**I Love to Tell the Story**

Explore every story of Jesus in this year-long devotional guide. Go at your own pace using the online archive..

**Day 31: Jesus on Murder**

Read: Matthew 5:21-26

Remember chapters 5 – 7 are “the Sermon on the Mount”… so we continue to look at the essence of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus is talking about the a different kind of righteousness than the basic rules that were being practiced at the time. This section is about the heart of the law.

Guided reflection:

1. The LAW says do not kill… but Jesus fulfills the law with “but I say, if you are angry

with, insult, or call someone a fool… it is the same thing!” Apply this to your life. Anyone of God’s children make you angry? How do you react?

2. Next time the offering plate comes around for you to give your gifts to God, consider

Jesus’ words – before you bless God with an offering, make things right with others. How might these words impact your preparation for worship?

Guided Prayer:

*“Forgiving God, these words make us cringe when we know our tempers, our ability to sling insults and call people names… it is almost a sport on TV… forgive us for following the example of the world instead of following the words of Jesus. Today, help me forgive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Make a list of those who come to mind when you read this scripture) Amen.”*

**Day 32: Jesus on Adultery**

Read: Matthew 5:27-30 (Also consider 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-48)

This passage continues to redefine the laws. Jesus knows our human weaknesses and challenges us to consider how to discipline ourselves.

Guided reflection:

1. Jesus knows that sexual sins begin in our minds and hearts and then become actions. Other sins can work the same way. Do you know when you are being tempted? What do you do?
2. Jesus wants folks to know that we must regulate ourselves – He even hyperbolically suggests going blind to not look at someone in a lustful manner. What personal safe guards do you have for your temptations – where or when are you most vulnerable? What can you do to keep from sin?

Guided Prayer:

*“Loving God, you know my weakness – help me be honest about my own vulnerabilities. Grant me wisdom to come up with a plan of actions that will keep me pure in your sight. (Make a list with God on how to protect yourself from pitfalls) Amen”*

**Day 33: Jesus on Divorce**

Read: Matt 5:31-21; Matt 19:9; Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18

Jesus’ words in this passage kept me [Lynette] in a dysfunctional marriage for 21 years. My heart still breaks to know that I made choices that felt healthy and the best for my soul… yet mark me in this scripture. I believe Jesus wants us to know that marriage is an important value and the way we treat others, particularly our spouses, is not to be taken lightly. I wish I had a testimony of a blessed and healthy and fulfilling marriage for 35 years, but instead I have a testimony of how I found God’s grace in my brokenness; and how I tried to be as loving and respectful as I could be as I gently laid aside my bonds of marriage but maintained my connection to my Ex as a brother in Christ. I needed God’s grace and found it … so today, reflect on your relationships, your choices, your family members… and pray for God to heal our marriages and make us whole.

Guided Prayer

*“O God, we pray for those caught in painful marriages. May your love grant them wisdom and insight as they wrestle with how to be whole and healthy. Grant your forgiveness to those who have sinned. Amen”*

**Day 34: Jesus on Making an Oath**

Read: Matthew 5:33-37

This passage is talking about the power of words. It isn’t about using bad words but about not meaning what you say. Jesus took seriously both our attitude, our actions, and our words.

Guided reflection:

1. Jesus makes it clear that we should mean what we say and say what we mean. We say “I swear on a stack of Bibles” meaning, I am telling the truth, or “I am pledging my oath to you.” Do you make promises? Do you keep them?
2. Let your “YES” mean yes, and your “NO” mean no. Would others say that you live by that motto? How might you regain trust in your word?

Guided Prayer:

*“O God of the universe, teach me how to be authentic and real in my conversations. Help me not to just give the answer another wants at the moment when I know I cannot deliver… but help me be honest and true. May others know they can count on my word. Amen”*

**Day 35: Jesus on Getting Even**

Read: Matt 5: 38-42; Luke 6:29-30

Jesus keeps taking the “letter of the law” and reframing it so we understand the “spirit to the law”.

Guided reflections:

1. Take some time to consider the implications of these words. What is hard about them? What good might come from them?
2. Consider non-violent movements you have seen. How do they live out this passage?
3. How do you live out this passage?

Guided Prayer:

*“Lord, I am so tied to what others say and do that I feel a need to react and set them straight. I know it is up to you to judge, but it is hard to not take things personally! Continue to teach me your ways of peace and love. Amen”*