

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR TECH-FREE WEEK



"DISCONNECT
TO
CONNECT"

FEB 28 – MARCH 6

For Families, Individuals, or Zoom Groups

By Pastor Jeffrey Collins

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It has been the tradition of the church to use the season of Lent to deepen the experience of discipleship as we prepare our hearts to celebrate Easter. You might hear someone say that they are “giving something up” for Lent. The idea is to do without something that normally draws our time or attention and to give that time to focus on the Lord. This year we invite you to join us for a week when we put most of our technology aside in order to spend more time with the Lord and with loved ones. We recognize that in our technology-saturated society, we may not be able to do without *all* technology (for instance, you may need to use a computer at work, and may need a phone to stay in touch or even to do these devotions with a friend!), we can decide beforehand to unplug other devices which are only for entertainment or distraction (the TV, Streaming, Surfing the Net, Online shopping). While you may not be able to do it for a week, you may want to plan at least one day when you actually will do without all technology (take a walk, play a game with your family, tell stories, look at photo albums, plan an outing, plan an extended time alone with God...). March 5th is officially National Day of Unplugging in the U.S., but you could choose a day that is more convenient for you.

This daily devotional and prayer guide has been prepared as a resource to make your experience of “Tech-Free Week” more meaningful. It includes daily Scriptures, interactions and prayers which can be used alone, but are better shared with family or friends.

I hope you enjoy them!

Pastor Jeff Collins

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Read the following Scripture out loud and slowly enough to digest it:

Scripture: Psalm 63:1-5

You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Reading: After a full day of physically demanding activities, you return home to your family.

As you walk in the door you are greeted by your loved ones, but also by the savory aroma of your favorite food as it is being prepared. You deeply breathe in the delicious smell, which draws you into the kitchen. You can hardly wait to sit down for dinner because you are thinking about how good it smells and how wonderful it has tasted the last time you ate it. If you were hungry before, you are *really* hungry now!

Just as hunger draws us to food, spiritual hunger draws us to the Lord. But we do not take the time to feast on His presence often enough. With so many distractions and deadlines and pressures in life, we rarely take time to meditate on God's Word or linger in His presence.

God's invitation stands to "Taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8a). This week put aside some of the technology that eats up your time and instead allow yourself to breathe in the "aroma" of the Lord and bask in His love for you.

Take a moment right now to think about times when you have really felt close to God's presence and blessing. What was the setting? Who were you with? Were you alone? What made that experience special? (If you are with others, you might share about some of those experiences with one another).

Now, slowly re-read the above Scripture from Psalm 63.

Closing Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank You for reminding me of what my soul hungers for. Thank you that you satisfy my soul like cool water on a hot, muggy day or fine foods when I hunger. Help me to make time daily to be in Your presence, listening to Your voice as I read Your Word and walking with You through prayer. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

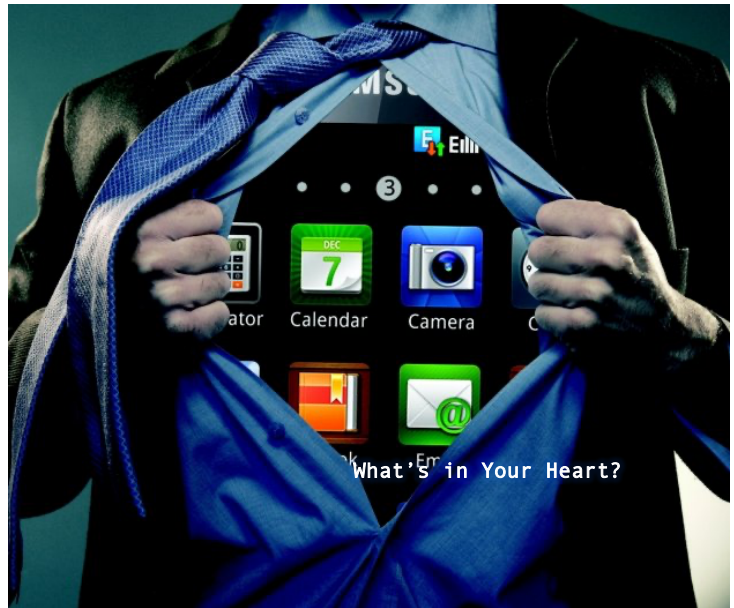
Monday, March 1, 2021

Read the following Scripture out loud and slowly enough to digest it:

Scripture: Mark 12:30

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

The goal of Jesus’ ministry, death and resurrection was to restore us to a right relationship with God. Jesus said that loving God is the greatest commandment.



So let's take a moment to think about what this Scripture is really saying:

- What does it mean to love God with all of your heart? What would it imply if you were to say this to another person? To love someone “with all your heart” generally means that your emotions are devoted to that person. You feel wonderful about that person and when you are with them you are happy. You long to spend time with them. You gladly give anything for them. So how are you loving God with all your heart?
- What does it mean to love someone with all your soul? If you have a soul-mate you know that is someone that you just connect with and value and love. You are often together and think in the same ways, and like the same things. So, how is Jesus your soul-mate?
- Some people think that those who believe in God check their intellect at the door, but many of the greatest minds in every field of study are devoted to the Lord. They dig deeper in their field because they know that the truth always leads them to the presence and power of the Lord. The apostle Paul tells us to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor.10:5). In other words, to fully use our minds to love God. In what ways can you use your mind to love the Lord?
- What do you give your greatest efforts to doing? Is it your studies? Your job? Pleasing your spouse? Working out at the gym? Building something? In what ways do your efforts reflect how you love the Lord with all your strength?

Closing Prayer: *Dear, Dear Lord, I don't want to be that person who **says** that they love You, but is really all talk and no action. Show me how I can better love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Help me to live that out in my daily life. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Read the following Scripture out loud and slowly enough to digest it:

Scripture: John 13:34-35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus was the ultimate example of love. He gave Himself up for the sake of those He loved (us!). In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul gives a description of the characteristics of love. Let's take a moment to consider how we might better live out each of these characteristics in our own lives. As you think or talk about each element, come up with ideas of how to express them in real actions toward people you actually know and love. Here we go!

- Love is patient... "I really need to be more patient when... _____"
- Love is kind... "One way I can show kindness is... _____"
- Love does not envy... "I tend to be envious of... _____"
In what way does my envy of others reflect ingratitude for what God has given me?

- Love does not boast... "I find myself 'tooting my own horn' when... _____"
How does my boasting make other people feel about themselves? _____
- Love does not dishonor others... "One way I can honor someone is... _____"
- Love is not self-seeking... "I need to put others first by... _____"
- Love is not easily angered... "When I feel myself getting angry, I will try to be more loving by... _____"
- Love keeps no record of wrongs... "I have been holding a grudge about... _____"
"I will seek to work things out concerning this by... _____"
- Love does not delight in evil... "I have found myself rejoicing in the wrong things when... _____"
- Love rejoices with the truth... "This is how I will avoid gossip, lies, false news, etc... _____"
- Love always protects... "This is how I can protect others in love... _____"
- Love always trusts... "I need to be more trusting of... _____"
- Love always hopes... "I will hope for the best for (person or situation?) _____"
- Love always perseveres... "I won't give up on... _____ even when they have failed to live up to my expectations."
- I will apply these characteristics of love on social media by... _____
- I will take the following concrete action to be more loving... _____

Reread today's Scripture and 1 Corinthians 13 before closing in prayer.

Closing Prayer: *Lord, help me to be more loving of others. Help me to love them as You have loved me – even when I didn't deserve it. Use me to bless others with Your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Read the following Scripture out loud and slowly enough to digest it:

Scripture: Matthew 16:24-27

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done."

What does it mean for you to "take up your cross" or "lose your life" to follow Jesus?

Are there areas of your life that you have yet to bring under the Lordship of Christ?

List them: _____

What would it look like for you to trust Jesus with these things? _____

In Galatians 2:19-21 Paul says "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.* The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (italics mine).

In what ways is this attitude reflected in your own life? What are some ways that you need to take a greater hold on this in your life?

Describe what the life of a person living today would look like if they were completely surrendered to Jesus in all things: _____

Reread today's Scripture before closing in prayer.

Closing Prayer: *Lord Jesus, You gave Yourself up for me, becoming obedient even to death on a cross. Show me how to give myself up for You and for others that I might follow You fully in all that I say and do. Amen.*



Thursday, March 4, 2021

Read the following Scripture out loud, and slowly enough to really hear it:

Scripture: Luke 6:27-36

²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Most of us would claim that we don't have any enemies. That's probably not true. Let's broaden the concept a bit... How do you treat people who don't agree with you, or don't share your view on current issues or politics? How would people with a different world view from yours interpret the things that you post on social media? If others belittle or mock things that you hold dear, do you belittle and mock in return? Or, are you gracious and loving to these 'enemies'? Do you continue to love those who constantly oppose you, or do you 'write them off,' having nothing more to do with them? If they 'slap' you with their comments, do you offer the other cheek or slap them back? Today, find a way to love your 'enemies' and do good to them.



These are some ways I can (and will) love my enemies: _____

Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Mt.5:9)

Reread today's Scripture before closing in prayer.

Closing Prayer: *Lord, help me to be a peacemaker. Help me to overcome my pride so that I can love and serve those who don't love me. Help me to forgive others freely, just as You have forgiven me. Help me to let go of resentments and grudges and anger and rage and malice. I can't do it alone. But with Your Spirit I can overcome. Help me, in Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Friday, March 5, 2021

Read the following Scripture out loud and slowly enough to digest it:

Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Known as The Great Commission, Jesus said this to the Eleven apostles who had gathered and were waiting for Him in Galilee. We receive this as a commission for all of us who are Jesus' disciples because He said to "Obey everything I have commanded You"... and Jesus had just commanded them to make disciples, so this must also be something that we obey as disciples... But do we? Is this a priority for us?

- As you think about your own life, how high would you rank "making disciples" among your plans and goals for the last month? _____ for next month? _____
- In what ways have you been involved in making disciples (check one):
 - I Support an evangelistic ministry... ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - I talk to others about my faith ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - I give out evangelistic materials ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - I serve/help others so they can see Christ ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - I study to prepare myself to share my faith... ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - I "share" good sermons with others ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - I invite people to church ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - Other (be creative) _____ ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - Other _____ ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
 - Other _____ ☐regularly ☐sometimes ☐never
- What is one thing you could do to help you be more effective in making disciples?

- What is one thing your church could do to help you be more effective in making disciples? _____ (please let us know!)

Closing Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, You gave **everything** to make it possible for people to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You left the glory and comfort of Heaven and humbly came to earth as a carpenter and teacher. You gave Your very life as a sacrifice so that others (like me) could be forgiven and redeemed. Now You call me to do Your work in the world and to continue to make disciples. Lord, I don't know that I'm up to it. I'm not very good at it. But I trust in You. I know that You never call us to do anything without equipping us for the work. So I will make disciples. I will go into all my world and share the good news of salvation. I will make it a priority in my life. I will consciously work toward it. I will look forward to sharing in the joy that all of Heaven experiences when one sinner repents. And I thank You for allowing me to take part in this sacred work. Amen.*

Saturday, March 6, 2021

(Re)-Read the following Scripture out loud and slowly enough to digest it:

Scripture: Psalm 63:1-5 (It's worth reading again!)

You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,

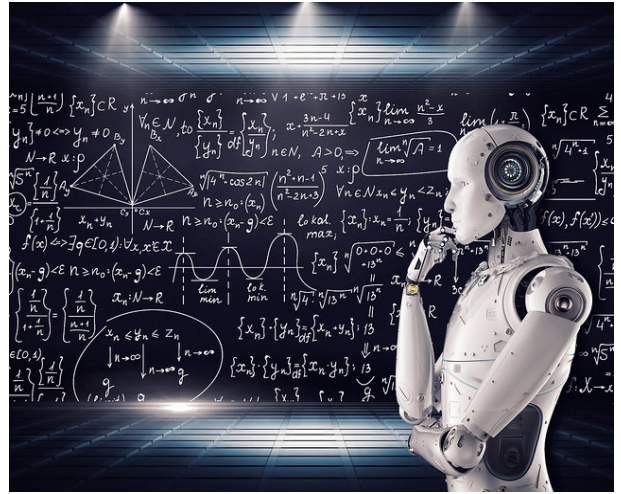
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.



Let's play a game! It's sort of like "Simon Says," but instead of doing what the leader does, you do the hand actions that you might do in each situation:

1. You see a dear friend or family member whom you have not seen in a long time and you were not expecting to run into. As they move toward you, you want to hug them. How would you put your hands to greet this loved one as they approach? What would your facial expression be? (Do it!)... (No, really! Do it... even if you are alone!)
2. You are with a group of friends and you're all really into the game. Your team just scored an amazing touch-down. How do you react? What do you do with your hands?
3. You are at a great seminar and the speaker says, "Who would like to receive this free gift?" You really want what they are offering. How will you let the speaker know?
4. You are walking down the street and hear a voice over a loudspeaker saying "This is the police. Put your hands in the air." What do you do? (Do it!)
5. You want to let someone who is looking for you know "Here I am!" How do you show that with your hands?
6. You just had a scrumptious meal and you want to let your host know "Oh, that was so good!" How might you use your hands to express this?
7. Now go back through numbers 1-6 and consider (or talk about) what these same hand gestures might express in a worship setting. If you are in a group, have each member share about a different number response.
8. Now reread Psalm 63:1-5 slowly out loud and use your hands to respond in worship as the Psalm is read. If you are with others, have one person read it out loud and the others close their eyes and respond with hand motions).
9. Tomorrow in worship, attempt to use your hands to express your love, devotion, surrender and hunger for God.

"Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing." (1Tim.2:8)

Closing Prayer: Lord, God, You are my God. Because I have experienced Your love and Your joy, I hunger for more and more. I long to be in Your presence. I search for You and will seek to continually grow closer to You. Make me more like You. Let Your light shine in me and through me to others, that Your light may bring them out of darkness and that the aroma of Christ in me may draw others to the feast of Your love and peace.