

**DEVOTIONAL
JOURNEY
SERIES**

WALKING WITH JESUS IN
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

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Day 1

Reading: Luke Chapter 1:1-45

In the beginning of Luke we hear that he set forth to make an accurate account of Jesus from eyewitnesses. Luke possibly traveled with the Apostle Paul from town to town, hearing from witness to witness.

Maybe he listened to a man named Peter at an evening fire, as the aging apostle shared the anguish of his memory from another evening fire, and the faithless words he spoke there.

Maybe he talked to Mary the mother of Jesus, as the children sat at her feet listening to her tell stories of her son, and his journey to the cross.

James the brother of Jesus could have shared his early disbelief, and the events that unraveled before his eyes; events that would ultimately have their place in his thoughts and heart.

John the Apostle in Jerusalem may have talked of his love for Jesus. He may have shared stories about how he used to rest his head on Jesus' chest. John experienced this Love early on and it effected his entire life.

Is there any doubt that this was an unveiling journey for Luke as he walked with Jesus through the stories of the many witnesses he interviewed? Each piece knit together to reveal the wonderful way of Jesus experienced by the lives of so many. How could Luke not be changed by these encounters and the miraculous unraveling of these wonderful tales?

These beginning verses show one thing. This is a miraculous story. So far it is a story where the old and young alike encountered a new birth. It is a story that brings the hopes and faith, of young and old alike, to new depths and new heights. It is a story of angelic messengers bringing great news. It is news that is hard to grasp for some, and news that is easily accepted by others. Ultimately it is news that God is doing something new in the world. It is something new, but something that was planned and woven together in the very fabric of time. It is the true perception of reality.

As you begin this journey what are some of things you are hoping to encounter as you walk with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke? Is it a new and miraculous birth, a new hope and faith, or an angelic message proclaiming that God is doing something new in your life? Are you looking for something God had planned and woven together into the fabric of time just for you? Maybe you don't know, or haven't really thought about it. Stop to think as you record some expectations. At the end of this thirty day devotional you will be asked to return here. See then, if God met your expectations, or if God gave you what you really needed.

Day 2

Reading: Luke 1: 46-80

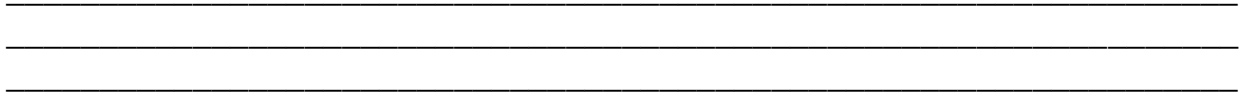
I have done it! Driving down the road, in the shower, sitting by a lake with fishing pole in hand, as the wind blew and the fresh smell of the cool fall evening rejuvenated my soul. I have broken into song and I have sung about the great things God has accomplished in my life. I have sung and wept, as I recalled God's faithfulness to me. All the while the Father was near listening to me, his adopted son, as I sang at his feet in the joy of his steadfast love and mercy.

I remember the songs I used to sing before I met him. They were songs of woe and sometimes songs of tears. I was singing to no one in particular. I was asking in song who really loves me, who cares, who will accept me for who I am, and who will never let me down. Songs that were sung to my own empty life, a life without purpose and meaning, and a life without the love I had always been searching to find. It was a search that existed in my earliest memories.

There is only one thing that makes me sing now. It is an unexplainable joy. It was this same joy that Zechariah and Mary experienced. It was Joy that made a silent mouth sing and young girl praise the God who did, was doing, and was going to do a new thing in her life. In reality it was joy for the whole world, because Zechariah's and Mary's joy was meant to be shared and experienced everywhere and with everyone. It is a joy that was meant to march into the sands of time. It was the beginning of an outpouring of joy that was meant to be poured into the future from the past and present. It was the seeds of joy planted within that would bear fruit in the hearts of many. This includes those who had not been born yet. This was the beginning of God pouring out joy into the hearts of the world absent of the divine joy it was meant to know.

What song has your heart been singing lately? Have you known the joy of God that births songs of complete bliss? Have you been singing songs of woe to your empty life? Are you ready for a new song to sing? A song birthed from an insuppressible joy through the God who has, and is, and is going to do a new thing in your life?

Sit at God's feet. Sing to the Lord a new song. Remember your blessings and they will be the words of your song of thanksgiving. Sing to the one who desires the divine gift of joy to be established in your heart. Write the words to your new song below and on many occasions return to add to this list. Then sing them anew in a fresh thanksgiving.



Day 3

Reading: Luke 2: 1-51

Imagine for a moment that you and your family are prisoners. You cannot express yourselves freely, move about freely, and none of you can venture out to find your life's true purpose and live it to the fullest. Your prison guard is a harsh, cruel, and unfeeling task master. You are at the guard's whim, you are the butt of the guard's jokes, and you soon become embarrassed. Maybe you even learn to hate yourself, your life, and your very existence.

Now imagine that you receive a letter over and over again, year after year, that someone is coming to set you and your family free. This person is coming to remove the charges against you, your chains, and will imprison the very guard torments you night and day and keeps you locked up in your cell. These letters give you hope. You come to believe them. You wait expectantly as you endure your harsh imprisonment, but you wonder if freedom will ever come.

In some sense this is the story of the nation of Israel. The people Jesus was born amongst as citizen, neighbor, and redeemer. They had been waiting for such Deliverer. God had given them this promise over and over again throughout their history. It was written down in their letters. Throughout their history this people had been battered and worn, abused and trapped, wandered and strayed, and at the time of Jesus' birth were captives of the Great Roman Empire and an empty religion, but their greatest imprisonment was to sin.

These people waited anxiously wondering if freedom would ever come.

Then Jesus is born and the angels of heaven open the sky and sing a song of fulfillment. Shepherds hear the proclamation that the ancient promises have come true. After viewing the special child these shepherds run along the countryside to tell every one of the miraculous sights and sounds they had experienced in the night.

A week later the temple prophets sing songs of victory and praise at the sight of the child. God has opened their eyes to see the truth and their hearts were able to accept that God has visibly acted in human history to set God's people free.

All these things Mary treasured in her heart. She knew the one born to her was special. He was different. What twelve year old has ever said, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house and doing my Father's business?" He knew his purpose and he would fulfill it and no one needed to tell him what it was. Deep down Jesus knew!

His purpose was to set the prisoners free! Not from Rome, but from themselves and the life they were living trapped by sin. He came to set them free from the captor that had taken them prisoner, the harsh prison guard of sin. It was a burden to their souls and this task master was relentless. It made them hate

themselves, to be embarrassed of themselves, to act unloving and unkindly to each other, and especially to the God of creation.

Do you feel imprisoned? Has life lost its vitality? Has life become a harsh taskmaster? Does it keep you from finding your way and living your life's purpose? Do not blame it on your circumstances, your relationships, or your experiences. The prison you are in has always been built upon the foundation of sin.

Take some time to think about what it is in life that makes you feel imprisoned. Ask yourself why this is so important for you to be free from it? Does it make sense for you to feel this way? What's at the basis of it all? Has your life been out of your control to change?

Write some of these things down and take them to God in prayer. Ask God to reveal the truth of these things and give you a heart to accept them for what they may be. Then ask Jesus to set you free from them. This is the beginning of a life long journey if we will remain in it. Over time the more we are set free, the more prisons we are able to recognize and hand over. All of these we turn over to the one who has the key to all of our cells. He is the Deliverer of God.

Day 4

Reading: Luke 3: 1-6

This reading begins with a long list of important people in the land of Israel. God could have chosen anyone of these people to proclaim the coming of the Deliverer, but instead God chose John. A man who lived in the desert, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore a garment made out of a camel's hide.

Yes, John was born to Zacharias who was a priest, but John who normally would have been nurtured and trained to step into Zacharias's shoes, chose the desert ministry instead. Who among us would go into a desert to hear anyone?

These strange, out of the ordinary and unexpected actions seem to be a pattern with God. For even the one called the Deliverer was born in a filthy stall where the animals were shuffled into at night. He wasn't born in a palace, into riches, or into status. He might as well have been born on the top of a garbage dump. What does this say about God? Could it be saying something concerning God's rejection of these things?

John came to prepare the way. I have seen many road construction projects. They have to clear away trees, houses, build bridges over valleys, and cut their way through mountains in order for others to travel safely in the direction they need to go.

John has come to clear the way for the Deliverer, but the road that needs cleared isn't on land, but in people's hearts. Doubt, lifestyle choices, upbringing, education, and self-centeredness which are all built upon sin block the way for the Deliverer. They block the way for the traveler to travel safely without any roadblocks towards God.

You might be thinking that if Jesus is the Deliverer, then why does the way need to be cleared in order for Him to set us free? The Deliverer sets us free, but the lock that keeps us imprisoned is in our own heart, and we must present our locked hearts to Him in faith, believing the Deliverer can set us free.

By using this devotional you have agreed to take a journey. It is a journey with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. This journey is ultimately a journey of freedom to love God, and love others. It is a Journey to find life, love, joy, hope, peace, and contentment, because these things flow out of God and into the traveler's life. Before you can begin to make this journey with Jesus we must hear John. We must hear John everyday of our life. He calls for us to surrender the obstacles in the way of the King. We can't reach God and God can't reach us until we surrender the obstacles to the Deliverer that is in our way. Then the journey truly begins.

What obstacles of doubt are in your way? What things do you make excuses for in your life? What are some of the things that you know hurts others, or things that if others knew, then it would devastate them? What are some of the attitudes

souring your heart towards God? If you want to really participate in this Journey, then we must hear John speak to us. He calls us to repent, or let go of these things and turn our direction to walking with God. What do you have to lose?

I do know what you stand to gain. You stand to gain freedom, life in abundance, joy, peace, happiness, contentment, love, and hope. You stand in the place to be able to see God and know God.

Write down some things that come to mind and ask God to help you believe and to forgive your unbelief. Offer God the lock on your heart, so that the Deliverer's key can set you free.

Day 5: Luke 3: 7-19

There are two groups of people in this story who have come to listen to John. One group consists of the financially well to do, those with power, and those with authority. The other group isn't that viewable, but be assured they are there.

These are the ones who can't afford new clothes, who are burdened by taxes exorted from them at every turn, who are taken advantage of by people who are in positions of power. They are also the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned, and homeless.

Can you imagine how they must have felt when John stood up for their rights and needs? John rebuked those who were in part responsible for their pain. He explained that if they wanted to make the road straight in their life for God, then they needed to start caring about these people they have hurt and taken advantage. They needed to stop using people as a footstool to their own prosperity. People do not exist to make our life better. They are not there to take advantage of, to use, or to cheat. They are people of value and worth. We are all people of value and worth.

Greed is one of sins ugliest taskmasters. It always leaves you unsatisfied and wanting more. There are also those who are emotionally greedy. They expect people to live up to their expectations and meet their needs. They are often offended when others expect anything from them. They suck the life out of people for their own life. These people also need to make the way straight because God cares about all people and not caring about others is at the heart of sin.

As long as a person's intentions and desires are set in wrong directions, then they will always be facing away from God. They will never be able to see God or know God.

"What must we do" is a good question to ask. What is even better is doing what we must do, when we learn we must do it. This is what John calls the fruit of repentance. It is the proof that we have indeed begun the journey with Jesus. It is proof that we are beginning to make the path straight. John helps people begin their journey with baptism which symbolizes their new birth, their new start, and their new life, but John tells of another baptism they will need. It comes from the Deliverer.

The Deliverer will baptize all; some with the Spirit of God, or the very freeing presence of God in their life, and others with an eternal fire.

That fire is a result of the presence of God being removed from their existence for eternity. It is the prison they loved on earth and in their prison they will remain. They thought, "At least I was in control of my own cell." On this earth it was their hearts desire. In eternity it will be their heart's greatest regret.

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