



# ▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

**Saturday/Sunday, 3/10-11/18**

**“Conversion”**

**Luke 22:31-32 (NIV)**

*“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

**Family Activity:** Ask someone you know to tell you the story of why they decided to follow Jesus.

**Monday, 3/12/18**

**“Repentance”**

**Matthew 4:17 (NIV)**

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

- After being tested in the wilderness, Jesus begins his earthly ministry by calling all to repentance. The word repent means to rethink or turn around. Jesus is calling all to rethink and turn from the paths we are on, and to turn our minds and hearts to him and his kingdom. This is at the root of Christian conversion. What do you need to turn from that keeps you from wholeheartedly following Jesus?
- What practices can you take on during this Lenten season to turn and refocus your heart on Jesus?
- Think about/discuss what is meant by the kingdom of heaven. What does it mean for the kingdom of heaven to have “come near”?

**Prayer:** Lord, we desire to see and to know you and your kingdom. Help us in turning away from the things that keep us from you, so that we would be your faithful followers and builders of your kingdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Tuesday, 3/13/18**

**“Surrender”**

**Acts 9:1-18 (NIV)**

*Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”*

*“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.*

*“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”*

*The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

*In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"*

*"Yes, Lord," he answered.*

*The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."*

*"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."*

*But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*

*Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.*

- In this passage we read of the conversion of Saul. Saul would come to be known as the apostle Paul, would write many of the letters of the New Testament, and would be instrumental in the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Prior to his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee, responsible for the persecution of Jesus' followers. After encountering Jesus, however, Paul surrendered his life completely to following Jesus and proclaiming the Gospel. What does it mean to surrender one's life to Jesus? What would it look like for you to surrender your whole life to Jesus?
- Through his conversion, Paul lost all of the power, pedigree and prestige that he had as a Pharisee. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul says that he considers all of these things garbage (literally, dung) for the sake of gaining Christ. Christian conversion requires surrender and surrender can entail a fear of loss (the loss of control, possessions, standing, influence, etc.). What is it that you fear losing for the sake of Christ?

**Prayer:** Lord, we want to be yours, to follow you, and to abandon ourselves to you. Help us to surrender ourselves to you and your purposes. Help us to let go of the things we try to hold onto, and to not fear the loss of those things. Like Paul, may the scales fall from our eyes to see you and to love you with everything we are and have. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Wednesday, 3/14/18**  
**“For All Who Are Far Off”**

**Acts 2:37-39**

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*

*Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

- This passage comes after the apostle Peter addresses a crowd of people, exalting the crucified Jesus as Lord and Messiah. At hearing Jesus’ message, they were “cut to the heart.” What does it mean to be cut to the heart? Have you ever experienced being cut to the heart by the message of Jesus? Think about/discuss that experience.
- After being convinced of their own brokenness, Peter encourages the crowd to experience conversion through repentance and baptism, for the forgiveness of sins. He says that they will also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that this promise is for them, their families, and “all who are far off.” What does it mean to be far off from God? Are you currently, or have you ever been, far off from God? Who do you know in your day-to-day life that is far off from God? How can you share with them the Good News of Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord, we thank you for the witness of Peter and the early church. We thank you that you seek us and offer such indescribable gifts in your Son and the Holy Spirit. We never want to be far off from you, but seek to grow more and more in our knowledge and love of you. In our seeking, Holy Spirit, empower us to live out the Good News in Jesus to those in our lives that are far off. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Thursday, 3/15/18**  
**“Love”**

**Acts 16:25-33 (NIV)**

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”*

*The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

*They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.*

- In this passage, Paul and Silas found themselves in jail for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus and creating a stir in the area. After the earthquake, Paul and Silas had the perfect opportunity to free themselves from prison. By most standards, they should have had no concern for their Roman jailer, but they decided to stay in the jail cell because they knew that the jailer would likely be killed by the Roman higher-ups for prisoners fleeing on his watch. The radical love shown by Paul and Silas to someone that could be considered as an enemy was the reason the jailer experienced an incredible conversion to faith in Jesus. To the Romans, the jailer's life meant nothing. To Jesus, it meant everything. Who are the people in your life (strangers, acquaintances or even enemies) who the world would consider of little worth? How might you show them the radical love of Jesus? How does this conversion story affect how you understand evangelism?

**Prayer:** Lord, we praise you for the radical love that you show us, and for the ways that you draw us near to you. Help us to see others as you see them and to reach out to them in your radical love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Friday, 3/16/18**

**“Praise”**

**Psalm 126 (NIV)**

*When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion,  
we were like those who dreamed.*

*Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.*

*Then it was said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”*

*The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.*

*Bring back our captives, LORD,  
like streams in the Negev.*

*Those who sow with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.*

*Those who go out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with them.*

- This is a psalm of praise for God's work of restoration; restoring the captive people back to the land that he had promised. Throughout, scripture uses this Old Testament imagery of restoration to describe the restorative work God does in and through Jesus. When you think of God's work of restoration in your own life, what is it that elicits praise the most?
- Let this psalm be a source of praise and prayer for you today.

**This week's devotional was written by Pastor Jake Schneider  
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