

• A 21 Day Devotional •

Red Letters

Reflections on the words of Jesus

DAY EIGHT

The Heart

21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

Mark 7:21-23 NIV

The Heart

Matthew 7:21-23 NIV

Throughout Scripture the heart is defined as the central and inmost part of our being. It is essentially the core of who we are as humans. What we think and what we do, whether good or bad, is an overflow of what is within our heart.

The things we watch, listen to, and read mold our hearts. Our eyes and ears are like a drop box to our hearts. Our minds live in the world our hearts create. If we fill our hearts with sexual imagery and lewd music, our minds will live in a perverted world. If we fill our hearts with horror and the occult, our minds will live in a world of fear. If we fill our hearts with profanity and crude humor, our minds will live in a profane and crude world. What we fill our hearts with will shape our thinking and is what will inevitably work itself out in our actions.

Heart of mine drawn to darkness,
Be renewed, be made in God's likeness.

Hear His words and be transformed,
Look to Jesus and be conformed.

DAY NINE

Who Do You Say I Am?

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” 28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

Mark 8:27-29 NIV

Who Do You Say I Am?

Mark 8:27-29 NIV

Who do people say that Jesus is? Some believe Him to be a prophet. Some believe Him to be a wise teacher. Some believe Him to just be a good humanitarian. Some even believe Him to be the world's greatest con artist.

But who do you say He is? More importantly, who we confess Him to be with our mouths should be evident in our actions. If we say He is Savior, the One who forgives sin, do we continue to live lives as slaves to sin without any conviction or repentance? If we say He is provider, do we trust Him with our finances through living generously? If we say He is love, do we continue in anger and hate? If we say He is hope, do we continue to live as if all hope is lost?

Who we say Jesus is changes nothing about the reality of who He actually is. If we say He is only a man, it changes nothing about the fact that He is God, the Creator of man. If we say He is only a prophet, it changes nothing about the reality that He is the One whom all prophets spoke of and pointed to. If we say He is only a good teacher, it changes nothing about the reality that He is the good teacher; the fount of all knowledge and wisdom. Our belief about Jesus will change nothing about Him, but it will change an awful lot about us.

You are my life,
My sin sacrifice.

You are my peace,
Though difficulties increase.

You are my all in all,
The strong arms that catch me when I fall.



DAY TEN

Jealous God

42 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea.

Mark 9:42 NIV

Jealous God

Mark 9:42 NIV

In this passage, our attention is drawn to our conduct and the way it affects others as they are following Jesus. This seems like such a harsh statement from Jesus, but then I began to think about my wife and my children. They are everything to me. I care about them far more than I care about myself. I would willingly endure pain, suffer humiliation, and even give my life to protect my family. If any man tried to harm my family or turn them against me I would be hard pressed to not want to destroy that person. Jesus modeled this same love and care toward us when we did absolutely nothing to deserve it.

Exodus 34 verse 14 says, "Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." He is not jealous because He is needy, but His love for us is so immeasurably deep and immensely wide that He is jealous toward anyone or anything that would draw us away from Him. If I, being a man, loving imperfectly, can feel a jealousy and vengeance toward anyone that would dare disturb that love then how powerful is the jealousy and vengeance of a God who loves perfectly? We never want to find ourselves on the side of the one who is disrupting the love and relationship between God and one of His people. Instead, our lives should push people to love Him and cherish Him all the more.

Jealous God, O furious fire,
You carry Your bride out of muck and mire..

Spotless You make us and spotless we'll be,
On the day You usher forth eternity.

Nothing can help the man who stands in Your way,
There will be no mercy for those who lead her astray.

DAY ELEVEN

Born Again

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." 4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

John 3:3-5 NIV

Born Again

John 3:3-5 NIV

No man or woman can ever see the natural world, the kingdom of man, apart from being birthed into it by human means. In the same way, no man or woman can ever see the supernatural world, the kingdom of God, apart from being birthed into it by spiritual means.

Jesus says that first an individual must be born of water. This is the natural birth by which we receive the natural mind. Jesus goes on to tell us that if a man or woman wants to experience the God life, they must not only be born of water, the natural, but of Spirit, the supernatural. It is a birth into the divine nature. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here." (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV) Our eyes and ears are opened to a new world. A world where God has always dwelt, but we lived as if he didn't; unaware of His presence. Our strength used to be spent in sin, but this is no longer our story. Now we offer ourselves, heart, soul, mind, and strength to be used for God's good purpose.

Through sinful man, born once,
Through Son of Man, born twice.

Upon the matchless worth of Christ
I have second birth, abundant life.



DAY TWELVE

He Must Be Killed

22 And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

Luke 9:22 NIV

He Must Be Killed

Luke 9:22 NIV

We must be very careful in the way we understand and communicate how it is that we are granted salvation. We live in an age of increasing liberality where the Bible is twisted and distorted to accommodate the desires and preferences of man. When we speak about God's love extended to us apart from the sacrifice of His Son we maximize our worth and minimize the worth of Christ. This is not the Gospel.

Proverbs 17:15 says, "Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the Lord detest them both." God's just anger burns against those who would let the guilty simply walk free. So He cannot overlook our guilt. God cannot remain just and justify sinners. Therefore, He satisfied His justice by pouring our punishment on Jesus.

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer." (Isaiah 53:10 NIV) God's love cannot cast your sin aside, but it can cast it on Jesus! "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5 NIV)

Beaten and bruised, bloodied and battered,
My chains He loosed, my shame He shattered.

Hung on a cross for all to see,
A banner painted red proclaiming victory.

DAY THIRTEEN

Quench Your Thirst

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,
14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed,
the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up
to eternal life."

John 4:13-14 NIV

Quench Your Thirst

John 4:13-14 NIV

Something that unites all mankind, young and old, rich and poor, is thirst. We are all attempting to satisfy a deep thirst in our souls. The woman that Jesus is speaking to in John chapter 4 has had five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband. She has been so thirsty for love and has sought it in the arms of men, but none have satisfied her soul. Others search for satisfaction in drugs and alcohol. Some attempt to quench their thirst in pursuit of wealth, prestige, and possessions. Men and women think they will satisfy their souls through travel and beholding the beauty of the earth, but this too will not satisfy until they come to the One who holds the earth in His hands. We are equally united in our inability to quench our thirst by our own means.

Jesus tells this woman that the water He offers, which is Himself, will not only eternally satisfy the thirst of all who would drink, but it will actually create a spring within them that will give life and satisfaction to our souls. He will quench our thirst.

Drinking from broken cisterns and bitter streams,
Longing for the living water He brings.

Drink soul, it is his will,
Be satisfied, O' have your fill.

DAY FOURTEEN

Bread of Life

32 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

John 6:32-33 NIV

Bread of Life

John 6:32-33 NIV

In the book of Exodus God calls Moses to lead the people of Israel out of slavery under the hand of the Egyptians. Being led out of Egypt, they find themselves in the desert with no permanent home and no established resources. They are called into a season of complete dependence on the provision of God. God blesses this wandering group in a miraculous way. Each morning He causes a wafer like substance, called manna, to cover the earth and each morning the people could go out to collect all that they needed. There was always enough for everyone to have his or her fill. This is how the people survived. for forty years!

Jesus is reminding the people that Moses never gave the people this bread from heaven but that it was God who saw after their need and their survival day after day. He now says that the true bread from heaven has come. Without manna in the desert, God's people would have surely perished or they would have turned back to Egypt and submitted themselves to slavery once again just for food. We too would perish apart from Christ and we have no need to look back to our "Egypt", to our old sinful lives, because there is more than enough in Jesus. He is all in all. He has now become what gives life to the whole world.

Sweet provision,
O' Bread of heaven.

There is no lack, I have no need,
For from Your hands, my soul does feed.