

a satisfactory answer but it is interesting that the teacher of the law agreed that loving God and neighbor was more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices. It is much easier to leave God in the realm of laws and ordinances and feel fairly self satisfied that we've done our best to keep the rules and check off all the boxes. Jesus' response of affirmation to this teacher of the law reveals that relationship is of greater priority than rules in the eyes of our God. The frequent references to the Church being Christ's own Bride is an indicator of the depth of relationship which the God of the universe intends. He wants to be our treasure, our beloved, our joy! Be encouraged by the vision of John in Revelation where he writes about the joy that comes with the union of Jesus and His bride – us, the church, His Church! Read Revelation 21 and 22 and bask in the imagery, the power, and the beauty of what Jesus is promising.

Saturday — Someone Who Gets It

Read Luke 1:26-38. Mary is a good example of someone who "gets" this command to have no other gods before the Lord God Almighty. Her humble response is simply "Yes, Lord. I am your servant." Mary's song, in verses 46-55 of the same chapter gives us a look into Mary's trust and love and adoration of the God who called her into an unknown path of service. As Luther explains the first commandment he urges followers of God to "Fear Love and Trust in God above all things." God's call to each of us is to love Him with a response of "Yes, Lord." Where is the Lord God calling you to follow Him right now in your life? Does that call to follow and trust Him seem difficult, if not impossible? Consider how Mary must have felt and how overwhelming that request. But we know the Lord is God and He is trustworthy and faithful and strong and powerful. As we've reflected on this week, He loves you and cares deeply about you. Know and believe that He is here to lead you to the places where He wants you to serve Him and share His love. Read Psalm 145 as a prayer today. May your mouth speak in praise of the Lord today!

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This week's *Bring it Home* devotions were written by Retired Immanuel Teacher Gail Hein. This publication may be reproduced and shared.



Bring It Home

*Devotions for
the week of
August 20, 2017*

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

O soul are you weary and troubled?
No Light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
Over us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conquerors we are!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

Monday — “I AM”

Read Exodus 20:1-6. God speaks with authority when He proclaims, “I AM the Lord your God...” This is the same response He gave to Moses in Exodus 3:1-17. Take a moment to think about who God is to you, from your experience and from your reading of God’s Word. What are the words, phrases, and images that come to mind when you think of God? From the Exodus readings, did you see the traits of this God whose name is “I AM”? He’s holy, eternal, present, all-knowing, compassionate, and rescuing. Read John 14:1-14. Jesus tells His followers, “I AM the way...” Jesus is our way to eternal relationship and joy with our God. He is truth when everything and everyone around us is vying for our attention. He is life itself and worthy of our praise. In His song “I AM,” Mark Schultz beautifully spells out these wonderful traits of our loving God. “I am the fount of living water The risen Son of Man The healer of the broken And when you cry I am your Savior and Redeemer Who bore the sins of man The author and perfecter Beginning and the end I am.” If you have time and the ability, clip the following link to take in all of this beautiful song. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-HlkxnSZSA>

Tuesday — God Acts First

Read Exodus 20:1-6 and notice what comes just prior to the first commandment. When the Lord speaks these commands, He doesn’t just come at them out of left field. He isn’t a mobster cornering people in a dark alley and demanding loyalty. He is the living and active God who has already worked mightily on behalf of His chosen people. What preceded that first commandment? Love! This covenant relationship always begins with the love of God toward His chosen people. He miraculously brought them out the slavery of Egypt, all before a single commandment was listed. Read Deuteronomy 4:32-40 which records Moses’ words to the people at the end of his life. As you read, notice the actions of God toward the people. Read Titus 3:3-8. God does not place these commandments as a condition of His love – He loved us first and then calls us to respond to Him with honor and praise. As you consider the first commandment (and all of them, for that matter) and who you know and believe God to be, how are you receiving that love into your heart and life? What does your response to His love for you look like? What could you do in the next day or so to respond to the Lord with a demonstration of your love for Him?

Wednesday — Everybody Worships Something

Read Mark 10:17-27 and 2 Kings 17. God’s Law can be a difficult thing. It is difficult to look at the law and see it as a mirror that reflects back our sin to us. The enemy of our soul wants us to be ignorant of our sin so that we do not turn to our Savior for forgiveness. That enemy wants us to reject the one true God and to conform to the pattern of this world and thereby miss out on the joys of intimate and joyous relationship with our loving Father. When writing about this first commandment, Luther said, “...to have a god

is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts. ...” What is it that you run to when things go poorly or even when things go well? What do you turn to to make you feel better when disappointed? Or what do you believe to be your strongest asset? Do you bring out your sports trophies or your 401k portfolio when you are feeling downcast? That’s your god. Do you bring up your child’s grades or the incredible deal you got in every conversation? That’s your god. What we escape to is what we worship. Do you turn to another glass of wine or the next episode of a Netflix binge fest to make you peaceful at the end of a hard day? That’s your god. Put more bluntly, a blogger wrote, “What makes us crabby reveals our idols.” Finish the sentence, “I get crabby when....” “Do you balk at attending a family gathering because it conflicts with a sporting event or because grandma doesn’t have wifi, or because you don’t think it will be fun for you? That’s your god. In and of themselves, these things need not be idolatrous, but God desires for us that we find our hope and joy in Him alone amidst the ups and downs of life. He calls us to rely on Him and cultivate love for Him because He is the One who truly cares for us and our eternal joy. Read Ephesians 2:1-7 and rejoice in the God who forgives our sin and loves us with an eternal love

Thursday — The Shocking Ways of God

The story of the prophet Hosea is an odd one, but it reveals the passionate love and forgiveness that God offers to His beloved people. Hosea is called by God to marry a prostitute to love her, forgive her and have and show tender mercy toward her. Israel had been unfaithful, rebellious, and adulterous, yet God still loved, still called, still forgave. Read Hosea 2:16-20. This is a shocking action for the Almighty God to embrace and forgive rebellious sinners. It goes against all logic and reason for God to behave graciously. This is what Paul was saying as he wrote to the Corinthians. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. God’s way of behaving is astounding to our reason. He is generous to sinners. His love for us is immense and consuming. He offers the life of His own Son for the sake of us sinners. He is a jealous God, not wanting us to share our affections with anything or anyone else. David Crowder has a wonderful song called, “How He Loves Us” which says: “Oh! how He loves us, Oh! how He loves. And we are His portion and He is our prize, Drawn to redemption by the grace in His eyes, If His grace is an ocean, we’re all sinking.” God’s ways can at times be shocking, even those matters that we now take for granted when it comes to our Lord’s forgiveness, grace, and the love He has for us. Take those gifts to heart again today, remembering the lengths that He went in order to show you His love, a deep love that He has for you! If you’re able, check out the link with the full song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzfPHnoT0-0>

Friday — He Wants You!

Read Mark 12:28-34. Throughout all of Mark chapter 12, people are trying to corner Jesus and get Him to answer their questions in a way which would prove that He was not “kosher,” so to speak. Jesus apparently gives