**I Love to Tell the Story**

Explore every story of Jesus in this year-long devotional guide.

**DAY 51: Self Deception**

**Read: Matt 7: 21-23; Luke 6: 46; 13:26,27**

Guided reflection:

I think Jesus is telling us in this scripture that we can have the right lingo and do some of the correct actions, but if our motivation is not pure, it is useless! Jesus is looking at the heart – he knows if we do mission work to fill a need to look compassionate when we feel guilty for taking advantage in another situation. Like the spouse who knows they are in the “dog house” and will do or say whatever it takes to try to make the other person happy, Jesus knows when our motive is to get out of trouble, not to change for the sake of our loved ones. Ever done that? Jesus does not want empty words or empty actions. He knows our hearts! So, if your heart is not in it, don’t do it!

Guided Prayer: *“Authentic Loving Lord, help us to face our phoniness. We want to look good for others and we forget there is really an audience of ONE and that one is you! Help us to drop our focus on pleasing others and turn, instead, to pleasing you. May our hearts match your hearts or as Jesus said, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” Amen.*

**DAY 52: Hearers and Doers of the word**

**Read: Matt 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49**

Guided reflection:

Have you ever been to the coast? Ever see a house built so close to the coast if a storm comes it is going to blow apart. Yet, those homes are often the “high rent district.” Seems foolish, doesn’t it? Jesus wants us to know that we have a solid foundation if we listen to Jesus words and then build our lives on that solid foundation, when the storms of life try to toss us back and forth, we will remain solid – because we have a solid foundation. But, if our spiritual condition is built for show, with no depth, it will crumble when the going gets tough! Have you checked your foundation lately?

Guided prayer: *“O God, the source of my strength, show me where my foundation is faulty. Show me where I am prone to defeat in the future because I am not thinking the way your word would have me think. Keep working in me so that I can stand the storms of life and end up being better instead of bitter. Amen”*

**DAY 53: End of Sermon on the Mount**

**Read: Matt 7:28-29**

Guided reflection:

We began looking at this compilation of Jesus’ teaching on day 27. If you take time to look over your notes from Day 27 – day 53 that is 26 days of focus on Jesus’ teaching. Throughout the rest of the gospels we will watch as Jesus begins to focus on leadership development of his disciples. We will see his daily comings and goings, and we will learn his parables and stories, but day 27 – 53 have contained enough of Jesus’ words to change our lives forever. What have you learned about Jesus and what have you learned about yourself from this “Sermon on the Mount”?

Guided Prayer*: “Holy God, allow the words of my mouth and the actions of my life, reflect the*

*philosophy and teaching of Jesus. Work in me to make Christ visible to others around me. Amen.”*

**DAY 54: The Healing of the Leper**

**Read: Matt 8: 1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16**

Guided reflection:

“Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean?” A leper was the outcast. The man not only needed to be healed of a disease, he needed a way to reconnect with his community, and to be pronounced no longer a threat to others. Jesus said “I WILL!” And then gave him instructions on how to be taken out of exclusion. But Mark goes on to say that the man was so thrilled he began to tell everyone. Jesus began to be seen as a Magic Man and crowds love a show. Jesus was disturbed that folks were coming to the show instead of allowing him to “show them the way”. Do you ever come to worship for the show and miss the point of what God wants to say to you on that day?

Guided Prayer: *“Today I pray for those who are caught in circumstances that keep them not only ill, but shunned by others, O Lord. Open my eyes to see where I need Jesus’ touch and help me to focus on what God’s Word wants to say to me instead of focusing on whether folks are performing well. Keep me focused on worship and not entertainment. Amen”*

**DAY 55: The Centurion’s Servant**

**Read: Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7: 1-10**

Guided reflection:

This story shows us the power of Jesus’ words – the centurion understood that Jesus did not have to be physically beside his servant to heal him, he just needed Jesus to say the word! The Luke passage shows more of the love of the centurion for this servant. The lesson to those standing around was – Oh, have such great faith! Today, let us pray for those whom we love that need Jesus’ touch.

Guider prayer*: “Healing God, just like the centurion, be there for those that I love who need your*

*healing touch. (Name your loved ones; name what you desire God to do for them; and remind yourself how much you love them.) Thank you for allowing me to love these dear people. Amen”*