**Endless Summer #4: Imitating the Faithful**

**Matthew 24:32–35**

**August 20, 2023**

**DAILY DEVOTION**

Find a rhythm in God’s word this week! Follow this 5-day plan on your own or with your group!

[**https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/29941**](https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/29941)

**INSPIRATION**

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.”

—John Muir on our National Parks

**ICE BREAKER**

1. What is a beautiful natural place you’ve visited recently? What was the attraction of the place that either drew you there or inspired you to return again?
2. Teddy Roosevelt said: “The establishment of the National Park Service is justified by considerations of good administration, of the value of natural beauty as a National asset, and of the effectiveness of outdoor life and recreation in the production of good citizenship.” How can visiting a National Park or other beautiful or inspiring location help you draw closer to God and his creation?

**DEEP DIVE**

**Read this out loud**

An excerpt from the message this week:

“We are on a search all the time for perfection – perfect career – perfect marriage – perfect income – perfect kids – only to realize it is just not attainable – we start looking around – maybe she is perfect for me – maybe he is perfect for me – that job is – those kids are way better – and we start to compare – and Jesus warns against that – don’t covet – but when you are living as if there is no eternity – then it leads us to compare and to covet.”

**Read Psalm 119:89–90 and Isaiah 40:8 and then answer the following questions:**

1. Parts of the Old Testament have come down to us from as long ago as 3,500 years. We know Moses spent much of his time writing out the earliest stories of God’s chosen people in the first five books of the Old Testament. What does that say about the importance and endurance of God’s word across the Millennia? In what ways has his word impacted your life?
2. Many people think the Bible is full of a lot of commands, rules, “do’s and don’ts” and occasionally long lists of instructions for sacrifices or genealogies with names nearly impossible to pronounce. But mixed in with all that, much of the Bible tells the story of God’s people, and it includes the good, the bad, and the ugly histories. There’s no sugar-coating the story. What is one of your favorite stories or passages from the Bible that has had a profound impact on your life?
3. One regular year has 8,760 hours in it. It takes about 72 hours, or 3 days, to read through the entire Bible out loud. It goes even faster if you’re not reading out loud. That’s less than 1 percent of the year. How can you find and dedicate time to read through Bible in a year? If you’ve done that before, how did it impact you? If you haven’t, what impact do you think reading through the Bible in a year might have on your spiritual life and relationship with God?

**Read this out loud**

An excerpt from the message this week:

“We know that from our sacred text – it lets us know that God’s voice spoke the universe into existence.

Let there be…and it happened. He spoke and all the stars were born. He spoke and the darkness disappeared. He spoke – and there were mountains and animals – and birds. He spoke and all creation responded.

Jesus could speak and the wind and waves would obey.”

**Read Mark 4:35–41 and John 6:66–68 and then answer the following questions:**

1. Reading and studying God’s word is not intended to be a magic formula that will make everything better in your lives. Yes, sometimes it will lift you up and encourage you, but other times it will step on your toes and redirect you to a place of greater reliance on God. If you’ve had such an experience, describe a time when it was clear to you that God’s word (either written or in your heart) compelled you to take a certain course of action.
2. What is the biggest challenge when it comes to obeying God’s word?
3. What has been one of the most difficult concepts of God’s word for you to grasp or that you need help understanding? If you’re not willing to share it with the group, consider reaching out to someone you respect as a spiritual leader. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a pastor.

**Additional Study**

If you have time during your Small Group or you want to study more about the message topic, read and consider the following passages:

* Matthew 24:34–44
* Hebrews 4:8–13
* 2 Timothy 3:14–17
* Isaiah 55:8–13

**NEXT STEPS**

1. How are you going to apply the lessons learned in the message this week?
2. What can you do to encourage someone in your group to take their next step?

**PRAYER**

1. After sharing prayer requests, pray for the person on your right. Pray for that person throughout the week.
2. Is there someone in your group that could use a prayerful reminder that God is present in their lives?

**SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY**

Establish a regular rhythm of serving together! Below are some service opportunities.

* BENSON - Local Mission Partner is ABIDE. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* MILLARD - Local Mission Partner is Heartland Hope. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* FREMONT - Local Mission Partner is LifeHouse. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* OMAHA - Local Mission Partner is Open Door Mission. Contact Lyndsey Deyoe for more information.
* Or get to know your community! Seek out service opportunities in your area.