

LIVE

THE STORY



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LIVE THE STORY DEVOTIONAL

This **devotional** is part of a discipleship journey called Live The Story (LTS). Along with **gathering weekly** in small groups and engaging in **daily practices** LTS exists to help people learn to live the story of Jesus in every part of their lives.

These personal devotions are intended to help you work through some of the key ideas from each session of LTS as you consider their implication for your life.

Each reflection takes one scripture passage and looks at it from 5 different angles (one angle a day for five days allowing for one rest day before the next weekly gathering).

The pace of the devotions is intentionally slow because the transformed life is often a matter of depth before breadth and depth takes time.

The goal is not that you would just go through a list of bible passages but that, as you sit with one key idea a day, the passages would go through you.

By meditating on their truths, sitting with their effects, and placing yourself within them, the hope is that you would discover more of Jesus and, in time begin to look like him.

Each devotion has 5 elements and should take you 15-20 minutes to complete.

The prayer

The first reading

The response

The second reading

The reflection

I pray that as you commit this time to God He would meet with you in significant ways.

As always, should you need any help, please feel free to get in touch at www.mattlewis.co.za

Praying for you as you journey,

Matt



WHY JESUS: I AM

THE PRAYER

Find a quiet space to be alone with God where you won't be distracted. This may be early in the morning, somewhere in the day when you can slip away from the busyness of your work, or later in the evening when you've finished all of your necessary tasks.

Whenever you take time for devotions, what matters is that you try to make it a time when you can focus on God. It would be good to turn off your phone, close a door, and sit in a way that will help you stay awake (it's unlikely that lying down will do this).

Once you've found a space, make yourself comfortable and take a moment to slow down.

- Closing your eyes may help you minimise distractions.
- Breathe deeply and ask the Holy Spirit to awaken you to his presence.
- When you are ready, speak with God about your devotion time. Ask him to help you focus on what you are reading and to hear what he is saying. Ask him to stir your heart with his truth and to bring real and lasting change through the power of his spirit.
- Give yourself a moment in this space and then end your prayer time by slowly reciting the following passage two or three times out loud.

Lord, I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Amen. Psalm 119:10-11 (MSG)

THE FIRST READING

In each devotion, there is a first and second reading of the same passage. In the first reading, I encourage you to read slowly (preferably out loud) and take notice of what stands out as you do. How might God be "turning up the volume" on a thought, word, verse, image, or emotion in the passage?

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

RESPONSE

Take some time to respond (write down, draw, pray, etc.) to God's prompting in the first reading of the passage. What is he highlighting and saying to you through this?

THE SECOND READING

Read the passage again (slowly and preferably out loud) through the "lens" of what The Spirit highlighted in the first reading. Listen for anything else the Spirit might be saying.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

THE REFLECTION: "I AM"

Each devotion ends with a short reflection from me. My hope is that these thoughts would confirm what God has been speaking to you in your own response time, and serve to clarify some of the key ideas that help us live the story of Jesus.

It's not the first time we read these words in the bible. Many years before this moment, before Thomas or Philip asked the question, and before Jesus moved into the neighbourhood, there was Moses. A man running from a past he was trying to forget. A prince shepherding sheep, a leader lost in the desert, a destiny buried under regret. And yet, even there on the far side of the wilderness, in a moment when he least expected it, God found him. Calling out to Moses from a burning bush, God invites him to step onto the Holy Ground of encounter.

There he would rediscover who he was always meant to be, a liberator of the oppressed, the leader of a nation, the conqueror of an empire. Overwhelmed by the immensity of so great a task, his first question leaves him floundering in doubt.

We're all aware of what we aren't. All of us have found ourselves on the far side of the wilderness in some way, shape, or form. And yet, just like he found Moses, God finds us. When he finds us he calls us; not to a life lost in the desert but to a redemptive existence of purpose.

The Bible makes some pretty big claims about what Jesus has done and what that means for your life. You may be overwhelmed by the seeming immensity of it all.

Perhaps, like Moses, like all of us, your reflex is to count yourself out in light of who you are not. Can I encourage you not to?

Don't run from the life you know you long for but are afraid to take hold of. The calling of God has very little to do with who you are or aren't. Just as Jesus sat before his disciples and asked them, Who do you say that I am? He sits before you now with the same question. How you answer that question is what stands between you and your humanity. I know, we live in a world obsessed with its own power while drowning in the consequences of its own weakness. However, contrary to what many may think, this is actually the question that matters most.

Who do you say that He is?

When we take the time to ask this question and then stop long enough to listen - When we take off our sandals and step onto the Holy Ground of encounter with God - we will hear his answer whispering to us in the deep places of our soul.

"I AM."

I know you are not. Me too. But let me assure you; He is, and that changes everything.

WHY JESUS: THE WAY

THE PRAYER

- Find a quiet space.
- Breathe deeply and recognise God with you in this moment.
- When you are ready, speak to God about this time together.
- After you've finished praying, go through the following passage a few times slowly and thoughtfully (preferably out loud).
- Allow God to meet you in these words.

Lord, I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Be blessed, God; train me in your ways of wise living. Amen. Psalm 119:10-12 (MSG)

THE FIRST READING

Read this passage slowly (preferably out loud) as you allow God to meet you in these words. Pay attention to anything God might be highlighting as you do.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

RESPONSE

Take some time to respond (write down, draw, pray, etc.) to God's prompting in the first reading of the passage. What is he highlighting and saying to you through this?

THE SECOND READING

Read the passage again (slowly and preferably out loud) through the "lens" of what The Spirit highlighted in the first reading. Listen for anything else the Spirit might be saying.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

THE REFLECTION

So you're human? Really? How do you know? How do any of us know?

As our lives unfold on this pebble flying through in an infinite universe of time, space, and opinion, how do we really know what it means to be here at all? I think the truth is that we don't. Not really. Granted, we've been poking around in the dark for as long as any of us can remember, fumbling for clues about things like origin, ailment, and cure (Where we're from, why we hurt, and how we find healing).

But, one look at what we call "human" today shows us just how desperately we have lost our way. We've followed the leaders of money, sex, and power and they have taken us far from home.

We still ache though. Deep within we long for something that none of these things can shake. And so it is that we keep searching. What we're looking for is a way back to ourselves. The sobering truth, however, is that there is no self to come back to apart from God.

Like it or not, we are from somewhere. We didn't make ourselves. Humanity was not our idea. We are God's, and any hope we have of being fully human is found ultimately with him. When we forget this, when we try to be God for ourselves, we lose our way.

Thankfully, God in his goodness has not left us to wander through the maze of our own rebellion alone. He hasn't even given us an impersonal map expecting us to trace a path to freedom. No. His response is far more intimate than that. Seeing the mess that we have created, He steps into the maze with us, reaches out his hand, and asks us to trust him.

To follow him.

Jesus asks us to model our lives after his own and in so doing to discover what it truly means to be human. The miracle of Jesus certainly includes forgiveness of sin and the promise of heaven when we die, but that is just the beginning.

The radical declaration of Jesus is that when we could no longer find the way back to ourselves, back to God. The way found us. And, the saving that he offers is about so much more than just a prayer and a waiting room till we die. It's about friendship with God that changes who we are while we live.

A friendship that reveals what it truly means to be human as we follow - in thought, word, and deed - the greatest human who ever lived.

In our age we are bombarded with many “ways”, all of them claiming to lead us to the good life. However, if we hope to live the story. If we hope to step into God’s intention for our short part of his eternal plan, we need to recognise that there are not many ways that will lead us there.

There is only one way, and his name is Jesus.

WHY JESUS: THE TRUTH

THE PRAYER

- Find a quiet space.
- Breathe deeply and recognise God with you in this moment.
- When you are ready, speak to God about this time together.
- After you've finished praying, go through the following passage a few times slowly and thoughtfully (preferably out loud).
- Allow God to meet you in these words.

Lord, I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Be blessed, God; train me in your ways of wise living. I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel that comes from your mouth. Amen. Psalm 119:10-13 (MSG)

THE FIRST READING

Read this passage slowly (preferably out loud) as you allow God to meet you in these words. Pay attention to anything God might be highlighting as you do.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

RESPONSE

Take some time to respond (write down, draw, pray, etc.) to God's prompting in the first reading of the passage. What is he highlighting and saying to you through this?

THE SECOND READING

Read the passage again (slowly and preferably out loud) through the "lens" of what The Spirit highlighted in the first reading. Listen for anything else the Spirit might be saying.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

THE REFLECTION

Gravity is real. I learned this the hard way as a young boy. I climbed to the top of my fathers' concrete barbecue armed with nothing more than a tea towel around my neck and a deep conviction in my gut that I could fly.

You see, the night before this moment, much like Martin Luther King Junior, I had a dream. In this dream, I floated through the air with effortless swipes of my hands as if swimming through water. When I woke up the next morning the line between fantasy and reality had all but disappeared.

I jumped out of bed and ran outside. Filled with the assurance that only the imagination of a child could bring; I climbed the concrete barbecue, tiny hand over tiny hand until I was standing on the top of it. Over a meter off the ground, tea towel blowing in the wind, I stood there for a moment, certain that I was the next superman. And then, I jumped. Not with caution or restraint, but with the kind of abandon that certainty brings. You can imagine what happened next. After a split second of freedom, a first swipe of the hand quickly turned into a frantic flailing of the arms. My illusions were shattered. The line between fantasy and reality came screeching back into focus and no tea towel could save me from the inevitable fall.

SLAM! The ground, like gravity, was real.

Truth, like the ground, like gravity, is real.

It's what we slam into when we realise we are wrong. We might not like it, we might try to deny it, but sooner or later, if we ignore it, we will find ourselves falling through the air of our own imagination and slamming into the bedrock of what is.

Jesus comes to wake us up from our misguided fantasies and calls us to his pre-ordained reality. He offers us truth. The "inside scoop" on how he's made his world and how he intends for us to flourish in it. Like a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, His Truth, spoken in His words and embodied in His life, leads us into the fullness of what it means to be human.

We can reject it. He's given us that freedom. We can insist on being the superman of our own story, deciding what we will do with our lives. But truth doesn't change. No matter how much we believe in our own imagination, we are still the little boy wearing a tea towel, seconds away from a rude awakening.

The irony of it all is that our dreams aren't far off from the truth. Our longing to fly is God-breathed. Humanity was created for an incredible purpose. But not on our own terms, not in our own strength. Jesus offers us his truth because he longs to lead us into his purpose.

While we may perceive it as the limitation we so fear, truth is actually the liberation we most desire. If only we would trust him.

WHY JESUS: THE LIFE

THE PRAYER

- Find a quiet space.
- Breathe deeply and recognise God with you in this moment.
- When you are ready, speak to God about this time together.
- After you've finished praying, go through the following passage a few times slowly and thoughtfully (preferably out loud).
- Allow God to meet you in these words.

Lord, I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Be blessed, God; train me in your ways of wise living. I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel that comes from your mouth I delight far more in what you tell me about living than in gathering a pile of riches. Amen. Psalm 119:10-14 (NIV)

THE FIRST READING

Read this passage slowly (preferably out loud) as you allow God to meet you in these words. Pay attention to anything God might be highlighting as you do.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

RESPONSE

Take some time to respond (write down, draw, pray, etc.) to God's prompting in the first reading of the passage. What is he highlighting and saying to you through this?

THE SECOND READING

Read the passage again (slowly and preferably out loud) through the "lens" of what The Spirit highlighted in the first reading. Listen for anything else the Spirit might be saying.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

THE REFLECTION

That's what we're all looking for, isn't it? The life. The good life, the great life, the "my life is better than your life" life. At least that's how it seems when you consider our preoccupation with pursuing happiness and pleasure. Not to mention how committed we are to share our success in that pursuit, however fleeting or superficial it may be, with the world on whatever social media platform we can find.

"Look, look! I found it! I found the life!" But have we? Has our preoccupation with finding the life we wanted actually satisfied the longing? I don't think it has. Why? Is it perhaps because the life we thought we wanted isn't the life we really needed? If so, where do we turn? How do we find what seems to be so elusive?

As with all great questions, the great answer is Jesus.

Unfortunately, so many of us have stopped looking to Jesus for anything. He is no longer an authority on truth, or justice, or life in our culture, and it shows. The unrest in our souls even in light of all that we have achieved is evidence that we are taking our deepest questions to the wrong places. Which should make us wonder. Why don't we go to Jesus? Why do so many of us think about anything but life when we hear his name? Is it because we've misunderstood life, or is it because we've misunderstood Jesus?

Regardless of how we answer these questions, the truth is simple.

Jesus is all about life!

Not only is He all about life; He is life. And not just any kind of life, but life and life to the full, eternal life; a life that brings light to the whole world. Whatever it is we think about Jesus, it is so important that we understand this.

Jesus is offering us life.

If we will follow Him, walk in His ways, and submit ourselves to His truth, He will lead us to a kind of life that goes far beyond anything we could imagine. He has not come to ruin you, to ridicule you, or to reject you. That is the work of the devil.

Jesus has come that you may have life!

When we come to believe this, dropping our defense, surrendering into the trustworthy arms of our God, trusting the process regardless of what it may look

like or feel like in the moment, that is when we begin to take hold of our humanity.

Trusting God is how we find the life we so deeply long for.

WHY JESUS: THE FATHER

THE PRAYER

- Find a quiet space.
- Breathe deeply and recognise God with you in this moment.
- When you are ready, speak to God about this time together.
- After you've finished praying, go through the following passage a few times slowly and thoughtfully (preferably out loud)
- Allow God to meet you in these words.

Lord, I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Be blessed, God; train me in your ways of wise living. I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel that comes from your mouth I delight far more in what you tell me about living than in gathering a pile of riches. I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you, I attentively watch how you've done it. I relish everything you've told me of life, I won't forget a word of it. Amen. Psalm 119:10-16 (NIV)

THE FIRST READING

Read this passage slowly (preferably out loud) as you allow God to meet you in these words. Pay attention to anything God might be highlighting as you do.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

RESPONSE

Take some time to respond (write down, draw, pray, etc.) to God's prompting in the first reading of the passage. What is he highlighting and saying to you through this?

THE SECOND READING

Read the passage again (slowly and preferably out loud) through the "lens" of what The Spirit highlighted in the first reading. Listen for anything else the Spirit might be saying.

Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NLT)

THE REFLECTION

"This changes everything!" Those were the words that came rushing out of my mouth as I danced around the coffee table in my living room that night. I had been struggling with my faith for a while. I had some questions. Questions like, "how could God just love us?" or "what about my mistakes? "I have made so many mistakes!"

I shared these questions with a friend who asked if I would be willing to talk about it. We sat for hours, pouring over a bible opened on a coffee table in the middle of the room. Back and forth, he would assure me of God's love for me; I would assure him of how unloveable I was. Of how unloveable we all were and what that meant for our religious lives. Eventually, our conversation took us to a passage in Romans that broke through my doubting heart.

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

Those words hit me like a freight train and in a moment the scales fell from my eyes. Suddenly I saw what before I could not imagine. The spirit cried out from within me, "ABBA FATHER!" and I knew that it was true. I knew I was a son and God was my Father; and that the fear of my slavery mindset had been done away with in Jesus. This truth pulled me to my feet and set me to dancing in deep celebration.

What I've learned since then is that Jesus came, not so much to change God's mind about us, but to change our minds about God. Jesus came to declare once and for all to a humanity in search of home that God is not what we thought He was. He is not distant, disappointed, or disinterested.

God is not waiting on us to do enough or pull ourselves together before he offers Himself to us in love. God is a father. Better yet, he is The Father. God is not a cosmic reflection of the failed fathers so many of us have experienced, nor a divine improvement on the wonderful fathers many of us call dad, but something else altogether. God is a perfect fulfillment of our eternal longing for all that a father should be rather than our temporary experience of all that our fathers (good or bad) have been. God runs to us with open arms, greets us with tears in His eyes, and calls us into an eternal celebration where everything He has is ours. (Luke 15:11-32)

When we know this, really know it, we find freedom. Striving comes to an end as we enter into the easy rhythms of his grace, and gratitude propels our lives into action. (Matthew 11:28-30)

That's why Jesus.

Because in all the spiritualities, in all the world, in all of time; Jesus is the one place where our maker meets us in the mess that we have made of our lives, calls us to His way, teaches us His truth, offers us His life and leads us to The Father.

As we come to accept His invitation, when the gravity of His goodness short circuits our skeptical souls, our lives ignite in worship, and day by day we long for His sweet presence in which we are changed.

This is ground zero of learning to live the story. To know our God as Father and live wholeheartedly as his sons and daughters.

**If you would like to further explore
the LTS journey please contact us at
www.mattlewis.co.za/live-the-story**