



the **attentive** life
Lent 2016

WEEK FOUR:
February 28 - March 5

Each week during Lent, we will
distribute the upcoming week's
devotional in print at Connect Central.

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Week 4: February 28 - March 5

We who do trust him - even if hesitantly and with many doubts along the way - turn out to be the beginning of a whole new creation empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome evil with love. We who trust him are now no longer defined by the evil we have done, but rather by what God has done for us in Jesus, and is doing in and through us through the Spirit of Jesus.

In Jesus, there are astonishing things now true about us as we trust and follow him, and we are invited to accept, internalize and live from our new identity. The old is done away with, the new has come.

You'll find three sections to each day: a reading from the Bible, a reflection or two, and then space to remember.

In the morning, **receive.**

Read the set passage each day. Read it when you wake up in the morning. Read it slowly and reflectively. Receive the word of God into your mind, into your heart, into your soul.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

Throughout the day, **reflect.**

Read the reflections and questions for the section. These are designed to move you along the story line and offer you starting points to guide your meditations through your day.

Is there anything from the reading for the day that you'd like to investigate further? Was there something that connected dots for you? Anything that puzzled you?



At night, remember.

Before you go to sleep each night, spend a few minutes thinking over the day that's now coming to an end. Invite Jesus to walk with you through the day, and bring to mind those things that would be helpful to sort out with him in the safety of his love for you.

What were the thoughts and feelings within you when you woke up? How did you spend the first hour of your day?

What was the highlight of your day?

What occupied your attention the most?

Where did you most sense God's presence during your day? What was going on?

Did you sense God's prompting to do something? Or say something? Did you sense him move you to engage with a particular situation you noticed? How did it go?

What were your primary emotions? Was there a fear or anxiety that was constantly present? Was there a hunger or a longing that was a constant itch?

Was there peace? Joy? Gratitude?

Who were the people you interacted with today? How do you think your interactions went? Was there a conversation you wish you could redo? Is there someone you need to make peace with tomorrow?

Is there someone whose forgiveness you need? Is there someone you need to forgive?

End your day in the **Lord's Prayer**.

Receive

Acts 1:1-9

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.



Reflect

After his resurrection, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the task that lay ahead of them - to continue what he had begun.

He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had come upon them - and then, in the power of the Spirit, to be his witnesses.

What is a witness? What is it that makes a credible witness?

What might it mean to be a credible witness of Jesus?

Do you recall what Jesus said would be the mark of his disciples?

Remember

Receive

Acts 3:1–19

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

“Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...”



Reflect

The gospel is pointed. It speaks directly to our hearts: “You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life...”

The gospel invites a response from us. And there are but two possibilities: rejection, or repentance.

Repentance is a complete turning of ourselves toward Jesus, and a complete turning away from everything that is in opposition to him.

Repentance isn't merely an intellectual shift in our perspective on Jesus. It is a heart-felt honesty about our own sinful condition, and a heart-felt grief over our own sin, and a heart-felt gratitude for the grace of God revealed to us in Jesus, and a heart-felt love for the one who loved us to the point of taking our sin upon himself and dying for us on the cross, and a heart-felt resolution to leave our old lives behind and begin afresh, following Jesus.

Repentance isn't a one-time event. As we follow Jesus, we discover that repentance characterizes the journey. Martin Luther, the great German Reformer, made this insight the first of his 95 Theses almost 500 years ago: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said ‘Repent,’ he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.”

We are the repentant people of God.

Remember

Receive

Colossians 2:13

When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

Romans 4:7-8

"Blessed are those
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

Isaiah 43:25

"I, even I, am he who blots out
your transgressions, for my own sake,
and remembers your sins no more."

Isaiah 38:17

In your love you kept me
from the pit of destruction;
you have put all my sins
behind your back.

Isaiah 44:22

"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,
your sins like the morning mist.
Return to me,
for I have redeemed you."

Psalms 103:12

...as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Hebrews 8:12

"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."



Reflect

We are the forgiven people of God.

Our transgressions are forgiven, our sins are covered. God will nevermore count our sins against us, because Jesus took our sins upon himself on the cross.

Our transgressions are blotted out. We have made a mess of our lives, but God has cleaned it all up in Jesus.

God has put all our sins behind his back, where neither he nor we can see them anymore.

Our sins have vanished in his forgiving grace like the morning mist that disappears when the sun rises.

God has taken our transgressions and put them as far away from us as possible.

And God has forgiven us, and does not anymore remember our sins. You may not be able to forget what you have done, but God is not able to remember it.

That is the truth of our condition in Jesus.

We are the forgiven people of God.

Remember

Receive

Romans 8:31–39

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:14–19

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.



Reflect

We are the beloved people of God.

These two passages from the apostle Paul are crucial to understanding who we are in Jesus.

God loves us with a fierce love that nothing can diminish or hinder. Nothing at all in all creation, including ourselves.

Nothing is more important for us to grasp. Nothing is more central to our understanding of ourselves than this: God loves us. And nothing is more central to our understanding of each other than this: God loves us.

And so we are to live, as those who are loved by God... and as those who are in community with those who are loved by God.

This is not easy. And so Paul prays for us, that we would be rooted and established in love, and have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.

Today, remain in his love for you.

Remember

Receive

1 Corinthians 12:4–26

Now are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.



Reflect

We are the gifted people of God.

The gifts of the Spirit are simply ways that God works through us for the common good. Paul here describes some of the ways that God gifts us - there are many, many more.

And we belong to each other - the gifts are not ours so we can compare ourselves with one another to our advantage or disadvantage. Rather, the gifts of the Spirit are given to us so we can be dependent on each other, participating in life together, serving one another, united in one heart and purpose.

We belong... to each other. And our gifts belong to each other - they are given to us by the Spirit for the common good.

How has God gifted you? And how are you using his gifts in love for the common good?

What gifts of the Spirit do you see in those around you?

Remember

Receive

1 Corinthians 13:1-14:1

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away....

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Follow the way of love...



Reflect

When all is said and done, the Jesus way is very simple: Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love one another as we have been loved by God.

In this very familiar passage, Paul makes the abstract very concrete indeed. He describes great and amazing gifts of the Spirit, incredible displays of faith, and impossible acts of self-sacrifice. And then he makes his point: without love, all these things are empty, hollow... without love, they are nothing.

Think of those you spend your days among. Your family, your colleagues, your friends, your neighbors, those who share the highway with you...

Does this pattern of love describe how you seek to relate with them? What gets in the way?

Follow the way of love...

Remember

Receive

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.



Reflect

You ask your spouse to forgive you. You are genuinely repentant, but you've hurt her, and she's not ready yet to reconcile. What are you to do?

You are trying to be a witness to Jesus, and you do what you can to reflect him in your life, and you do what you are able to speak of him to those you encounter. But it doesn't go well - you encounter indifference, rejection perhaps, even scorn. What now?

You trust God with your finances, and give generously to those in need, trusting him to provide for you. But there's an unexpected shake-up at work, and you lose your job. What next?

It is in these moments that our faith in Jesus, and our hope in him, and our love for him grow deeper and take root within us - if we stay firm in our trust in him.

And it is in these moments that we realize how much we need each other. We need companions on the journey.

Do you have trusted friends who are walking the Jesus way with you? Or are you traveling alone?

Remember



Matthew 6:5–13

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This, then, is how you should pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**And forgive us our sins,
as we also have forgiven those who sin against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.**

***For yours is the kingdom,
the power
and the glory...***

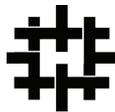
From this time forth and forever.

Amen.

Easter service times:

Saturday, March 26, 5:30pm

Sunday, March 27, 9am, 10:30am, & 12pm



HERITAGE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

7413 Maxtown Road, Westerville, Ohio 43082

info@heritagecc.org | 614-898-9412 | heritagecc.org