





## **Theme: Becoming Better and Not Bitter** **"By Sharing the Good News"**


 You also can get these Meditation Moments each day directly on your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

### **Weekly Memory Verse:**

**18-20 "Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."** – Matthew 28:18-20 (The Message)

**Meditation Moments for Monday, August 11** – Read **John 4:4-15**. In Jesus' day, most Jews looked down on Samaritans, even hated them. The shortest route from Jerusalem to Galilee was through Samaria, yet many Jews going north or south would travel east of the Jordan River through Perea, modern day Jordan, just to avoid the Samaritans. Jesus did not physically *have to* go through Samaria. He made a *purposeful spiritual choice* to go through Samaria. In stopping in Samaria, and drinking from Jacob's well, he was directly challenging an unjust prejudice of his day.


 At its heart, today's reading is about two important issues. First is bearing witness to God's longing for peace among God's children. Second, is the life-giving, soul-cleansing, peace-making, world-changing water that bubbles out from the one who made us and gives us eternal life. Where in your daily life do you see people who are struggling or don't fit in? What are you doing to bear witness to God's work by deliberately going out of your way to connect with those you see who need to know God's love, and the living water Jesus offered?


 Jesus offered the Samaritan woman water that quenches thirst forever. She likely confused the living water Jesus offered with a natural spring of flowing water

that would keep her from coming to the well so often. She at first wanted to escape the labor; Jesus wanted her to embrace the water within. Do you just want Jesus' living water to make your life easier or simpler? Or do you want living water to make you whole so that the world might see Jesus in you?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, keep me from chasing convenience and an easier life. Guide me to your work, no matter how hard, that I may bear witness to your love for humanity. Make me willing to go out of my way for the sake of the world. Amen.*


**Tuesday, August 12** – Read **Luke 24:44-48**. When Jesus was with his disciples after the crucifixion and resurrection, he taught them to reflect on Israel's history to find their ongoing personal mission. Jesus charged the disciples to preach the story of repentance and forgiveness of sins. He opened the disciples' minds to see the big picture: that their history as a people, from Moses to the Psalms, said that in the Christ, "the anointed one," there is salvation and peace that makes us whole. They were to preach to all nations the life found in his resurrection.


 Jesus did not give the disciples an optional task by saying, "if you feel like it, and it's convenient in your day's schedule," then do these things. Rather, he **commissioned** them—gave them a mandate or command to be witnesses of God's work in the world. What do you need to do in your life to more fully take on Jesus' mission to share his hope and forgiveness with the people around you?

 Your personal story of a changed heart and life can be more powerful to people far away from God you interact with wherever you live, work, or play, than any abstract or intellectual claim. You, like the disciples, are a witness to God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ. In what ways can you share your personal story of a changed heart and life with those around you?

**Prayer:** *God, keep me alert for chances to faithfully share the story of your son's life, death, burial, and resurrection. Give me courage when afraid, confidence when unsure, and passion when indifferent. May I make you proud as I share my personal story of a changed heart and life? Amen.*


**Wednesday, August 13** – Read **Acts 1:3-8** and **John 3:7-8**. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give his followers the power to bear witness to God's work in the world. The Spirit still gives us guidance, courage, strength, alertness, and passion to share the person and work of Jesus. The mighty wind that is the Holy Spirit, which also is described in John 3, empowers followers of Jesus to tell the story of God's great love for the world. God calls us to radiate hope, to live with a confident expectation that God's work is real and present in the world today.


 God did not leave us on our own to radiate hope. Sometimes we can feel like we don't have the strength to be better instead of bitter. Through the Holy Spirit, God grants us the power to be living extensions of Jesus' ministry in today's world. The Spirit is God's gift to help us have the strength to be better. It's often said that we have as much power from the Holy Spirit as we ask for. Are you asking for the Holy Spirit's power? In what ways, as a God-powered messenger, can you share Jesus' story with others?

 The “end of the earth” could be anywhere—your office, your favorite restaurant, your health club or your neighborhood. Where are the one or two settings where you can most effectively share your faith story with others? Which one of your friends, family members, or co-workers might be able to join you in this mission?

**Prayer:** *God, give me opportunities to share my faith story with others. Show me where you are already at work around me, so I can join you in your work. Help me remember that my power comes from the Holy Spirit. Amen.*


**Thursday, August 14** – Read **1 Peter 3:13-16**. The writer of 1 Peter saw it as important to be ready to provide evidence for our faith, and the hope we live in, to anyone who asks. We best defend our faith and radiate hope, not in arguments or disputes, but by being able to support our faith reasonably and realistically by telling our story of how God has worked in our lives. No one can argue with our story. Candor, confidence, and compassion are vital for us to be able to share effectively.

 Reason is important. We need to understand what we believe and why. It's important to remember our “beliefs” aren't beliefs if we don't truly believe them but just repeated what we have heard. But beliefs take on reality in our lifestyle, as people see actions that back up our Christian claims. Does your lifestyle back up your verbal claims of Christianity? Why or why not? Do you have a sense of the story people tell about you as they see how you live?

 You may, from time to time, meet people who challenge your beliefs, with a strong air of doubt or skepticism. Most in our culture will try to be kind, but like the Romans in Peter's day, some won't. The author of 1 Peter challenged readers to stay respectful and humble in all situations. How easy or hard do you find it to remain respectful and humble when someone challenges your faith? How does that stance make your beliefs more or less credible to others?

**Prayer:** *O Lord, in my passion to defend my Christian faith, help me to be humble to all I meet. Let your loving kindness flow through me as I represent you to the world around me. Amen.*

**Friday, August 15** – Read **Acts 8:27-38**. Jerusalem was a long way from Ethiopia. Acts said this Ethiopian had come to Jerusalem to worship, but how did he get his hands on a scroll to read on his journey home? Maybe he'd heard some of the spreading stories in Jerusalem about Jesus. Something made him curious about the sacred readings in Isaiah. His curiosity produced initial confusion. He admitted he needed help to understand what he was reading. Philip's immediate task was simple—help this curious man find the gospel message.

 The Holy Spirit sent Philip on a mission to help guide the influential Ethiopians to understand the gospel from the prophetic words of Isaiah 53. Philip ran to the chariot eager to help the man. That example of eager obedience is inspiring. When the Holy Spirit whispers to you, how willing are you to listen? Are you eager to listen to other people's faith questions? Are you willing to be patient as you help others on their faith journey by being a companion on that journey?



People who have spiritual questions and/or feel far away from God may need your help to make sense of what, for many, can be a very confusing message. When was the last time you helped someone make sense of the gospel message? Do you feel equipped to do so? If not, what could you do to feel more confident and capable?

**Prayer:** *God, teach me how to listen closely for the Holy Spirit's whispering guidance. Help me have the courage to eagerly obey. Stir within me, Lord, a desire to better equip myself to help curious people find their story in the gospel story. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 16** – Read **Matthew 28:16-20**. The disciples made their way to the rendezvous point in Galilee. Understanding more fully who Jesus was after his resurrection, the eleven disciples probably worshiped him with more depth than ever before. “Some doubted,” likely meant some still felt stunned, even dumbfounded by the reality that Jesus, whom they had seen die, was now alive, their risen Savior. He told his disciples to “go”—not a single act, but a lifestyle. It can be translated more directly with the words, “keep on going.” As you go about the daily rhythms in your ordinary life, the Savior said, prioritize the mission of disciple-making. And as you do, realize the comforting presence of Jesus is with you every day.



The Message version of this Great Commission reads, “**Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life.**” To train means we are doing it WITH others, not TOO them. We are companions and guides, leading with compassion and grace, which is how Jesus meets us. “Baptizing” and “teaching” are important aspects of being a follower of Jesus, but not necessarily the means to make disciples. People become disciples by coming into the community of believers and submitting to Christ as the Lord of their life. Teaching disciples means leading them toward a life of obedience to Jesus, not just intellectually teaching doctrine. Jesus said, “Go.” How’s your “going,” anyway? Would you say that Christ is the Lord of your life? In what ways is your Lord leading you to make disciple-making a priority?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I want to glorify you with my faithful commitment to make disciples. Help me remember that you are always present with me as I live out your commission. Amen.*