



Individual Devotional Study Guides Week #4

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 let's 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 4: "Sacrifice" March 5-10

Monday – March 5

Sacrifice

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 #4

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Matthew 27:46

Thoughts of a Fellow Sojourner

Have you ever met someone who was separated from their father? This is an all too common occurrence in our world. Everywhere we look, we see the articles, the books, the quotes about how not having a father figure is detrimental to any child. Gender has no bearing on it. Age has no bearing on it. If the father figure is absent in the life of their child for any reason, it has a negative impact on the life of that child. Even adults remember the scares their fathers have left on them, and often times these scars become huge motivations in future endeavors, the impact is far greater than anyone ever seems to think it will be.

Even if only for a few hours, this is pain that Jesus felt on the cross that day. Jesus was the son of God. The only man who ever lived a life that had no blemishes even in his relationship with his father. Yet, in one intense moment, he was nailed to a cross, slowly dying of dehydration, exhaustion, and suffocation. Even with all of his emotional and physical pain, nothing caused him to shout out, until the moment he was separated from God, his father. Imagine living your entire life knowing this moment would come. Knowing that not only would you eventually die, but that you would be separated from the person that meant the most to you. There is nothing you could do to control the situation, it had to be this way. You had to suffer so that others would never have too. You had to suffer so that others could share in the life you have. Jesus knew this was coming. Every day he walked this earth, every sermon he preached, every miracle he performed, and every interaction he had, he knew would all culminate at this point. Everything he did was for this moment. The pain he endured was more than whips, it was more than nails, it was more than thorns, it was separation from his loving Father. In this moment on the cross, Jesus lost his greatest encourager, his greatest support, his greatest source of strength. Every day he walked this earth, Jesus prayed, communed with, and enjoyed time with his father, knowing full well that one day it would end. The moment Jesus said those words on the cross, he was expressing the greatest pain he ever felt. He was expressing the pain of losing his father, his Abba.

This is the sacrifice it took to overcome sin. Jesus had an intimate, powerful, and moving relationship with his father. He set the example for all us: teaching us to pray, to bring needs before God, teaching us that God loved us. How could he teach those things if he had not experienced them? Jesus knew God, he knew his father, yet his desire for us to know his father was so great that he took on the most unimaginable pain. He willingly separated himself from God, knowing

that it was necessary for us to experience God in the same way he did. He did not have to share. He did not have to sacrifice. But in his great love for us, he sacrificed his relationship with God, so that we could ultimately find ours. He became a pure lamb, whose blood was spilt so that everyone could know the joy of relationship with God.

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,

You separated Yourself from the Father not by force, but by choice, that we might choose to experience union with Him. Thank you, Jesus for Your sacrifice, on the cross, the greatest sacrifice humanity will ever know. Teach us how we too might sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others.

Lead us where sacrifice is most essential; Open our eyes to whom we might humble ourselves before so they would be lifted up; Amen.

Tuesday – March 6

Sacrifice

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.)

1. Read Matthew 27:45-50 slowly a few times (Lectio)

*45 From noon until three o'clock, the whole land was covered with darkness. 46 About three o'clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice. **He said, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" This means "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"**47 Some of those standing there heard Jesus cry out. They said, "He's calling for Elijah." 48 Right away one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar and put it on a stick. He offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, "Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." 50 After Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, he died.*

2. Ponder the text (Meditatio)

Did Jesus feel all alone abandoned by his disciples and loved ones? Why did Jesus feel abandoned by his Father?

What was more painful for Jesus, the cross or the abandonment?

What would have made the Father leave Jesus alone to die on the cross?

3. Speak to God (Oratio)

Father, I know you are holy. I know that in you is no sin. I know that my sin pushes you away and cannot be in your presence. I know your Son Jesus took my sins on his shoulder and went to the cross for me. I believe that the most painful thing for Jesus was not that he went to the cross, or even that those he loved ran away from him, denied him or hid, but that he was separated from you—even for just a short time. I know that you are the great Three in One and you have been in complete unity and harmony forever. To be separated from you must have been so painful to your Son. I know my sins caused his separation and for that I am truly sorry.

4. Find a quiet place (Contemplatio)

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, I never want to be separated from you. Forgive all my sins and never leave my presence.

Thank you that you love me.

Thank you that you promise never to leave nor forsake me.

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Wednesday – March 7

Sacrifice

Individual Reflection

Intro:

Jesus set aside the thing that was most important to him in the entire world. He sacrificed something so that we could experience a relationship with the father. He left it all on the table for us . . . we just have to embrace it. Here is one way we can do that.

Items needed:

Clothes you don't wear, but are still in good condition.

Directions:

Go through your closets and dressers and pull out any clothes that you don't need. Make sure they are still in good condition and not just worthy of the trash. Then, take the clothes and other items you might collect and take them to a someone in need or a local thrift store. Take some of what you have and sacrifice it so that others may have it. It's a small thing to do in order for other people to have a little good in their life.

Thursday – March 8

Sacrifice

Individual Prayer Guide

Matthew 27:46 - At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

We all have people that we care about. Sure, we care deeper for some

than others but ultimately everyone cares about someone. Jesus in a way that only he could, cared intimately for every person that he ever met on this earth. His loving relationships with his disciples are well documented throughout the New Testament. Jesus even went as far as touching those the rest of the world wanted nothing to do with, just so that if nothing else, they would know that someone cared about them. Even with all of this being said, there was one relationship that he valued more than any other. Jesus shared a very deep and very intimate connect with his father, his Abba. Nothing mattered more to him than the time he get to spend each day conversing with his father and investing in that relationship. In Luke, we see this from a young age as Jesus' earthly parents left Jerusalem without him and had to rush back in fear of losing him for good. To their surprise they found him in the temple, the house of his father. That's how important Jesus' relationship with God was.

One of the most beautiful moments from the entire story of Jesus comes in his last breathes of life. As he hung there on the cross dying, he sacrificed his purity, his relationship with his Abba, so that you and I might someday be able to experience God in the same way he did. He sacrificed his relationship, the most important relationship he had, for us.

Prayer:

At some point all of us will have to sacrifice. It maybe something small, it may be something large, but we will all find our way to that moment in our life. For some reason our society idolizes sacrifice, it is an admirable trait. From soldiers to those who sacrifice something as simple as time in a day we all have something to give. This prayer is going to lead through a process of embracing the sacrifice of Jesus and then contemplating where you also might be able to give something to make the world a little better place.

1. Picture for a moment, yourself there as Jesus is uttering the words, "My God, my God, Why have you abandon me?" Can you see the anguish on his face? Can you hear the pain in his voice? Is it apparent to you that he has lost something valuable to him? Take a minute or two and ponder these thoughts.
2. Acknowledge the presence of God in the room you are in. Give to him word or phrase declaring his glory and power. (Ex. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the lord God almighty!")

3. Thank him for his sacrifice. Thank him for Jesus. Then ask yourself and ask God, "Am I fully embracing the sacrifice Jesus made for me?" If not explore what might be holding you back.
4. Ask God what is something that as an act of worship and in the spirit of sacrifice that you could offer the world. Make sure it something that ultimately gives the recognition back to God. Don't be afraid to start small and work into something larger. Just do you best to be authentic and follow through.
5. Take a moment of Silence. In this time really embrace Jesus, offers thanks, praise, any unspoken message that acknowledges his sacrifice and its significance to you.
6. Go and remember the attitude of "sacrifice" that Jesus had. Be intentional about replicating its effects in your own life.

Friday – March 9

Sacrifice

Individual Reflection

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Read Ephesians 5:1-2 slowly a few times (Lectio)

1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ponder the text (Meditatio)

What does true sacrifice mean?

What was God's example of

sacrifice? Am I living for self
or for God?
How does the word sacrifice make me feel?

Speak to God (Oratio)

Pray this paraphrase of Matthew 10:32-39 back to God:

I acknowledge you as Lord before all men.

I will also acknowledge you before our Father in heaven.

I will never disown you or be embarrassed about you to men As I know you will not disown me before God the Father.

My words and my life will be a testimony about your goodness before all men Because I know you will always speak on my behalf before the Father.

I know deep down that there will not be worldly peace until you return.

And that your Truth and love is far greater than any other relationship on earth and I will follow and serve you no matter what anyone else says or does.

I love my father, my mother and my family, but I love you even more. I know I am not worthy of you, but you love me anyway.

You take all of my sins, faults and wrong allegiances and throw them away
You receive me despite them all.

Therefore, I will pick up my cross and follow you wherever you are. I will give up those things that are selfish and self-serving.

I will lay at Your alter all those things that are not like you And I know you will change me to be more like you.

I will find my new life in you.

In no one else nor any other place can I be found You are worthy, Lord, and I will follow you forever.

Find a quiet place (Contemplatio)

Be still and listen for God's voice.

What is He saying to me about sacrifice? What do I need to let go of?

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Saturday – March 10

Sacrifice

Individual Reflection

Intro:

Jesus was willing to leave his place in heaven and come to earth to die in our place, so that we could experience what it was like to have an intimate, meaningful, and loving relationship with God. Anytime we really think about this, it begs the question, “What am I doing so that other people can experience God?” This is a chance for you to follow up with that question and actually answer it.

Items needed:

Un-necessary commodity or consumer good you buy regularly but don't actually need. — *I.e.; soda, coffee, food, new shoes, new clothing.*

Directions:

All of us have something that we buy on a weekly, daily or even hourly basis. A consumer good that it seems like at time we cannot function without. For some of us, it's the cup of coffee that gets our brain going in the morning. For others, it could be that new pair of designer jeans we saw at the store. Whatever the case, today's challenge is simple, yet also very difficult. Take an extended period of time: a week, two weeks, a month; whatever sounds right to you and don't purchase that item. During that time, save the money you would normally spend on those items, and give it to someone or something that could use it more than you. Sacrifice something you think you need so that others might be able to get something they really need. A few ideas might be to give the money to someone in need, tithe extra to your church, or use the money to a local ministry. Whatever the case, be sensitive to the voice of God for direction. Sacrifice to make the world a little bit better place as you help someone in need.

