

## Weekly Devotional : Week 10

April 9 – April 15, 2023

### How to use this devotional


For many of us, encountering God's presence and growing in our relationship with him are real desires of ours. However, we may have never been shown ways to practically accomplish those goals. These devotionals are designed to help guide you through different steps as you spend time with God during your week.

We encourage you to set aside space for a daily rhythm of spending time with Jesus. That could be as short as 15 minutes each day or you may want to spend 30 to 45 minutes. It's up to you. Each day's devotion provides an opportunity to reflect, read, pray, and take action in response to your time with God. May God meet you powerfully in this season!

These devotions are written and developed by Molly Ovenden. If you would like to read more of her work or learn more about her creative endeavors, you can visit her website at <https://mollyovenden.com/>

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### Week 10 : Day 1

 STORY

#### Imagine this:

You're in the hospital. There are several doctors and nurses surrounding your bed. You don't know where to look. There is such a frenzy of activity. The smell of disinfectants and all kinds of fluids you don't want to identify overwhelms your nostrils. Lights flash. Machines beep. Something stings, something rushes cool into you. Your mouth is dry, swollen, stale.

All of a sudden, someone says your name. It's repeated a couple of times before you can understand who is saying it. They have your attention now, and although your eyes are a bit blurry and out of focus, you lock eyes with this person. It's a doctor your age. They smile at you with such care and compassion.

Again, they say your name.

You feel peaceful in spite of everything in the frenzied state that it is. Perhaps you're even smiling, though you can't be sure because of all of the tubes.

The doctor begins to tell you in a loving voice, full of kindness how ill you are. As the doctor uses a lot of words you've never heard before, you reflect on your condition. You know you've not been treating your body well. You've thought about changing, but it's easier to let life happen as and when it does, instead of being proactive and moving toward healthy living.

You hear the doctor explain to you that they will get you back on your feet in a few days, but that if you don't follow these instructions—they hand you a packet of information—you'll end up in this same situation again, or even worse.

You consider your options. Lying down in this chaos of hospital staff, saline solutions, and hospital gowns gaping in the back are the least of your worries for the future. You want to have a future life. You want to actually live and thrive.

You promise yourself and the doctor that you'll follow the instructions because you want to be well. You want to be healed.

 SCRIPTURE

**Exodus 15:22-27**


<sup>22</sup> Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) <sup>24</sup> So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

<sup>25</sup> Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.

There the Lord issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test.

<sup>26</sup> He said, "If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you."

<sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

 REFLECT

- What part of scripture feels the most challenging? Why?
- What might God want to say to you about Himself as the miraculous Jesus who heals?
- You might want to write your reflections in your journal.

 PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for creating me, thank you for loving me, and thank you for healing me. I receive your healing touch on my body and in my heart, in Jesus' name. Thank you. Amen.


 ACTION

**Grab Your Journal.**

Write your thoughts in response to the sermon, Alpha video, and/or the above scripture passage. You can set a timer for 5-10 minutes, if you'd like to focus for a time. Otherwise, give yourself a few moments to contemplate what you've read today and write whatever comes to mind. You may choose to journal out your own prayers or questions here, too.

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**Week 10 : Day 2**

 STORY

**Imagine this:**

You're at a conference for your work. You've saved money specifically for this conference and made the trek to fly to a couple of hours and stay in a nice hotel. One of the speakers at the conference is someone you've learned from for a few years now. They had been researching this same topic when you were a student and you've been fascinated by their discoveries. You really would like to meet them.

As you check in at the conference, you look at the program. You've already been studying it for months since it was released and you registered. You know that you have a few opportunities for seminars and networking sessions in which you could connect with this expert.

You've been experiencing some issues that you know the expert will have insight to offer because of what you know they've been researching. You don't want to come across as overly keen, but you have been struggling with similar issues for a while now and you'd love a resolution.

You attend the first main session and although you arrive 30 minutes early, you have to weave through people to find a seat toward the front. It's a good session and you learn updated information relevant to your work, but not the answers you're looking for. The speaker leaves the stage immediately after speaking and with so many people you aren't able to get to meet them.

You know you can try at the next couple sessions—which, you do, but to no avail. Each time, there are too many people and you aren't able to ask your question. Now, it's the last day of the conference and you're attending a breakout session on a specialist topic, presented by this same expert. A colleague of yours knows of your challenge to meet this expert and decides to help, attending the session with you.

The room is quieter than you'd anticipated, but still very full. Your colleague and you are still able to find seats toward the front. As the seminar ends, you know that it's now or never. Your colleague is determined, too. In your desperation, you apologize to

those whom you're pushing past, but you know you have to be assertive if you're going to meet this expert. Your colleague makes a path for you and makes eye contact with the speaker.

You aren't sure what your work friend said or did, but the expert is waiting at the side of the stage and reaches out their hand with a smile. You're almost out of breath because of this nerve wracking pursuit. You reach out your hand to introduce yourself and you ask your question. The expert considers it thoughtfully and nods, agreeing at how challenging it is. They offer a few suggestions for a solution and you feel a sense of peace. One of the ideas especially makes sense. It's a simple fix, really, but you'd never considered it from this perspective.

You thank the expert for sharing extra time with you and they offer you a business card and say you can reach out any time. You feel beyond grateful. You exchange parting words and walk back to your work colleague. You thank your friend for their part in helping you get to have this conversation—the help and conversation have both been life changing and healing for your heart and mind.

 SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 4:23-25**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

 REFLECT

- Which aspect of this scripture feels hopeful to you today? Why?
- What might God want to say to you about following Jesus? About bringing others to experience Jesus? About Jesus' healing work?
- You might want to write your reflections in your journal.

 PRAYER

God, thank you that you are the God of healing. I am coming to you now with this problem (INSERT PROBLEM HERE) and I need your healing. Would you give me courage to come to you with all the areas of my life that are broken and in pain? And, would you help me to be courageous to bring others to you to get healed, too? Specifically, I lift up (INSERT NAME OF PERSON NEEDING HEALING HERE) to you. Heal them, in Jesus' name and give me the words of truth to speak hope into their life. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

 ACTION

**Engage your senses.**

You may choose to go for a walk outside or you may choose to stay inside, but spend time becoming aware of your body. This may feel uncomfortable at first, but allow yourself to overcome the awkward to notice your body: how it takes up space, how it moves, how it feels. Notice the different sensations you feel in your fingertips, the back of your head, your toes, your abdomen.

As you survey your entire body, one piece at a time, what thoughts come to mind? Are there parts of you that are in pain? Are there parts that don't function how they used to or how you'd like them to? Are there parts that you battle against?

Thank God for how he made you and ask him to heal your heart's perspective toward your body or a broken, ill, or diseased part of your body.


Continue your survey and notice what else comes to mind. Are there parts of you that feel healthy, vibrant, strong? Are there parts of you that used to be unwell that now can move freely without disease? Are there parts that you love in your body?

Thank God for how he made you and thank him for specific parts of your body which you love, are proud of, or have taken really good care of. Ask God to give you his perspective of your body.

Take some time to write a journal entry to reflect about this sensory experience. It doesn't have to be a long entry: simply set a timer for 5-10 minutes.

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**Week 10 : Day 3**

 STORY

**Imagine this:**

You come across someone who is really sad. Perhaps it's someone who regularly processes your pick-up order for you to collect from the grocery store. Maybe it's someone in your work or a neighbor—or, even a family member.

When you ask them about what they are experiencing, they share about physical ailments they suffer from, too. As you stay curious in your questioning, you discover that their physical illnesses started to pop up at a significant time of emotional pain—maybe it was a breakup, a death of a dream or a loved one.

As you practice listening really well and showing compassion toward them and their hurt, you wonder about whether they need to go to the doctor or if they just need a friend. You continue to ask questions and they share. Each time they share, they look less sad. Each time you ask a question, their face is a little brighter.

You don't know exactly why they seem to be doing better—*I haven't done anything*, you admit silently—but, perhaps the act of being present to sit and really listen was a gift. Or, maybe it was something else. When you part ways, however, you even feel better than when you encountered this person and this is quite intriguing—it's something you supposed you'll likely be mulling over for a while.

 READ

“And giving a person hope is sometimes the best remedy for illnesses.”  
— Father Raniero Cantalamessa

Take notes on what thoughts come to mind when you read this quote. You may want to add your thoughts into considering the following reflections or prayers.

 REFLECT

- When have you had an experience of the darkness of hopelessness?
- Why do you think this hopelessness experience has had such a significant impact on you?
- What would it feel like to have hope where you're feeling hopeless?
- How might you share hope with someone else?

 PRAYER

God of hope, show me hope where I'm feeling hopeless. In areas of life where I'm not hoping in you, but in transient, shifting, shallow, not-life-giving things instead, would you shine a light on those places? And then, would you help me to keep my eyes focused on you and my soul's hope fixed to you, God? Help me to be a person of hope who brings light into dark places and joy to sorrowful souls, in Jesus' name. Amen.

 ACTION

**Get Creative.**

Visit an assisted living home or an elderly neighbor. You may need to ask the home director for permission, if you don't have a relative living there.

If you have young children in your life, bring them along. Bring craft supplies—whatever you have to hand. It doesn't have to be fancy or complicated. Spend some time chatting with those with you and simply make something colorful, fuzzy, shiny, textured, silly, and beautiful. Whatever comes out after 20 or 30 minutes or more.

You may want to chat about what hope means and if the older folks feel as though they have hope or if it's something missing in their lives. You may consider checking in with them again at the end of the making session to see how their feelings about hope might have changed. Notice whether anything has changed in your own heart or mind toward hope. Spend 5-10 minutes writing your reflections in your journal when you finish.

## Week 10 : Day 4

### STORY

#### **Imagine this:**

Every day you walk the same route to get to the same coffee shop. Some days you get a latte, other days a green tea, but on special days you treat yourself to a hot chocolate. Coffee shops are your happy place. Recently, you've felt a nudge to try a different coffee shop. You've been ignoring the nudge, though, because you're happy in your comfort zone.

A friend of yours invites you out to a different place—one you've not been to before. You notice a little resistance at first, but once you arrive, it feels peaceful. As your friend and you chat about your weeks and how nice your drinks are, conversation takes a turn.

Both of you turn to see a figure of a person in the corner of the cafe. You can tell right away this person looks ill. You wonder how they made it to the coffee shop because they have some visible issues that you imagine would make it more than a little challenging to move through the day at home, let alone in public.

You try to ignore this person because it's not polite to stare and you know there's nothing you can do to help, anyway. Your friend doesn't stop talking about this person, though. Your friend isn't being rude—they are talking about what it could be like to see someone get healed today.

Your friend shares how they've been recently challenged to pray for the next 100 people they encounter who are ill or suffering from some physical issues of any sort or generally in need of some type of healing. They are on prayer number seven—two of the people your friend prayed for had headaches that went away, but they weren't sure it was a miraculous healing from God. A couple of the people didn't seem to have any physical changes and another would need to go to the doctor for tests before that person would know whether they'd been healed.

“Would you come with me to pray for my eighth person?” your friend asks.

You feel nervous, but you reason with yourself that you've not got anything to lose, and you're just supporting your friend, anyway. So, you go with your friend.

It surprises you what happens when your friend begins to pray. You know that you'll remember this moment in time for the rest of your life.

### SCRIPTURE

#### **Luke 10:5-9**

<sup>5</sup> “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ <sup>6</sup> If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

<sup>8</sup> “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

 REFLECT

- If it's true that the Kingdom of God is near, how would you like to respond?
- Where might God be inviting you to go that is a different place from your normal environment?
- What would it mean to you to have your life and how you live it bring healing to everyone you encounter?

 PRAYER

LORD, I am your disciple. You have called me to heal the sick in your name. This feels scary, out of my league, and frankly a bit socially awkward. But, here's the thing, God: I want to see people get healed. I want to see limbs grow back. I want to witness blind eyes being opened to see. I want to watch deaf ears perceiving sound how they are originally made to perceive it.

 ACTION

**Relational moment.**

Here is a challenge for you: This week, pray for one person each day to be healed. You can go to a hospital and speak to a chaplain, if you'd like to partner together (and you'll need permission to go into a hospital), but you don't have to.

Allow yourself to become aware of anyone with a sniffle, a stubbed toe, a headache, or a stomach ache. Call a friend or family member who you know has a long-term illness. After chatting with the person about their pain or sickness, you could pray for them to be healed.

Ask each person, in a really kind, appropriate, gentle, and loving way if you can pray for them right now. If they say yes, then, if appropriate, ask to put a hand on their shoulder or on the sick or hurting part. Try praying a simple prayer, thanking God for how much he loves this person and for God's healing touch. Tell the pain or ailment to go away and for the person to be healed in Jesus' name.

Then, check in with them to see how they are feeling. If it feels appropriate to pray again, you can do that. If they are healed, thank and praise God and celebrate you've witnessed a miracle. Otherwise, let the person know that you wanted to pray for them so they'd experience Jesus' friendship and love for them. And then, thank them for the opportunity to pray with them.

Whatever the healing results or not after praying with these people, reflect on how you feel after making this connection. You may want to record your thoughts or prayers for this person in your journal after your time together and keep track of how many people you've asked for healing for.



## Week 10 : Day 5

### STORY

#### **Imagine this:**

You are in a movie theater with a group of friends. The film you are there to see is the story of your life. You're a little bit nervous about what people will think about your private life they don't know about yet, but you settle into your seat, nonetheless.

As your life plays in significant moments big and small, you notice your heart lifting. Despite all of the hardship and pain in your past, you feel a sense of gratitude. The things that felt particularly bad at the time, now are just a flicker of time that's gone by.

Various scenes play out in clips of moments when you recall feeling devastated, disappointed, humiliated, hopeless. Moments later, as more scenes flash, those painful moments make sense and you have a idea of how many tiny events in your life were profound redeeming moments.

It shocks you that from many things in your past you have overcome and so many things you thought were life changing in a negative way, really weren't. They actually created the way for something new and better. Not everything looks polished, but a surprising amount is more hopeful than you remembered thinking it could be.

The film ends with a scene of you sitting in a movie theater with your friends. It's a pretty meta experience, but you take a deep breath, feeling satisfied about the life you've lived because of this new perspective shift. You feel loved. You are thankful. You have a sense of fulfillment and hope for the future.

### SCRIPTURE

#### **Psalm 103: 1-5**

Praise the Lord, my soul;  
    all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

<sup>2</sup> Praise the Lord, my soul,  
    and forget not all his benefits—

<sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins  
    and heals all your diseases,

<sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit  
    and crowns you with love and compassion,

<sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good things  
    so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

 ACTION

## Examen

Reflect on your week using an ancient spiritual practice called, examen. You may want to add these examen reflections to your other journal entries from this week.

You can spend as little or as long as you'd like on each stage of this examen process. However, if this is a new practice or if you're short on time, you can start with 1 to 5 minutes for each stage of the examen.

- a) Consider this week's consolations - What good happened this week that filled me up, brought me joy, gave me energy? Why, God, did this fill me up? Where were you in this moment/instance/experience? God, thanks for being here with me in the consolations.
- b) Consider this week's desolations - What bad happened this week that drained me, felt sad or angering, emptied me? God, why did this empty me? Where were you in this moment/instance/experience? Thanks for being here with me in the desolations.
- c) Ask God: What do you want to say to me today about talking to you? About sharing my relationship with you with others? About how much you love me?
- d) Ask God: What do you think of me? What have you given me awareness for today that's more than I had at the beginning of the week?
- e) Spend a moment thanking God for showing up—even if it wasn't how you'd expected.