

#InstagramJesus

Weekly Devotional

A ministry of Chapel Hill
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WEEK 7

This daily devotional pairs with Mark 1:29-39 and the sermon preached February 16-17



Written by Serena Blair

Worship leader at Chapel Hill. Jesus is the King of my heart. I love being John's wife, proud to get the title "Mama" to twin girls, and have been a hairdresser my entire adult life. I have a passion to live out my faith and not hoard it. I love God's Word. It is the plumb bob, the vertical reference line written straight from the loving heart of Father God to our hearts and the depth of our souls. For fun: I love family, people, yummy coffee, vacation, fashion (yes!), and all things salty.

LifeGroup Guide

Reflect

How has Jesus been challenging you this week? Where have you experienced transformation?

Story

Mark 1:29-39

Head

Jesus helps people in many different ways and contexts in these verses. List out all the different groups and individuals he helps and how he helps them. Notice Jesus' intentionality in who, how, and when he helps people.

What is the significance of Galilee, the geographic location of this passage?

How is Jesus physically, emotionally, and spiritually squeezed by the demands of people in these stories?

Heart

What practices do you have that help you do more than survive the demands of life? Is prayer one of them? Jesus helps a lot of different people, works long and hard hours, but doesn't seem to be swayed by others' expectations of him. He has a clear, confident sense of purpose and direction. How is this passage challenging you to do the same?

What is your biggest challenge: to have faith God can and does heal, or to have faith in the God who is able to heal even when he does not?

Do you live life with a holy urgency? Do you look for kingdom-purposed moments in your everyday life?

Hands

Simon's mother-in-law responded to being healed by Christ by serving. Where are you serving right now? How are you giving back in response to what Christ has done for you?

Prayer

DAY 1

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:29-31

Ask

Do I need faith to be healed? What if my faith is weak or non-existent? What if I fluctuate between faith and doubt? Can I still be healed? Is it God's will to heal me?

Reflect

I lead a LifeGroup of leigh-11-year-old girls. This year I decided to ask them what questions they have for God. I wanted to hear from them what subjects they wanted to cover over the next nine months. The questions were, and are, amazing! We are still trucking through them. One was this: *How do you deal with disabilities in people even if you pray?*

When someone is sick or handicapped or disabled, it's hard to see God in it, isn't it? In our LifeGroup, we started exploring this issue by looking in Genesis at God's good creation and considering the impact of the fall. As we considered the overarching story of Scripture, we spent time dwelling on the character of God—a God that wants the very best for us and will use everything in this broken world to his glory.

Ultimately, we have to decide if we believe he is not only able, but also willing to heal. Faith has an important place in both healing itself (see James 5:15, Matt. 9:2, Mark 11:22-24, Acts 14:8-10) and trusting in the one who heals. We can remember that, whatever the outcome of our prayers for healing, Jesus bore all of our sickness, shame, illnesses, and sin on the cross. Sickness and disease was never his plan, but he still came up with the one and only solution: Jesus. As we wrestle with the question of whether God is willing to heal, it helps me to consider the character of God. When he heals, it is because he is gracious, compassionate, and willing to minister to the children he loves. If he doesn't heal, he is still all of these things.

There aren't easy answers to the problem of suffering. As you read and reflect on today's passage, let me encourage you to bring your honest questions, your doubts, your suffering, and the suffering of others to the one who is always good and always present in our suffering. Consider prayerfully what your biggest challenge is: to have faith God can and does heal, or to have faith in the God who is able to heal even when he does not?

In this passage of Scripture Mark 1:29-31, we see a loving Father that listened to the faith-filled plea of his friends and privately healed someone in a humble setting. No crowds were necessary to prove who he was; just a woman that was sick...and a Savior that took her hand. Beautiful.

DAY 2

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:30; Matt 6:33

Ask

Do we immediately take our requests to Jesus?

Reflect

Have you found yourself in a moment where you should be at Jesus' feet but instead you have taken your thoughts, feelings, and emotions and placed them on a friend? Or maybe you look to your friends for distraction from what's really going on for you emotionally?

I can think of many times where this has been true in my life. It's like a default mode that takes me to a hiding place known as "smile and wave." Ha, ha. Underneath the surface is true need, deep longings, prayers that need to be spoken out loud, and rest for my soul that I withhold from myself because I don't want to bring it to Jesus. Somehow, I lack trust.

In this story, Mark says Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a fever; immediately the disciples spoke to Jesus about her. There was no time between their knowledge of the fever and their petition to Jesus. They clearly knew who Jesus was and had deep faith that He could do something about it. How often do we respond with urgency and call on the name of Jesus?

When my twin daughters were born, I hired a nanny to come once in a while and help. Audrey and Estée were four weeks old. I had gone out for a quick walk and when I returned I went over and picked up Estée out of the baby swing. The motion of picking her up made her choke on her saliva. She stopped breathing and began turning a shade of blue as she struggled to get oxygen. My heart stopped. I placed her on her tummy in my arm and began carefully tapping on her back. I finally looked at my nanny and said "What do I do?" She said, "Call 911." I will never forget this moment. With a fierce full-body sweat, I threw the door open to paramedics. All in all, Estée breathed and everything ended up fine. What is so sad is that I didn't immediately call on Jesus. Why? I can only surmise that I hadn't practiced it. I hadn't flexed that muscle of taking everything immediately to Jesus.

Do we practice taking everything to Jesus first? Everything? When someone asks for prayer do we say, "Can I pray for you right now?" Or do we say "Sure," and forget moments later? This is a muscle that has to be flexed, trained, and worked out. We have to practice going to Jesus first. These disciples in Mark 1 knew who Jesus was and what he could do. Do you?

DAY 3

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:31, Revelation 2:3-7

Ask

What is our response to Jesus? Simon's mother-in-law's reaction to being healed by Christ was to serve. Where are you serving right now? How are you giving back in response to what Christ has done for you?

Reflect

I have never been sick—I mean really sick. But I definitely have had doubt. I've never doubted God's ability, but I have definitely doubted his will. I wonder why I have doubt? Is it out of holy fear or reverence for the Living God? Or is it because of familiarity? Two stories that have helped me to reflect on this are found in Luke 7 and Mark 6.

Luke 7 is about a Centurion, a Roman high-ranking officer. He had a servant he highly regarded who was sick and about to die. He asked that Jesus say the word and his servant would be healed. Somehow this Gentile soldier knew and had faith that if this Jewish Rabbi said his servant was healed, he would in fact be healed. "Say the word and it will be done." The faith this Centurion had actually caused Jesus to marvel. Jesus turned and said to the crowd, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

In Mark 6, Jesus goes to his hometown Nazareth and teaches in the synagogue. The listeners were astonished, saying, "what is this wisdom given to him...? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary...?" He offended them. Dropping down to verse 6, it says Jesus marveled at their unbelief.

Two stories, one with a Gentile and one with his very own people who should have known him. Jesus, the Omniscient God who knows each and every one of us, who was present at Creation, who is King and reigns forevermore—"marveled"!

I wonder if my doubt lies in familiarity. Am I so familiar with Jesus I have forgotten how to be amazed? Jesus has authority over *the whole earth*. Familiarity can breed spectacular unbelief. Mark 6 says Jesus could do no miracles in his hometown because of their unbelief. In these stories, faith either hindered or allowed Jesus to do miracles. Wow.

Simon's mother-in-law reached out and took the hand of the Living God. She swung her feet over the side of the bed, stood up, and proceeded to serve him and his friends. She could have said "Thank you, I'm going to rest a bit because I think I'm weak from this fever—food's in the kitchen." No, she took his hand and got up. My encouragement today: reach out and take the hand of God, get up, marvel at him! Remember your First Love and have faith!

DAY 4

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:32-34, John 16 and 17

Ask

Do I live my life with a holy urgency? Do I look for kingdom purposed moments in my everyday life?

Reflect

Many years ago I heard a woman's testimony. She stepped up to the microphone and kicked off with this: "Six months ago I was given seven-to-eight months to live. You see, I have cancer and I'm going to die." This naturally piqued every ear in the church. She talked about getting that life/death sentence. She first assessed everything in her life and immediately the things she was expending time on that had no kingdom purpose were tossed out. She took stock of her heart and the message of the hope of the Gospel. She committed to being obedient to anything Jesus called her to. She spoke every word with urgency wanting every minute to count. She considered her life/death sentence a gift because she felt that her last six months had brought her so close to the Father and had been more meaningful than the sum of all her years.

In every account of Jesus' ministry there is an underlying urgency. He knew His time on earth was limited. If you study the accounts of Jesus ministry in the Gospels you will notice that Jesus never wasted time, He was always about kingdom purposes whether He was teaching, healing, listening, praying, or asking questions and more. This is just what we find him doing in today's passage.

John 16 is Jesus' final teaching before his arrest and trial. In 16:4 it says ..."all these things I have spoken to you so that when the hour comes, you may remember **all** that I told you of them." (emphasis mine)

I have experienced loss many times in my life. One person sticks out in my mind more than the rest. He died recently. In his last week of life, he was able to meet with all of his loved ones. He imparted wisdom to them and reminded them of the good things of Jesus. He also was honest with them, in love. He told them what was affecting their witness in the way they were choosing to live or speak. In a way, there is the same tension in John 16 and 17. Jesus gave his disciples all they could handle in this passage.

Today, take stock of your life. What is your normal pattern of life? Is it getting up, going to the gym, then work, then sports (with your kids), or music, then dinner? Ask Jesus where in all the areas of your life you can be kingdom-purposed. How in "your going" you can make disciples? Do you ever feel a holy urgency? How does that look for you?

DAY 5

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:35, John 17

Ask

What's my prayer life look like, really?

Reflect

Can I be honest? This is the one area in which I have always wanted to grow. Prayer. Prayer is foundational. I have more books on prayer than any other. It's like I think I can master it or something. If I just get one more book, I will be a prayer warrior!

One author talks about prayer this way: it is the chief service of a life in God's plan. In all other service we are constantly limited by space, bodily strength, equipment, material obstacles, difficulties involved in peculiar differences of personality. Prayer knows no limitations. In every battle the real victory is won in secret, beforehand, by prayer. Prayer is striking the winning blow at the concealed enemy.

I love the picture of Jesus going to a solitary place. Jesus somehow made more time for prayer and less time for sleep. Remember he had just been up all night healing with the entire town at his doorstep. Jesus didn't need to pray because he was weak. He prayed because he was strong, and the source of his strength was his relationship with God his Father. Jesus knew that pressure and busy-ness should drive us towards prayer and not from it. Convicting? I should say!

Jesus knew the importance of solitary time with God. The great British Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "Woe to the man whose devotion is observed by everybody, and who never offers a secret supplication. Secret prayer is the secret of prayer, the strength of prayer. If you do not pray alone, you do not pray at all. Your heart must speak to God in secret."

When I am alone with God I am far more apt to be honest. When I'm alone I am far more apt to hear Him. I mentioned all of my books and while I have learned about prayer, the truth lies in my daily habits and time that I choose to protect to be with Jesus. Do I choose to have protected time with my husband and family? Date nights and alone time with my girls? Absolutely. Making a habit of prayer and listening to Jesus takes the same effort.

How's your prayer life really? How can you protect a time of prayer with God alone and not let anything else get in the way?

Read John 17 for a model of prayer: Jesus pours out his heart to his Father. Agape love is dripping from this chapter. Oh, how he loves us.

DAY 6

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:36-37, Jeremiah 29:13

Ask

Do we seek Jesus?

Reflect

Have you ever seen the movie, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* based on famed Christian author C.S. Lewis' book? In short, this movie is about the Pevensie children who enter Narnia through a wardrobe. In Narnia, they meet up with a Beaver family who reveal that Aslan the Lion is the true king of Narnia and the children are the chosen ones to help end the tyrannical rule of the White Witch. At the mention of Aslan's name, the kids react suddenly and powerfully, even though they have no factual or emotional understanding of him at this point. They begin their journey to find Aslan. He finds them and they love him instantly.

The Pevensie children realize the darkness of the world around them. They set out to find Aslan and instead he finds them. This story is told over and over again by people who have longed for truth in a dark world. They have sought Jesus, even at the mention of his name and found him. Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with me. This Scripture is so often applied to someone who doesn't know Jesus yet, but can be true in the everyday life of a believer. I believe Jesus is always present even when so many things vie for our attention. So many distractions.

The kids in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* could have entered Narnia and simply had a snow ball fight, they could have ignored the revelations they heard about the evil White Witch and gone about their own business choosing ignorance, choosing to not believe. In our lives, we can do the same thing. We can ignore or distract ourselves from the spiritual battle that is going on 24/7. Instead we must fix our eyes on Jesus, and focus on seeking him. If we seek to know him more fully through prayer, his Word, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then the things that burden his heart will burden ours.

In Mark 1:37, Simon and those who were with him told Jesus, "Everyone is looking for you". This is true in so many ways. Everyone is searching for ways to happiness and trying to fill the deep longings in their lives. Relationships and money, greed, and position. But when we find Jesus, the search will be over. How are you seeking Jesus in your everyday life?

DAY 7

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:38-39

Ask

Does the geographic location in the Bible matter?

Reflect

So what is the significance of Galilee anyway? If you are anything like me, you love maps and ancient history.

Galilee is like a county or province, and many cities are a part of it. In the time of Jesus, all of Palestine was divided into three provinces: Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Galilee was the scene of the greater parts of Jesus' private life and his public ministry. The first three Gospels spend ample time in Galilee.

This region shows up a lot in the Old Testament as well. It was located in Canaan. It was the area Solomon gave to Hiram, king of Tyre, as payment for timber from Lebanon to Jerusalem (Joshua 20:7; 1 Kings 9:11). It is also where the greatest prophet Elijah was from. We get scenes of Mount Carmel in the famous story of the showdown between Elijah and King Ahab in 1 Kings 18. We see the ancient territories of Issachar, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali, (Joshua 19) all located in what we know as Galilee. The river Jordan located in this region is famous on so many levels. This was where the second generation of the children of Israel crossed into the Promised Land and where John the Baptist camped out in his ministry. This is where Jesus was baptized.

The Sea of Galilee (also known as the Sea of Chinneroth in the Old Testament) shows up first in Numbers 34. This place on the map holds so much importance. The Sea of Galilee is where Jesus calls several disciples to become fishers of men, including Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Jesus also called Matthew the tax collector from Capernaum located on the northwest coast of the sea. The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would come from the region of Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2,6). Let me challenge you to consider the significance of this place.

When you come to geographic locations in your Bible, do you try to pronounce them and give up, blow past them altogether, or do you mark them? I put double green lines under every city, town, and region, and blue lines under water, like the Jordan River. When you study the Bible this way, you can find a place and discover you have been there before. In Mark 1:38-39; Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." And he went into their synagogues throughout all of Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.