



Reconciliation for restored relationship

FEBRUARY 2018 DEVOTIONAL

Happy Valentine's Day!

We know the phrase “*true love*” can be cliché. We also know there is an authentic love that endures through time and testing. There's so much more about love than just idle words or unkept promises.

It's comforting and affirming to read the scriptures about God's love: **John 3:16**: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*” It comforts us because we have tasted of the goodness of God and His mercy; we know He will always be faithful. When He tells us He loves us, we know it is not a careless expression. Hearing those words from God, we know it is real and trustworthy: He wants to draw us closer to Him into a deeper relationship.

This month's devotional theme is **Reconciliation**. Each day will explore a different aspect: **Day 1: Reconciliation with God** **Day 2: Reconciliation among believers** and **Day 3: Reconciliation for the world**. Reconciliation is a word bound together with other themes of grace - such as redemption and forgiveness. In the New Testament the act of reconciling can be described as when a former enemy is restored to friendship and restored to favor.

This is the very thing God did through his Son, Jesus, on the cross. When Jesus gave His life for us, He made a way for humanity to receive a right relationship with God by faith. Jesus spoke of this new relationship with Him in **John 7: 37-39**: “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.*” Some of us may have started out in faith, but over time may have forgotten how deep and wide God's love is for us.

This is our time to seek, hunger and thirst for God and His restoration and healing! Our God desires to fill us and restore us completely with all of His fullness of light and life. This is the path of the righteous; it grows brighter and brighter to the full day.

INFORMATION ON FASTING

Visit bethelworld.org and the February 2018 devotional for information on the purpose of fasting, helpful tips while fasting and appropriate things to do and not do during a time of fasting.

BETHEL PRAYER SCHEDULE

Monday: Prayer at 6am and Noon in the sanctuary.
Tuesday: Prayer at 6am and Noon in the sanctuary.
Wednesday: Monthly Church-wide Day of Prayer and Fasting – Prayer at 6am and Noon in the sanctuary -7pm Service

“Seeking God Diligently”

READ

Luke 19:1-10 • John 15:4-5 • Hebrews 11:6 • Hosea 10:12 • I
Chronicles 16:8-12 • Proverbs 8:12-21 • Romans 5:6-11 •
Matthew 6:33 • Jeremiah 29:11-14

REFLECT

As **Luke 19:1-10** points out, Zaccheus was “making haste” to see the Lord. He was running to see Jesus; he was diligently seeking the Lord. Zaccheus was giving his best effort to find Jesus, and he was going to do whatever it took to find Him – even to the point of climbing a tree.

What was motivating this wealthy chief of tax collectors to seek the Lord with all of his heart? Zaccheus was in a high position in Rome; from all appearances, he lacked nothing. The answer is in **verse 10**: “*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” Zaccheus was answering the Lord’s call.

Jesus stopped where he was and said “*Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.*” Jesus was also making haste to find Zaccheus, and this was not just a quick, “hi and goodbye” moment. Jesus wanted to stay at Zaccheus’ home. This is the same word used in John 15:4-5, meaning to abide, remain and endure. Jesus came to seek and to save Zaccheus; to find him, save him and restore him. Once Zaccheus responded to the call, Jesus said to him (paraphrased), “*Today salvation, healing and restoration and a lasting relationship with Me has come to this house...*”

As you seek God diligently, you will find He is seeking you as well! As you draw near to Him, He is drawing near to you. He wants to remain with you and endure with you; He desires to restore you and make you whole. Jesus will never leave nor will He ever give up on you; the Lord desires to remain in you so you would bear much fruit!

According to **Hebrews 11:6**, if you are having a tough time of believing, what can you do to get back on track? Name two things you need to do.

What are some of the rewards of seeking the Lord? (see Jer. 29:11-14, Matt. 6:33)

Do you desire to get things right in your life? Do you desire more order in your life? Do you have a desire to be restored? Or a desire to be fulfilled? How will God help you according to Luke 11:9-10?

What are some rewards Zaccheus received because of seeking God? Read Luke 19:1-10.

RESPOND

- Repent for any areas in your life where you are not putting God and His Kingdom first.
- Ask God to forgive you and cleanse and set you on a path of restoration and healing.
- Write down areas where you will seek Him and trust Him for His favor and His reward.

“A Culture that Builds Relationships”

READ

Romans 12 • Matthew 18:21-22 • Matthew 18:15 • Galatians 6:1-5 • I Corinthians 13:4-8 • Ephesians 4:25-27 • Ephesians 4:29-32 •

REFLECT

“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 1:7

These words of the Apostle Paul were received with great encouragement and excitement by the church in Rome. This letter to the Romans is the word of God. The believers there had thirsted and hungered for this and now they had it in their hands! The stories of the Church in China in the 1980's come to mind. Teams of Christian missionaries would secretly bring suitcases full of Bibles wrapped as “gifts” to the underground church. Later stories were told of remote villages in China receiving only 1 page of the entire Bible. To the Chinese believers, this was the gift of God's holy word and it was read and shared over and over again.

As we read Romans 12:1-2 may we have a fresh appreciation for what we hold in our hands. The early saints did not conform to the “pattern” or culture of the world. Instead, they lived out the kingdom culture that Paul taught them in Rom 12: 9-21. It was a life of serving with deep affection and respect for one another. They laughed and cried and prayed together. They spent time, had meals and raised kids together. This new way of life together was born out of being transformed by continual renewing of their minds in the precious word of God. We too will have life-giving relationships that endure, as we build them on the living and powerful word of God! It will happen, for God has promised it!

Discuss and share with each other in small group discussion.

In Romans 12: 9-21 what are some of the verses that stand out to you about building strong friendships?

Romans 12: 5 mentions the body of Christ. What should my attitude be toward others in the body?

Is there a connection between your health and unforgiveness? Is there a connection between effective prayer and forgiveness? Please discuss Eph 4: 25-27

Do you think God wants you to be a peacemaker? What does it mean in scripture when it says “Blessed are the peacemakers?” Talk about this idea as it relates to Romans 12:14-21. Talk about what you see in the scripture.

RESPOND

- Repent for any times where you do not trust the word of God or His direction.
- Ask God for help and boldness to step out in faith to be connected to others in the church.
- Write down the scriptures that you will meditate upon that will renew your mind.

“Restoring Unity as We Agree in Prayer”

READ

Matthew 18:19 • Ephesians 4:1-6 • Acts 2:42-43 • Acts 1:14 • II Chronicles 7:14 • I John 5:14-15 • Acts 12:5-7 •

REFLECT

“That they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” John 17:23

“Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3

These scriptures are relevant for us today. They are for believers all over the world so the church would have unity. Jesus knew if believers would be one, *then* the world would see a real and visible love in the Body of Christ. Some remember the song and lyrics, “We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord, and they will know we are Christians by our love.” So then, how do we achieve this oneness together? Let us look at prayer as a way we can experience this unity.

In **Matthew 18:19-20** Jesus says, “Again I say to you, that if two *agree* on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have *gathered together in my name*, I am in their midst.” The word *agree* is where we get the word “symphony” or “harmony of sound.” Here it means, “a perfect agreement of the hearts, desires, wishes and voices of two or more persons praying to God.” (Adam Clarke Commentary)

The idea of agreeing will be a challenge for us. It will require humility, patience and forbearance with one another in love. (**Eph 4:1-6**). It will be worth the sacrifice. As we agree and pray, there is nothing impossible with God! Think about it: we have the full permission and authority from God to move hearts, mountains and kings together in the Name of Jesus! The world will see our unity and our love for one another; it will help compel them to be reconciled to God. Halleluiah!

Read Matthew 18:19-20. What are the conditions in this passage in order to receive the blessing of “anything you ask, it shall be done”? _____

What is the divine connection between love and unity as seen in John 17:23 and Matt 18:19-20?

What are some of the ways we can experience and maintain the unity of the Spirit as seen in Eph 4:1-6?

As you read Acts 12:5, how important was prayer among the believers in the early church? How is it just as important today? _____

RESPOND

- Repent for any times where you do not trust the word of God or His direction.
- Ask God for help and boldness to step out in faith to be connected to others in the church.
- Write down the scriptures that you will meditate upon that will renew your mind.