrection.

### RESPOND

What might be some characteristics you’ve assigned to God that do not fit with the picture and message we have received from Jesus? Where did those ideas come from? Childhood? Church? Your own pain? Take time to pray today for a fresh vision of the God we worship and a renewed faith in his mercy and love demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

### PRAY

*Father God, in your Son Jesus Christ you have shown us who you are. Forgive us when we seek to form you into our own image. Sharpen our minds that we might see you anew through the lens of our Savior and his extravagant love for us. Amen.*

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

## READ

John 7:32-52

## REFLECT

In today's passage, Jesus is creating quite the uproar. Everyone seems to have an opinion, and no one seems to be speaking the same language. The pharisees are afraid and trying to arrest Jesus. The guards are so amazed and confused by Jesus' words they can't bring themselves to arrest him. The people want to know more but disagree about what Jesus' words mean. To top it all off, Jesus is offering free drinks. And in the midst of it all, Nicodemus is quietly coming to believe in Jesus, but he's not ready to change his pharisee Facebook status yet. Everyone is reacting strongly to this Jesus fellow, but the only one not freaking out is the one who actually spent some one-on-one time with Jesus. Nicodemus. Jesus says, I'm not going to be here much longer. Jesus says, come to me if you're thirsty. The invitation is there. Come to Jesus. Spend time with Jesus. Listen to the words of Jesus. It's easy to read this passage and look down on the pharisees' lack of understanding. But it was confusing. Who Jesus was and what Jesus was doing didn't fit in the box they had made for the Messiah. However, God doesn't seem concerned with operating in the parameters we set. Nor does Jesus seem concerned with people "getting it". He allows the confusion to continue. It is not enough to learn about living water, the invitation is to drink. The faithful response to the thirst of our souls is not trying to figure it out, but to come to Jesus and step into the flowing streams of the divine life. It's far easier to spend time in our head, trying to debate who's right and who's wrong. It's far easier to talk about your messiah opinions. It seems that Jesus wants something more than for you to simply understand. Jesus wants a relationship. Understanding can come after that. All who are thirsty, come. Don't just look at the water of life, don't just debate about it, but slow down, sit down, be with Jesus and drink deeply.

## RESPOND

Where are the places of confusion in your life? Have you replaced intimacy with Christ with understanding about Christ? What would it look like if you spent some more time with Jesus today? What are the boxes you put God in? Where are the places your intellect refuses for God to work? Perhaps that's exactly the place where Jesus could be asking you to slow down, sit down, come and drink.

## PRAY

*Loving God, teach my soul how to drink from the living water of your son my savior Jesus Christ. Open my ears to hear the words of Jesus, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink". Give me the courage to slow down, sit down, and be with him right now. Amen.*

## DAY 15

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

### READ

John 8:1-30

### REFLECT

Many early manuscripts of the Gospel of John omit the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery, and later manuscripts have differed as to where the story is placed. Yet, the story most likely does report a real event in the life of Jesus and includes memorable and significant sayings of Jesus.

The story shows that the authorities (the scribes and Pharisees) were eager to bring a charge against Jesus. They approach Jesus with a woman taken in adultery, a serious crime for the man and the woman. The authorities ask Jesus if she should be stoned as required by the law of Moses. Jesus' initial response is silence and when He speaks, He says very little. Jesus invites the judgmental accusers to test themselves. What person could honestly say he or she is without sin?

Then Jesus addresses the woman with words of both mercy and justice. Jesus offers grace for the sinner and condemnation of the sin. He loves the sinner, even as He hates the sin.

As Jesus responds to the woman and her accusers, He is reflecting the heart of God. The woman is freed from condemnation of her past that she might embrace her future with hope, gratitude and love for her merciful and gracious God.

### RESPOND

Jesus calls us to be merciful just as our Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). What makes it difficult for you to be merciful and compassionate and not to judge others?

### PRAY

*Gracious God, help us to be merciful and compassionate, loving and kind to others as we share the love, kindness, mercy and compassion that we receive from You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

## DAY 16

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

### READ

John 8:31-59

### REFLECT

*We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, “You will be made free?”*

What is the difference between trusting a promise and presuming upon the promise maker? What is the difference between living in covenant love and taking your covenant partner for granted?

For Jesus and the Jews of his day, the question had to do with being “children of Abraham.” Because Abraham trusted God’s promise, he was the father of faith in the God who promised him great blessing. All Jews, being children of Abraham, share in that promise. But the promise is to people who trust God, not simply to people who happen to be born into the family.

Think of it this way: if you take your parents for granted – their provision of food, clothing, shelter, and education – your relationship with them is degraded from one of covenant love to a simple transaction. Or, in a similar way, if you take your spouse for granted – his or her contribution to all that makes your household function and your marriage work – covenant becomes transaction.

So, though one couldn’t necessarily draw a relational “line” and say, “Now you’re presuming upon my promises,” it does become clear at some point that covenant has been taken for granted.

Faith in God through Christ is freedom to be for God in all of life, instead of enjoying God’s benefits without offering oneself back to God.

### RESPOND

What do you want to do this Lent as an expression of your freedom to love God back?

### PRAY

*Lord Jesus, knowing you is being set free to love as I have been loved. Draw me outside myself and into the land of the living, where I offer myself to you and others, and discover there abundant life. Amen.*



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