



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 15

Adult to Littles

Read: Psalm 111

Reflect: This Psalm invites us to notice and pay attention to God's good works in creation, and in our own lives. The Psalmist reminds us that God's work is full of majesty and splendor. We can often see the majesty in a vibrant sunset or in a mountain peak, but sometimes as parents it is easy to miss the splendor of our own children. When your eyes are tired and the floor is messy, it can be hard to appreciate the small hands that are learning how to hold a crayon or the little legs that are learning to stand and jump, and sometimes kick violently when it's time to get bucked into the car seat. What would it look like to give God thanks for what is right in front of us today?

Respond: Spend a few minutes sitting on the floor of your house (even if it is covered in Cheerios) or on the couch. Invite your child to sit next to you and ask them to help you notice and pay attention. Say, "What are three things we see right now that we can be thankful for?" You can do the same exercise while in the car. Or sitting outside. Welcome their responses and maybe share your own. Begin to see glimpses of God's majesty and splendor in your everyday mess and moment of your life.

- Michelle Acker Perez

Adult to Middles (Elementary)

Read: Psalm 111

Reflect: *Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart!... Great are the deeds of the Lord! They are studied by all who delight in them!* Have you ever given thanks for something with your WHOLE HEART? Do you remember? Can you tell the story? In the Bible we are taught that we should give thanks to God with our WHOLE HEART. But what do you think we should be giving thanks for? Do you know what it means when it says "Great are the deeds of the Lord"? The word "deed" in this sentence means "works" or "actions." *Great are the actions of the Lord.* The bible verse then goes on to talking about the people who study the actions, or the works of God are delighted – or filled with joy and happiness – because of what they see and learn. The bible is full of stories of God's actions, but that's not all - God is still at work in our lives. Do you want to some clues to help find God's actions? Whenever you see forgiveness God is there. Whenever you see someone showing love to someone hurting, God is at work. Whenever you enjoy the outdoors – a tree, the beach, a lake, a snowy day - you are enjoying God's work!

Respond: Together, go on a short scavenger hunt. Take a phone, a camera or sketch pad. Record 3 ways that you see God at work in the world around you – inside or outside, or even from your car! Later, take time to "study" these moments. What about them reminded you of God? Can you give thanks for them with your WHOLE HEART?

-Jerusalem Greer

Adult to Bigs (Youth)

Read: John 6:51-58

Reflect: Jesus wasn't a vampire but what was this strange talk about eating his flesh and drinking his blood? What does that have to do with following Jesus? With these words he was making a point: those who trust in him can know his love, experience security, and live like him, and Eucharist is that reminder. Here are three things you may be trying to understand in your own life: Love. Security. Image.

Love: We are tempted to find love everywhere: family, friends, relationships, food, video games, etc. The problem is, none of those things truly ever satisfy. They always fail us and ultimately leave us wanting for more. Jesus' perfect love fully satisfies. It was this love that led him to live and die. Also, we find the ability to love others – especially those who seem unlovable - because he first loved us.

Security: We all want to feel safe; it's one of our basic needs. Do you ever feel like a friendship you love is one bad conversation away from being over? Jesus invites us into a friendship that will never end. He doesn't expect you to be perfect, he wants you trust that he loves you and will never leave you. It is in Jesus you'll find real safety.

Image: Lastly, we are all concerned with *what* we look like but we should be focused on *who* we look like. Jesus has given you a great promise. He has sent the Holy Spirit to live inside each of us and to teach us how to follow Jesus' ways (John 14:15-17). The Holy Spirit helps us to look to Jesus as the one we should model, the only one truly worth emulating.

By telling us we should be eating his flesh and drinking his blood is Jesus telling us to take all of him in- his love, his presence, his actions. Think of your favorite meal, (maybe mac and cheese?) and how you can eat until you're about burst, Jesus wants us to feast on him the same way we would that good ol cheesy mac but know that he is the greater meal.

Respond:

As a family, make your favorite meal together! As you eat, pray with and for each other. Talk about the love of Jesus in your life and how you can help each other live more like him.

- CJ Quartlbaum

Adult to Adult

Read: Ephesians 5:15-20

Reflect: A bucket list is a list of things someone wants to experience before they die. Everything from traveling to an amazing destination to completing athletic feats to seeing a band in concert could be on a bucket list. The lists are supposed to function as inspiration to live your best life before the end comes for you - experience and do everything you can before your time runs out - because you never know when the clock will stop ticking. The author of Ephesians is clearly feeling some end times urgency as he writes to the church at Ephesus. Expecting the return of Jesus imminently, he is exhorting them to not waste one moment of the time given to them. *Time* in this reading is not merely a marking of the sun and moon rising and setting or the passage of seasons (chronos). *Time* here is *kairos* - sacred time. It is the Right Time - God's time - to choose a wiser way. As followers of Jesus, we have the opportunity to participate in the redemption and transformation of these days of evil by being filled with the Spirit. Rather than spending this time focused on the things the world values, this passage reminds us that when considering our bucket list we ought to start with the inspiration of the Spirit, rather than the inspiration of the world.

Respond: This week, set some time to consider your bucket list with the inspiration of the Spirit. Is there a spiritual practice you've always wanted to try? Are there acts of service that you've been meaning to incorporate into your monthly routine? Is there a justice issue that is important to you that you'd like to dedicate more time to? Write these down, and share them with someone you trust as you begin to make a plan to live your best life in the Spirit.

- Regina Heater

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