



Our faith is not just something we check in with on Sundays, our faith is how we live lives of meaning and purpose everyday, if we will learn to notice and respond to how God is moving. But this awareness, like anything worthwhile, takes practice. Which is why a weekly discipleship practice of Reading, Reflecting, and Responding to scripture in the context of community is so important. The following devotions have been written with this practice in mind. Use them with friends or family to help you deepen your experience of faith.

Week: Ordinary Time, Proper 14

Adult to Littles

Read: Psalm 57

Reflect: Even when life feels scary and overwhelming, David praises God. He asks God for help, and then he praises God's love and faithfulness. We, too, can be honest with God about what scares us or what kind of help we need. When we praise God, it brings God joy and it reminds us of God's goodness.

Respond: Help children write their own psalm of praise. You may want to start by asking them what is something they want to ask God for help with or something they are afraid of. Then give thanks for all the ways you both see God's love! If you made a gratitude list together two weeks ago, think back to the kinds of things you were thankful for and praise God for them. You may want to end the psalm like David: "Let your glory be over all the earth."

--Kristen Kludt

Adult to Middles (Elementary)

Read: Ephesians 4:1-16 (ESV)

Reflect: Unity in the Body of Christ is something many churches strive for. Everyone plays a vital role in the Church and including you! God's dream for the Church is that it is very diverse – in talents, race, backgrounds, age – in every way that you can imagine! But being a church made up of so many different people can be complicated. Which is why it is such an important goal. When we learn to walk in unity as a church community, we are an example to the world that it is possible to love and value each person no matter our differences. What happens when a group of friends or a team is not unified? How do you help restore unity in those situations? To learn to be a diverse Church, the full Body of Christ, we have to learn how to extend value and love to all of its members – even when we have disagreements and different experiences.

Respond: Put a puzzle together with a friend or your parent and talk about why each puzzle piece is important. What would the puzzle look like if you didn't have all the pieces? How is the church like a puzzle?

-Faith Brooks

Adult to Bigs (Youth)

Read: Psalm 111

Reflect: In verse ten we are told, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” When we respect God and scripture in a way that is humble, and willing to trust even when it extends beyond our own understanding, we begin to walk in wisdom. For as verse seven reminds us, all of God’s precepts are trustworthy. We can rest in the wisdom of the One who knows all and sees all. When we wonder, “What is wise?” we know we can seek the scriptures for answers. We don’t know if wisdom has an end but here we clearly see its beginning.

Respond: This psalm was written in an acrostic format, which means the first letter of each line, followed the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostic poems also may use the first letter of each line to spell out a message or a word. To respond to Psalm 111 take time to write an acrostic poem using the letters of your name to explain how you will delight and trust the Lord as life goes on. It doesn’t have to rhyme or be fancy, but simply written from the heart. For example, if your name is Tom:

Today is the day for praise and thanksgiving, for God’s reign is supreme and unending.

Oh, how my soul delights in knowing that I am loved by my creator.

May my life shine as one of compassion, justice, and love to reflect the God I love.

- Chara Donahue

Adult to Adult

Read: John 6:35-40

Reflect: In today’s Scriptures, we read Jesus’s conversation with some people who had sought him. They wanted a sign from Jesus so they could believe him. The people told Jesus that Moses fed their fathers bread from heaven while the Israelites were in the wilderness. Jesus humbly explained to the people that Moses didn’t give the Israelites bread from heaven but that it was God who gave them the true bread. Jesus further explained that it was he who came from Heaven and to give life to the world. The people asked Jesus to give them the bread. Jesus told them, “...I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”, (John 6:35). Jesus said that although the people saw him, they didn’t believe him, but that it was God’s will that everyone who saw the Son and believed on him would have everlasting life. As Christians, we have bread that will never run out nor ever grow stale – the love of God, the life of Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit. We never have to be spiritually empty or hungry, we can feast on that bread as often as we like. But what does that mean “feast on the bread” apart from the Eucharist?

Respond: Sometimes we are like the people in this story – we want proof of God’s presence in our lives, yet we are unwilling to open ourselves up to new ways of experiencing God. Recently Bishop Michael Curry laid out 7 practices to help us draw closer to God and to each other, they are Turn (repentance), Learn (study the life of Jesus), Go (be a part of bringing wholeness to the world), Bless (giving of ourselves to God and others), Worship (participating in a local church), Pray (spending time talking with and listening to God), and Rest (taking time to restore our body, mind and soul.) All of these options are ways in which we can feast on the Bread of Life. Which one will you choose to try this week?

- Aretha Grant

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