

Using the Devotional

Each week is designed to help you focus on the 7 final statements of Jesus on the cross. For seven weeks starting on February 12th, you will have a daily devotional and exercise that will take you through a variety of spiritual disciplines to help you grow spiritually. Here is what your week will look like:

Monday - Main devotional

Tuesday - Reading and
Listening. (Lectio Divina)

Wednesday - Question /
Reflection / Application.

Thursday - Devotional
Prayer guide.

Friday - Reading and
Listening. (Lectio Divina)

Saturday - Question /
Reflection / Application.

Sunday - Guided Journaling
and worship in community

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina is a way of studying and praying the Scriptures so that the Word of God may penetrate the heart and lead to acquiring God's perspective and love for the world. Through Lectio Divina, a person gradually lets go of their own agenda and becomes open to what God is communicating to them. Developed in the 12th century by Guigo, a Carthusian monk, Lectio Divina, a Latin term meaning "divine reading", consists of four steps.

The **first stage** is lectio (reading). One reads a passage in the Word of God in an unhurried manner several times to become familiar with it. Any text of Scripture may be used, but it should not be too long. (Bible reading plans with a daily set of passages for a year, while worthwhile in themselves, work against this approach.)

In the **second stage**, meditatio (reflection), one ponders the text and thinks about how to apply it to one's life.

The **third stage**, oratio (response), involves responding to the Holy Spirit, inspired by one's reflection on God's Word. Here one speaks to God from the heart – acknowledging woundedness, asking for forgiveness, giving thanks, praising God, rejoicing, and so on.

During the **final stage**, contemplatio (rest), one rests in silence and solitude. It means listening to God by opening one's heart and soul, and letting go of one's own ideas, plans, and meditations.

Week 1: "Forgiveness"

February 12-17

Monday – February 12

Forgiveness

Individual Reflection

Prayer of Preparation

Heavenly Father,

I offer you my life today. Help me to slow down and listen to You. Please speak into my very being whatever you want me to hear today and transform me more into your likeness from our time spent together. Help me to be obedient to follow through with whatever you ask of me.

Amen.

Statement from the Cross #1

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34

Thoughts of a Fellow Sojourner

Sin repels and pushes away. Forgiveness attracts and gathers. Sin destroys. It is a disease that brings death to all. Forgiveness heals and brings new life; eternal life. When Jesus said from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" he was stating the only cure for our disease of sin. It is the antithesis of sin and what reconciles back to him the things that he loves the most: us.

Sin is what caused Jesus to die alone. The soldiers mocked Jesus while he was hanging on the cross, suffering. There was no compassion in them, no love, no mercy for the One who claimed to be God. There was a crowd standing at a distance from the cross. Some in the crowd came to see if Jesus would save himself from death. Others were more sympathetic toward him, but confused as to why the Messiah had to die. They all stood at a distance and watched as Jesus slowly died. They were either too afraid or too helpless to do anything to help him. One of the criminals jeered and challenged Jesus to save himself. Everyone was at a distance from Jesus due to their sin and Jesus died alone.

After Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem just a week earlier we see the very reason he went to the cross. He looked over the ones who had shunned him and pushed him away and he says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." In their sin they rebuffed, shunned and pushed away all attempts by God to reconcile them back to him. But God did not

give up. He goes all the way to the cross so that sin is conquered and reconciliation with God is made possible.

Forgiveness is the reason Jesus came and the reason Jesus died. He did not simply die to wash away sin, but rather he died to reconcile the whole world back to him through forgiveness. Each one of us must make a decision in our own hearts about Jesus. Do we accept his forgiveness and be reconciled to the God who loves us enough to die for us? Or, do we stay in our sin and continue to push him away? Forgiveness attracts and gathers. Sin repels and pushes away. Which do you choose today?

Moment of Reflection

Take some time in silence for reflection, meditation, or simply to listen to what God wants to speak into you.

Written Response

Close your time by writing to God a response or plan for application.

Prayer of Consummation

Lord Jesus,

We are an undeserving people, yet in and through Your blood there is forgiveness;

Thank you Jesus for your unending mercy and grace exemplified on the cross.

Teach us how to forgive as you forgive;

Lead us where to forgive as you forgive;

Open our eyes to whom we must ask forgiveness;

Amen.

Tuesday – February 13

Forgiveness

Individual Reflection

Lectio Divina: (**Lectio Divina** is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word.)

Read Luke 23:32-34 slowly a few times (Lectio)

*³² Two other men were also led out with Jesus to be killed. Both of them had broken the law.³³ The soldiers brought them to the place called The Skull. There they nailed Jesus to the cross. He hung between the two criminals. One was on his right and one was on his left.³⁴ **Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."** The soldiers divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵ The people stood there watching. The rulers even made fun of Jesus. They said, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." ³⁶ The soldiers also came up and poked fun at him. They offered him wine vinegar. ³⁷ They said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." ³⁸ A written sign had been placed above him. It read, this is the king of the jews. ³⁹ One of the criminals hanging there made fun of Jesus. He said, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself! Save us!"*

Ponder the Text (Meditate)

Why was Jesus so forgiving of those who mocked and jeered him?

Why did Jesus go to the cross?

Why did he not save himself from pain, suffering and death?

Speak to God (Oratio: "plead; pray")

God, I understand that you went to the cross for my sins!

God, I understand that it was also my hands that nailed you to the cross!

God, I am no better than the criminals hanging next to Jesus!

God, my sins have "mocked" you in my rebellion against you!

But, God I know you love me!

God, I know you died in order to wash away my sins!

God, I feel your forgiveness in my heart and soul

And joy is now my life with you!

God, Thank you!

Find a quiet place (Contemplate)

My soul finds its rest in you, Lord

My soul finds its peace in you, Lord

My soul is restored because of you, Lord

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Wednesday – February 14

Forgiveness

Individual Reflection

Intro:

As Christians we can internalize a lot. As a result we decided it would be best to give you some application ideas to get you "out" and practicing the qualities of "Seven." The first quality is forgiveness and here is something you could do for Day 1.

Items needed:

2 Chairs

Directions:

Place the two empty chairs across from each other as if you were going to have a conversation with someone. Now sit in one of the chairs. Take a good look at the empty one, picture Jesus sitting there ready to talk with you. He has a smile on face and his eyes are gentle and full of warmth. You can tell he wants to be there, he wants to listen to you. Talk to him about the area(s) where you need to find forgiveness in your life. Think through the following stages:

Do I need to forgive myself for something?

Do I need God to forgive me for something?

Do I need to ask forgiveness from someone I have hurt?

Do I need to forgive someone for something?

Talk to Jesus. He is right across the table from you. Share your thoughts with him, he'll listen. Take as long as you need break it down for him, leave nothing unsaid.

Thursday – February 15

Forgiveness

Individual Prayer Guide

Luke 23:34 - *"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.' And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice."*

In this verse from Luke, Jesus is dying and he is still unconcerned about himself. He is more concerned about the world getting one last chance to hear about forgiveness. He knows he is innocent, he knows he doesn't belong on the cross, but in the moment none of that matter to him. The same thing mattered to him that had always mattered to him: Forgiveness. Christians say that we offer the world the same thing that Jesus did. However I bet if we asked the world what they thought we offered them, it wouldn't be anywhere close to what Jesus offered them. With some of his last breathes Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of others.

What areas of your life do you need to experience forgiveness in? Maybe you need to forgive yourself for choices from the past? Maybe you need to ask God to forgive you of some sin that pervades your life? Maybe you need to forgive someone who has sinned against you. Whatever the case forgiveness was something that Jesus so believed in, that he used some his final breathes to plead for it. Something that important to Jesus is worth having in our own lives.

Prayer:

As seen from the excerpt above forgiveness affects three main areas of our life: our relationship with self, relationship with God, and relationship with others. In order to experience the true power of forgiveness in our life we have to experience it all three areas. The following prayer formula is one way to do that.

Sit in silence for a couples minutes. Really focus on engaging God. Thats what prayer is for, engaging God.

Acknowledge God's presence. Thank him for taking an interest in your life.

Ask him to forgive your sins and to bring to light anything that maybe keeping you from knowing him on the most intimate levels

Ask him to help you embrace that forgiveness in your life. Part of learning to embrace God's forgiveness is being able to forgive yourself.

Ask him to enlighten some area's in your life where you may need to extend grace and forgiveness to the people you interact with. This can include but is not limited to family, friends, co-workers, roommates, or neighbors.

Thank God for his forgiveness and his heart for others. Ask him to do the same in you and in the other people around you.

Sit in silence for a minute, then move forward again with the rest of your day.

Friday – February 16

Forgiveness

Individual Reflection

Lectio Divina: (**Lectio Divina** is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word.)

Read Ephesians 1:7-8 slowly a few times (Lectio)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ponder the text (Meditatio).

What does it mean in my life?

What emotions does this truth stir up in me?

How am I forgiven?

How can I live knowing my sins are washed away?

Speak to God (Oratio)

I recognize that my sins have offended you Lord and hurt others

I acknowledge that my sins have caused broken relationships

I have tried to be a "good" person, but come up short

I am deeply grateful that your Blood has cleansed me of all my sins

Thank you, Lord, for my new life in you

Find a quiet place (Contemplatio)

Be still and listen for God's voice

What is He saying to me about forgiveness?

What is He saying to me about my new life in Him?

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Saturday – February 17

Forgiveness

Individual Reflection

Intro:

In the spirit of "go" today's application is simple. We all have people in our life that we either need to seek forgiveness from or whom we need to offer forgiveness. Today's exercise is simple, "Go find it."

Items needed:

People who you need to offer forgiveness to or the people you need to seek forgiveness from.

Directions:

Make a list of the people in your life that you either need to ask forgiveness from or those you need to forgive.

Then, either go see them or contact them and seek reconciliation.