



## **Theme: 3 Powerful Gifts**

### **"Why Church?"**



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:**

***<sup>18</sup> Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.*** Matthew 16:18

### **Meditation Moments for Monday, September 22 – Read Matthew 16:13-18 and 18:15-**

**20.** Jesus had fewer than 100 followers and faced deadly hostility from his country's power structure. Yet, amazingly, he believed his followers would form an irresistible divine power that he called "my church"! He expressed a big vision—he said his church would be so spiritually powerful that not even "the gates of the underworld," or Hades known as "the realm of the dead," would be able to stand against it. He showed that he could make that vision real by dying and then rising from the dead!



Pastor Myron Augsberger in *The Preacher's Commentary Series* wrote, "Jesus stressed a course of action on the offense, not on the defensive. He would move in on a world that was so permeated with evil that it would reject Him, but the gates of hell would not stop Him, nor prevail against the planting of His church." In what ways are you personally able to work to roll back the darkness of our world? How do you support and help your church in rolling back the darkness?





Scholar N. T. Wright observed in his commentary *Matthew for Everyone*, "Jesus isn't going to build an actual city, or an actual Temple. He is going to build a *community*, consisting of all those who give allegiance to him as God's anointed king." Jesus said the rule in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy to avoid unverifiable accusations was vital to making his church a true community,

not just a hall where isolated people watch a performance. How can you make integrity a central value as you are an active member of Jesus' community?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, give me the courage, creativity, focus and faith to live as a committed member of your cosmic "winning team." Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 23** – Read **John 13:31-35 and 15:8-17**. Jesus' words on the final night of his life took "loving" far beyond fuzzy, fluffy sentimentality. He would soon show what love looks like by giving everything, even sacrificing himself for the good and well-being of others. "As I have loved you" was a whole new level of love. Jesus' followers saw that they couldn't love that way on their own. The apostle Paul called love the first fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.


 Imagine you were one of Jesus' followers. After three years of daily contact, he said he wouldn't be physically with you anymore. But he would send the Holy Spirit, and "as I have loved you, so you also must love each other." Could you accept the sincere and at times faulty love of other disciples as a sign of Jesus' love for you? Can you accept that today? Do you agree with Jesus that seeing that deep quality of love beyond emotionalism is **the** sure sign of being Jesus' disciples? Why or why not?

 Jesus began John 15:9 with ten keywords: "As the Father loved me, I too have loved you." Just as the moon reflects the sun's light, our love for others reflects God's love for us. In what practical ways do you live out your commitment to love God and others? To what extent are you able to view self-giving, not self-gratification, as the key to the kind of love that makes life genuinely worth living? How can your church be, above all, a living model of God's love for all people?

**Prayer:** *O Lord, help me not to pretend to love as an outward disguise to hide my anger or pain. Let me love from my heart as your love overflows and bubbles out of me to bless others. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 24** – Read **Psalms 32:1-7 and 11; Psalm 116:13-14 and 17-19**.

Israel's King David had an illicit affair with Bathsheba, killed her husband to cover it up, and only confessed when urged by Nathan the prophet. We read this story in 2 Samuel 11:1 to 12:13. If, as many believe, Psalm 32 grew from that time in David's life, it involved God's human community in the "personal" act of confession, before the word "church" even existed. "**All** the faithful" prayed in verse 6. Verse 11 invited **all** of God's people to praise God's forgiving love. In Psalm 116 the psalmist made promises with "all God's people."

 When we come to church, we too often try to put on a (falsely) flawless face. What would happen in the church if we would all introduce ourselves with the words, "I'm Jeff, I have issues. I'm a sinner?" The pretense would be gone, and we would free others up to be authentic, and bless each other by seeing each other as we are. How might it deepen your commitment to God and heal you inwardly to be honestly vulnerable in a trusted community as the writer of Psalm 32 was?



Scholar John Goldingay wrote of Psalm 116 in his commentary *Psalms for Everyone*, “The last part of the psalm addresses God, but most of it addresses other worshipers, people such as those family members and friends who would accompany an individual to the temple to make the offering and share in the rejoicing.... Other people’s trust in God is built up by hearing [the psalmist’s] testimony.” How can honestly sharing your life with others both strengthen you, and encourage and strengthen them?

**Prayer:** *I thank you for the worshipping community you have called me to be a part of and ask that you walk with us as we grow in our ability to love, worship and serve you. Amen.*

**Thursday, September 25** – Read **Galatians 6:1-10**. When he closes his letter to the people at the church in Galatia, which is modern day Turkey, Paul uses family as a metaphor for the church. Close to a hundred times in the New Testament, the apostles addressed the Christians they were writing to as “brothers and sisters.” It’s easy to see “church” as a corporate entity, all about policies, buildings and legal papers. But the heart of “church” is people gathered as God’s family.




The “family” image of the church matters deeply. The idea of the church as a family comes with responsibilities and mutual commitment. Family members care for one another, work for the good of one another, and support one another. They learn how to become like Jesus and love like Jesus sacrificially. In verse 2, Paul instructed the members of these newly formed churches to, “Carry each other’s burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.” What are some ways your church helps you to carry the burdens of other “family” members?




Scholar N. T. Wright wrote in commentary *Paul for Everyone, The Prison Letters*, that Paul’s counsel, “says the public image of the Christian church should be of a gentle, gracious community.” It should not be a place “which squashes sensitive souls and offends those who are by nature quiet and reserved.” Does it take more inner strength to be gentle or to lash out and hurt those who frustrate you, disagree with you, or do things you believe are wrong? When have you seen this kind of gentleness uplift you or someone else?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, thank you for the privilege and the challenge of being a member of your family. Teach me how to keep valuing and serving my brothers and sisters in this spiritual family. Amen.*


**Friday, September 26** – Read **Matthew 9:35-38 and 1 Corinthians 12:24-27**. Jesus worked tirelessly to restore people to physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness. He must have amazed the disciples by saying, “The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine.” Summit Church’s “DNA” springs from Jesus’ actions and teaching as we seek to be Jesus Christ to the world by loving God, loving others, and sharing the Good News. Like him, we believe the harvest is plentiful—bigger than we can even imagine. God calls us to be Jesus’ “body” in the world—to continue the work that he did using the gifts that his Spirit places in our lives.


 Jesus yearned for God to “send out workers into his harvest field.” To what extent do you think “troubled and helpless...sheep without a shepherd” expresses the spiritual state of neighbors, coworkers, and even some people you know in church? Are you willing to become one of the workers Jesus wished for? What abilities and resources have God given you that you can use to help reach troubled, helpless people with the good news of Jesus?

 As hard as we might try, we will never prove intellectually there is a God, any more than others can prove there is no God. Jesus said that if we want to prove God's existence, we show it by our actions when he said in John 13, <sup>35</sup> “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” It is by our works of mercy, compassion, and service, not by Gospel tracts or theological debates, that we will draw people to Christ. How has God equipped you for mercy, compassion and service?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you didn't give me gifts to make my resume more impressive or my ego bigger. Shape my life into a living testimony of your goodness and grace that makes the lives of others better. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 27** – Read **1 Peter 2:4-10**. God used Israel's desert sanctuary to draw Israelites into God's presence in Exodus 25:8-9. God worked through the Temples in Jerusalem, before and after Jesus' earthly life in Acts 2:46, to draw people into a life-changing relationship. God has used many other buildings in history as instruments to build his spiritual temple in human lives. Summit Church has 4 services on the weekends, “online” worship, a Thrift Shop and Early Learning Center all week long, and property in Three Springs for another campus we will develop in the next few years. But our faith is never about buildings. When Peter wrote today's passage, there were no Christian cathedrals anywhere, just groups that met in people's homes to worship. Yet the apostle saw God's people as “living stones” God was building into the “real” temple, just as the apostle Paul called the church “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Romans 12:5. Peter said all God's people are “a spiritual temple” called to share with others the difference God has made for you.

 Pastor Paul Cedar wrote in *The Preacher's Commentary Series*, “A spiritual temple requires a very specific kind of building material. It is to be built of living stones—the very lives of those who have become spiritually alive through faith in Jesus Christ. And such building must begin with Jesus Christ.” How has this process shaped your life? How did you become a “living stone”? What “mortar” connects you with other members of this “temple” God is building?

 Peter drew from Exodus 19:5-6 and Isaiah 61:6 where Israelite people were a “holy priesthood,” and Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 where Israelites freed from exile were God's people, though for a time they hadn't been. Have you ever thought of yourself as a member of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's possession”? How can that reshape your sense of value, mission, and purpose in life?

**Prayer:** *O God, thank you for what you are building in my life and in your church. Thank you for making me to love you, and others, as part of the church. Amen.*