

# St. Paul: Weekly Devotions

*Devotions on week's readings  
for 10.04.15 Pentecost 19b*

## **Day One: Genesis 2:18-25**

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

God makes things simple. Sin makes them complicated. Just think of it, before Adam and Eve sinned what did they have to do? They simply devoted themselves to one another.

They did not judge. Their marriage had no shame or hesitation or guilt or grudge. They didn't have to figure out how this "one flesh" thing was supposed to work when it came time to share the chores.

Can we have that life now? The answer is yes... and no. No matter how much we love one another, no matter how romantic a marriage may seem at first, we are still sinful. Just like Adam and Eve began to immediately blame each other, we find fault with those we love. We serve ourselves. No marriage is perfect.

However, even though we no longer live in a perfect

Garden Of Love, we do have one important gift that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden.

Genesis says that they walked with God in the garden. We have that gift too.

If you wish, whenever you wish, you may walk in God's presence. As a couple, as a family, or as a single individual we know that we are never alone because we can always walk and talk with Jesus.

"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." That changed quickly. They became very self-conscious and aware of their sin and guilt. But we can go back to the Garden when we realize that our sin has been washed away. We are as fresh and clean as Adam and Eve on the day they first awoke.

Do you want to walk in the Garden? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

*Prayer: Father, teach me the simplicity of forgiveness and the purity of love. Show me Jesus. Amen.*

## Day Two: Hebrews 1:1-13

*For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet."*

We don't know who wrote the letter "to the Hebrews." It seems that his identity was not important enough to preserve. And yet, he says that \*our\* identity is very important.

In his first chapter he says that we used to have only the word of God spoken by the prophets. But now we have the word of God made flesh. We have God's Son, so that we can truly know our Father.

In his second chapter he tells us how God has lifted us up. Quoting Psalm 8, he reminds us that God has created us to be greater than the angels. God gave the earth to us, although we ruined God's creation by our sin. And still God lifted us up to be seated with him in heaven.

Hebrews says that God did not want merely servants.

God desired companions. "I have called you friends," Jesus said. He calls us his children. He describes us as his bride, something that he never says of any angel.

"What is man, that you are mindful of him..." We long to be significant. We want people to remember us. We want to make our mark in the world, or leave some lasting legacy. But we know that our lives are trivial. And yet, God is mindful of us. He considers us worth his time, his thought, his attention, his sacrifice.

The author to the Hebrews then applies this verse also to Jesus. He is the one who will ultimately be crowned with glory and honor, and everything put in subjection under his feet.

Are you feeling small today? God says that "for a little while" we are lower than the angels. But just as Jesus was lifted up, you too will dwell by his side forever.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, I don't even dare to ask for any honor from you. I know I don't deserve it. And yet this is what you promise. Out of your love you gave me your name. Amen.*

### **Day Three: Mark 10:2-16**

*“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*

*And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.*

Shall we list all the greatest heroes of the Christian faith? People would name the 12 apostles, of course. And they'd list some of the martyrs, those who died for their faith.

Prominent on the list would be some Christian hymn writers and authors, or pastors of giant churches whose sermons are watched on television by tens of thousands. Recently Pope Francis visited the United States and people stood in line just to see him. Surely he would be on the list of the greatest Christians.

Where on that list would you find the name of an elderly lady who never went to high school, never held an important job, never wrote a book? Do you know the name of the custodian where you work? Where would he or she be on this list?

Where on the list would a little child belong – a 3-year-old who loves Jesus? There are

so many little children. We have dozens of 3 and 4 year olds in our preschools, and they are such new personalities that we often can't remember all their names. Where are they on the list of the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus put a little child in the middle of his disciples and said (paraphrasing), this is what your faith should look like.

There is no reason to believe that Jesus was not serious. He used the phrase that he always uses to add emphasis, “I tell you the truth...” The faith of those who receive the kingdom of God will be like this – a little child.

Lord I believe, help my unbelief. Where do you need to be more childlike?

*Prayer: Dear Jesus, I am not powerful or famous. I am not wise or great. But I am precious to you. Teach me to trust in you like a child today. Amen.*

## Day Four:

J.D. Schroeder, in his book *The Cowboy Preacher*, tells about visiting a new town in the “wild West” (Newcastle, Wyoming). Going door to door he found no one willing to talk with him. One man even cursed him.

Later, to play a trick on the preacher, this man told him to try at a certain building, but when the pastor entered he found it was a loud and dirty saloon and gambling hall.

“A filthy-looking man sat there eating eggs. In my daze I asked the man who the owner of the place was.” “I am!” he roared. But when the man found out that Schroeder was a preacher he shouted, “Get out of here! We don’t want to have anything to do with preachers in this town!” Pastor Schroeder gave up and left the town.

A few months later he was traveling to another town and got off the train here to stretch his legs. The saloon keeper happened to meet him and asked why the pastor had not stayed to start a church. “I thought you didn’t want any preachers in your town!”

“Oh, I didn’t really mean that! Tell me, can you really

preach in German?” (Many settlers spoke German at that time.) And the saloon keeper promised the pastor that if he returned to preach, there would be people to hear him.

When he returned, “Out of the gambling hall came the owner followed by a large number of cowboys, mountain men, miners, and others... These raw men were in church for the first time in years, some perhaps for the very first time. It was amazing how attentive they were to the sermon. I noticed that some even wiped tears from their eyes.”

The saloonkeeper’s life was changed. God’s kingdom grew. We are wrong to assume who will hear and receive the word. God’s Holy Spirit knows his work.

*Prayer: Dear Savior, give me courage, but where my courage fails give me perseverance, that I may continue to hold up the good news of your saving love. Amen.*

These devotions help us to think ahead about the Bible verses we will read in worship next week. They are written weekly by Pastor Don Neuendorf. You can learn more about our worship or our church at [stpaulannarbor.org](http://stpaulannarbor.org)