



Daily Devotions

Week # 1

February 7th - February 13th


Clearbranch

United Methodist Church
8051 Glenn Road
Trussville, AL 35173

Daily Devotion

Sunday, February 7th

By Clay Farrington



God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.
Genesis 1:31

If you read all of Genesis chapter one, you'll notice that God calls his creation good seven times ending with verse 31 above where God calls all that he had made very good. This is a fundamental tenant of the Christian faith. God is good. God creates good things. And God loves restoring things ugly and broken by sin back to their original intended state.

God's in the business of fabrication and restoration. And He does good work.

But it doesn't take a rocket surgeon to look around and see that everything's not good. War, murder, racism, kidnapping, slavery, forced prostitution, cancer, tsunamis, tainted water and political campaigns are all a part of our world today. Just watch the news. But the problem goes even deeper. Just look in the mirror.

We are all, every one of us, broken, marred by our own selfishness, inclined more to sin than to love, to revenge more than forgive and to look out for ourselves before others.

That's not how God intended it.

There's one more truth in Genesis chapter one that stands out: you were made in God's image. You were made on purpose and for a purpose. And no matter how you feel about yourself, when you trust in Christ for your salvation and for your life, God looks at you, pats himself on the back and says, now that is good.

God saw (*your name*) that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the 546,982,173rd day.

Heavenly Father, creator of all that is good and healer of all that is broken, heal us we pray. Heal my own self-image. Heal our relationships. Heal our church. Help us to see your image on the face of our neighbor and on the face in the mirror. And God we ask you to restore your kingdom and your will here on earth just as it is in heaven. Amen.

Daily Devotion

Monday, February 8th

By Beth King



By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Genesis 2:2-3 NIV

God rested. Can't you just picture him in his Laz-boy with his shoes off, a glass of Coke in his hand, and his eyes closed to take a nap? That's how I rest.

However, that's not what he did. Vine's Expository Dictionary defines this rest (šābat) as ceasing. He ceased—rested—from his work.

We may worship on our Sabbath, but afterwards, do we cease from our work? Our worry? Our Christian ways? God made us a day to be holy so that we could cease. Rest. We may still have work to complete, but we can "cease" our tiredness and complaining. We can rest in God's blessing and his creation, and in ourselves. After all, we are part of that creation and we can experience more rest by ceasing. Just cease.

Our Father God,

Thank you for the example of rest that you give us. Thank you for the rest you allow us. Thank you for your creation, and our part in it. Help us as we come to you to understand how to rest, to see our own glory, and to celebrate the creation you made in us.

In Jesus Name,

AMEN

Daily Devotion

Tuesday, February 9th

By Sonya Hendricks



"I will not present burnt offerings to the Lord my God that have cost me nothing."

II Samuel 24:24 NLT

I love David. He is a great shepherd, a fearless warrior, a passionate worshipper, a mighty leader, and a beloved King. He not only knows God – his God – intimately, but He also loves Him with all of his heart.

Read II Samuel 24. In this chapter, we watch this great man of God "lean upon his own understanding" and then stumble and sin. His sin angered God and brought disaster upon the very people he was supposed to protect. A total of 70,000 people died in 3 days – horrific! Thank goodness that is not the end of the story or the end of his story!

Out of his love for God, David responds to Araunah's offer "No, I insist on buying it, for I will not present burnt offerings to the Lord my God that have cost me nothing." It would have been easy for David to be upset with God or to be bitter over the harsh punishment inflicted. David chose to respond to God in love, however, instead of in bitterness.

The response of love is to give. John 3:16 reminds us that God loves us with His whole heart! "For God so loved the world that He gave..." God loved it when David gave generously. He loves it when we give generously. He loves a cheerful giver!

Challenge Questions:

- (1) Are you responding to God's love?
- (2) How are you responding?
- (3) Have you given God your whole heart? If not, what is holding you back?

Father – You are beautiful in all Your ways – even in the things I do not understand. Open my eyes to see You and to behold Your extravagant love for me. I want to give You my whole heart – holding nothing back. Please help me! Help me learn how to sacrifice like David did. Help me learn how to give out of a grateful heart. Amen

Daily Devotion

Wednesday, February 10th

By Sammy & Donna Rubin



"But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

Matt. 22:34-40

It seems to me that loving God would be acknowledged by every Christian as the most important tenant of our faith but yet is the most neglected. Loving God with our whole being is not something we do; it is who we are; it is the essence of our life in Christ. What we do, is what comes between us and our first love (Rev. 2:4) because what we do becomes our life instead of Him. Doing is always easier than being because it gives us a sense of purpose, when if we could just rest in Him, the doing, and the giving would just come naturally. If we could just be so enamored with Him, then the doing would emanate from His life within us (Christ in you, the hope of glory).

And therein lies the crux of the problem; we all want glory! But only He is worthy of all glory and honor and praise.

We were created with a longing to be wholly devoted to God. Nothing brings more joy to our spirit than giving the deepest affections of our heart to God. We need a deeper understanding of what it means to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. Matthew 22 clearly reveals to us God's greatest desire: that we would sit at His feet and attend to His every word. He longs for our lives to be given, fully yielded to Him, giving us the victory to live our lives from the inside out, holy, set apart in our affections, thoughts, and words. God is preparing the church for Himself, a pure and spotless bride at the end of the age. We will partner with Him in prayer and worship, and He will call the nations back to the first and great commandment.

Prayer: Lord, please show me those things in my life that have not been born of the Spirit, but of the flesh, so that I can acknowledge them, repent, and turn my complete attention, adoration, and affection to You. Help me to worship only You . . . at all times will I bless You; Your praise shall continually be in my mouth! (PS 34:1)

1. How might you increase your love for God with all of your heart?
2. How might you increase your love for God with all of your mind?
3. How might you increase your love for God with all of your strength?

Daily Devotion

Thursday, February 11th

By Logan Henderson



When he came to the town gate a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid, go home and do as you have said. But first, make a small cake of bread from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jar of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.'" She went away and did everything Elijah had told her. So there was food everyday for Elijah and for the woman and her family.

1 Kings 17: 1015 NIV

Have you ever sat at your desk at work and felt like all of your mundane tasks were just going to make you the first human with "Boredom" on your autopsy? What if I said even mind-numbing grunt work was planned by God? In the verses preceding these, Elijah is sent by God to a valley during a time of drought brought on by the evil deeds of Israel. He is then brought out of this valley to this specific poor, downtrodden widow to ask her for food. Now, commands from God in Scripture are almost always a test. Elijah's test, asking a woman with very little to provide very much, leads to an abundance of provision, and His glory being shared. So, how does this relate to me wanting to run screaming from my office today? Like Elijah, we all have trials we have to face, and today I'd say many of us consider 9-5 to be a biggie. But we must understand that God has put meaning into every moment, mundane or not, and trust in that, even when we feel purposeless and motionless in our lives. After all, those trials that you face from 9-5, much like Elijah's trials, will often become the means by which God uses us to spread His Light to darkness we may not even see.

Prayer: Dear God, please give me patience and guidance to make the most of your Name in every moment of my life, whether I see significance or not. I love you, and thank you for my life, and Your specific plan for me. Amen.

Daily Devotion

Friday, February 12th

By Dawn Proia



"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had." Acts 4:32 NIV

Ray Stedman said, "Being one in heart and mind means the early church not only shared the life of Jesus as a fact of their existence, but they also lived into it." Today, if you drive around town you will see the phrase, 'ALL IN' on a half a dozen church marquees. 'ALL IN' ! The early church simply loved as Jesus had loved – sacrificially and generously. They felt it. They experienced it. They were overcome with the desire to be graciously selfless ~ "What is mine is yours..." But it went so much deeper than material possessions ~ they were one united spirit by using all of their resources, gifts and talents to be there for one another. One Heart. One Mind.

The concept that no one will be wanting, hungry, cold or without shelter, or alone ~ not while we are here – united – is still the goal. Anything less than being 'all in' by using partial gifts would not have sufficed then and it won't today. Total investment like this makes us vulnerable. But we have to be willing to risk it all and take on that responsibility to show the depth of our faith. One heart. One mind. One community.

Are you ready to be vulnerable? Are you 'All In'? Is there something we have been asked to do or witnessed a need and held back, second guessed or turned away from meeting? What gift has God given to you to share with someone else as we become followers of Christ together with one heart and one mind?

Father God, we praise you and ask you to awaken in each of us a love so deep in Jesus and for each other that we would live like the early church in a constant state of generosity. We ask that you walk with us and instill the courage in us to overcome our vulnerabilities and allow the community to see that generosity in us in a way that Jesus would be honored. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Daily Devotion

Saturday, February 13th

By Carol Gargus



At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God.² You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience.³ At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.⁴⁻⁵ However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that He has for us. You are saved by God's grace!⁶ And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus.⁷ God did this to show future generations the greatness of His grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.⁸ You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed.⁹ It's not something you did that you can be proud of.¹⁰ Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Ephesians 2:1-10 CEB

A true believer in Christ is not just a created being, but a re-creation by God with work to do-lots of good work! God has always planned for us to do good works even before we were planned (or not planned) by our parents. What are these good works?

Every day is full of opportunities to serve God, whether we are at church, school, work, the store, your neighborhood, the ballpark, etc. We don't have to wait for that once in a lifetime or once a year mission trip, nor should we wait. No matter what Satan wants us to believe, we aren't too busy, too stressed, too broke, too old, too young, too whatever to say yes to being part of God's plan and doing His work right now. This makes me think of some wonderful older people who live at Princeton Towers. Several of these people get in their motorized wheelchairs every Wednesday afternoon and roll a few blocks to Hemphill Elementary school. They come, no matter what the weather is like, to share Jesus with the kids. They are also very active for God in their apartment complex and their community-they work for Christ. They pray hard and they work hard. They all could claim to be "too" this or "too" that, but they realize what they are is "too saved" not to do the good things in God plans.

We all have primary work and that is to serve God wherever we are-if He leads you to do something, there is a way, because He is the way. I have to give another example of this, there are a few doctors who close their practice for a couple of hours a week to come over to a local elementary school and share Jesus. One of these, a busy surgeon, says this hour a week with the kids is the most important live-saving work he does.

Thank you Father that we are not only saved from death, but re-created by you to do good stuff-your stuff! Please send the motivation we need when we think we are "too tired" or "too this or too that" to participate in your good things.

Are there things you are saying no to because you think are "too" something or another? Are there things you are saying "yes" to that prevent you from doing what God wants you to do?