



grow. pray. study. | daily devotional readings

October 18, 2020 “Witnesses: Going Fishing, Reflecting Light”

Five Essential Practices for Living the Christian Life

Matthew 4:18-20

¹⁸ As [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

MONDAY 10.19.2020 | Jesus actively shared good news

Read: [John 4:4-15](#)

Reflect: In Jesus’ day, Jews looked down on Samaritans, even hated them. Though the shortest route from Jerusalem to Galilee was through Samaria, most Jews going north or south would travel through Perea, east of the Jordan River, to avoid the Samaritans. Jesus did not physically *have to go* through Samaria. He purposely made a spiritual *choice to go* through Samaria. In going through Samaria, stopping and drinking from Jacob’s well, he was directly defying the enmity between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus was challenging an injustice of his day.

- Today’s reading is full of lessons. At its heart, it is about two important matters—1) bearing witness to God’s undeniable longing for peace among God’s children, and 2) water, the life-giving, soul-cleansing, peace-making, world-changing water that bubbles out from the one who made us, the inner thirst-quenching spiritual water that produces eternal life. Where in your daily living do you see injustice? What are you doing to bear witness to God’s work by deliberately going out of your way to confront the injustice you see?
- Jesus offered the Samaritan woman water that quenches thirst forever. The woman likely confused the living water Jesus offered with a natural spring of flowing water that would keep her from coming to the well so often. She at first wanted to escape the labor; Jesus wanted her to embrace the water within. Do you just want Jesus’ living water to make your life easier or simpler? Or do you want living water to make you whole so that the world might see Jesus in you?

Respond: Recall. Some of the most difficult times in our lives can often be the times that we find that we are closest to God. Reflect on how you experienced God in a difficult time and how you might be able to share a word of hope with someone who is struggling.

This was a difficult time in my life _____.

How I experienced God during this time? _____

Pray: Lord Jesus, keep me from chasing convenience and an easier life. Guide me to your work, no matter how hard, that I may bear witness to your love for humanity. Make me willing to go out of my way for the sake of the world. Amen.

TUESDAY 10.20.2020 | Jesus' precise sketch of God's big story

Read: [Luke 24:44-48](#)

Reflect: Jesus, with his disciples after the crucifixion and resurrection, taught them to reflect on Israel's history to find their ongoing mission. They were to preach to all nations the life found in his resurrection. Jesus charged the disciples to preach the story of repentance and forgiveness of sins. He opened the disciples' minds to see the big picture: that their history as a people, from Moses to the Psalms, said that in the Christ there is salvation and justice.

- Your personal story of a changed heart and life is powerful to the non-religious and nominally religious people you interact with wherever you live, work or play. You, like the disciples, are a witness to God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ. In what ways can you share your personal story of a changed heart and life with those around you?
- Jesus did not give the disciples an optional task. Rather, he commissioned them—gave them a mandate or command to be witnesses of God's work in the world. What do you need to do in your life to more fully take on Jesus' mission to share his hope and forgiveness with the people around you?

Respond: Invite. The Christian story is a powerful one. Someone at some point invited you to learn more about Christ, now you have an opportunity to do the same. Who can you invite to join you for worship or bible study or a small group?

Pray: God, keep me alert for chances to faithfully share the story of your son's life, death, burial and resurrection. Give me courage when afraid, confidence when unsure, passion when indifferent. May I make you proud as I share my personal story of a changed heart and life. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 10.21.2020 | Parting words from the risen Savior

Read: [Acts 1:3-8](#)

Reflect: Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give his followers power to bear witness to God's work in the world. The Spirit still gives us guidance, courage, strength, alertness, and passion to share the person and work of Jesus. The mighty wind that is the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:7-8) empowers Christians to be storytellers of God's great love for the world. God calls us to radiate hope, to live with a confident expectation that God's work is real and present in the world today.

- God did not leave us on our own to radiate hope. Through the Holy Spirit, God grants us power to be living extensions of Jesus' ministry in today's world. It's often said that we have as much power from

the Holy Spirit as we ask for. Are you asking for the Holy Spirit's power? In what ways, as a God-powered messenger, can you share Jesus' story with others?

- The "end of the earth" could be anywhere—your office, your favorite restaurant, your health club or your cul de sac. Where are the one or two places where you can most effectively share your faith story with others? Which one of your friends, family members, or co-workers can join you in this mission?

Respond: Encourage. The power of the Holy Spirit is with us and often can nudge us to reach out to someone in a time of need. Sometime today, ask God to bring to mind someone you know who needs a word of encouragement. Pull out your phone at that moment and send a text of encouragement to the first person that comes to mind. You might be surprised at what a profound impact it might make to them and to you. (Who did you text? What did you say? How did it make you feel? What was the response?)

Pray: God, give me chances to share my faith story with others. Show me where you are already at work around me so I can join you in your work. Help me remember that my power comes from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THURSDAY 10.22.2020 | "Whenever anyone asks... be ready"

Read: [1 Peter 3:13-16](#)

Reflect: *Apologetics: the art of defending and giving evidence for the Christian faith.* The writer of 1 Peter saw it as important to be ready to provide evidence for our faith, and the hope we live in, to anyone who asks. We best defend our faith and radiate hope, not in arguments or disputes, but by being able to reasonably and realistically support our faith candidly, confidently, compassionately and comprehensively.

- Reason has led us to believe our beliefs (i.e. our doctrine). That takes on realism in our lifestyle, as people see actions that back up our Christian claims. Do you think your lifestyle would back up your verbal claims of Christianity? Why or why not? Do you have a sense of the story that people tell about you?
- You may, from time to time, meet people who challenge your beliefs, with a strong air of skepticism and doubt. Most will try to be kind, but like Romans in Peter's day, some won't. The author of 1 Peter challenged readers to stay respectful and humble in all situations. How easy or hard do you find it to remain respectful and humble when your faith is challenged? For what reasons?

Respond: Why? Think about how faith in Christ has changed your life. In essence, why do you believe? Create an "elevator speech" for your faith – something you could share in 30 seconds or less while on an elevator with someone. Here are some questions to consider as you think about this.

1. Were you ever reluctant to believe? Did you have doubts? Write those here.
2. What happened that changed your mind? Was it an experience, a person?
3. How is your life different now?
4. How do you live out your faith – think of how you worship, grow, serve, give and share

Pray: O Lord, in my passion to defend my Christian faith, help me to be humble to all I meet. Let your loving kindness flow through me as I represent you to the world around me. Amen.

FRIDAY 10.23.2020 | Philip – ready to share when asked**Read:** [Acts 8:27-38](#)

Reflect: An Ethiopian in Jerusalem was a long way from home. Acts said he'd come to Jerusalem to worship, but how did he get his hands on a scroll to be reading on his journey home? Perhaps in Jerusalem he'd heard some of the spreading stories about Jesus. Whatever led to it, he was curious about the sacred Hebrew readings in Isaiah. His curiosity produced initial confusion. He admitted he needed help to understand what he was reading. Philip's immediate task was simple—help this curious man find the meaning of the gospel message.

- The Holy Spirit sent Philip on a mission to help guide the influential Ethiopian to understand the gospel from the prophetic words of Isaiah 53. Philip ran to the chariot eager to help the man. That example of eager obedience is inspiring. When the Holy Spirit whispers to you, how willing are you to listen? Are you eager to help others understand your faith?
- Non-religious and nominally religious people need your help to make sense out of what, for many, can be a very confusing message. When was the last time you helped someone make sense of the gospel message? Do you feel equipped to do so? If not, what could you do to feel more confident and capable?

Respond: Share. Put your faith out there. Wear a cross, wear a t-shirt or mask with scripture or faith symbols, or post something on social media. Pray that God would use that as an opportunity for someone to connect with you about your faith.

Pray: God, teach me how to listen closely for the Holy Spirit's whispering guidance. Help me have the courage to eagerly obey. Stir within me, Lord, a desire to better equip myself to help curious people make sense of the gospel story. Amen.

SATURDAY 10.24.2020 | "Therefore go... make disciples"**Read:** [Matthew 28:16-20](#)

Reflect: The disciples made their way to the rendezvous point in Galilee. Understanding more fully who Jesus was after his resurrection, the eleven disciples probably worshiped him with more depth than ever before. "Some doubted" likely means some were still stunned, even dumbfounded that they found themselves with Jesus—a once-dead, now alive, risen Savior. He told his disciples to "go," which is probably better translated *as you are going*. As you go about the daily rhythms in your ordinary life, the Savior said, prioritize the mission of disciple making. And as you do, realize the comforting presence of Jesus is with you every day.

- To "make disciples" is to guide people to accept the claims of Christ. "Baptizing" and "teaching" are important aspects of being a disciple, but not necessarily the means to make disciples. People become disciples by coming into the community of believers and submitting to Christ as the Lord of their life. Teaching disciples means leading them toward a life of obedience to Jesus, not just intellectually teaching doctrine. * Jesus said "go." How's your "going," anyway? Would you say that Christ is the Lord of your life? In what ways is your Lord leading you to make disciple-making a priority? * *NIV Bible Commentary Volume 2*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994, page 134.

Respond: Explore. We are called to make disciples and we might all go about doing this in a different way. Consider how God might have uniquely gifted you to share. Take a spiritual gifts assessment online

(such as the [UMC Discipleship Ministries assessment](#)). Explore how God might be calling you use your gift to share about your faith.

My Spiritual Gift(s):

How have I used this gift?

How might God be calling me to use this gift?

Pray: Lord Jesus, I want to glorify you with my faithful commitment to make disciples. Help me remember that you are always present with me as I live out your commission. Amen.

Family Activity: How can your family find ways to share the continuous Good News that “Jesus is alive”? Gather together and invite each person to share how he or she experiences the joy and love of Jesus in their life. Ask, “How do you know Jesus loves you? Or “When do you feel the love of Jesus in your heart?” Write these thoughts down, then create a list of people who might need to experience the love of Jesus. Choose one or two ways to share Jesus’ love with others. You might share kind and encouraging words or bake cookies. Maybe you want to share a song or a Scripture passage. Celebrate and share the good news of Jesus’ love all year long!

Prayers for our Community:

- Prayers for the family of Nate Stupka (husband of Amy, father of Dylan and Nick, who both graduated from North Polk this spring), who died as a result of Covid this past week.
- Prayers for Gianni, Janel and Matteo Comito, on the death of Gianni’s mother’s Julie Accola who had been in hospice due to cancer.
- Prayers for Diane Hammond's sister-in-law Lisa who has Stage IV breast cancer, as she under goes testing for problems with her esophagus.
- Prayers for keeping anxiety low and for health of school staff and kiddos, especially in the school districts transitioning now or soon to all in person, and prayers for elementary teachers holding in person parent teacher conferences this week and next!
- Prayers for Rhonda George's niece & her fiancé who are quarantined with mild symptoms of Covid.
- Continued prayers for Thomas Webb's mother & Pastor Melody's mother-in-law, Mary Webb, who is recovering from spinal surgery and scheduled to go home from in-patient rehabilitation on Tuesday.
- Continued prayers for Christine Perry’s stepfather who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- Continued prayers for Justin Young whose grandparents are receiving hospice care.
- Continued prayers for Julie Caster's dad, Lyman Rule, whose is receiving cancer treatment.
- Continued prayers for Larry Conrad, former pastor of Polk City UMC, and father of David Conrad, who is receiving cancer treatment.