



Theme: The Ark – God and the Animals

“Animal School”

We have a great new way for you to get these Meditation Moments each day directly to 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:

“So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.” – Romans 5:11

Meditation Moments for Monday, September 7 – Read **Luke 9:28-36**. This week we will look at lessons we learn about God and ourselves from animals. Our pets may not always “get down” the moment we tell them to or instantly stop (over)reacting to animals they see outside. But for their own safety, and that of others, there are times when pets really need to listen to and obey their master. Today’s reading told of a dramatic event (we often call it “the transfiguration”) when God certified Jesus as God’s son. Then came the terse but significant command, “Listen to him!”



The amazing change the disciples saw in Jesus’ physical appearance seemed to show vividly that he was more than just one more roaming rabbi. But, as though to leave no doubt, God’s voice said of Jesus, “This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!” What are some of the main ways you can listen to Jesus today, such as thoughtful Bible reading, prayer, or meditation? Are you willing to do some of these things? What keeps you from listening to Jesus? How might you eliminate those distractions this week?



Can you recall a “mountaintop experience” in which you felt particularly close to God? If so, in what ways did that experience stay with you when you had to leave the “mountaintop” and go back to everyday life? In what ways does

what you “hear” from God in the intense spiritual high moments shape the way you live your life in the “ordinary” day-to-day moments?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, keep my spiritual ears always attuned to listen to you. Help me not only to listen, but to obey you in the ways of living to which you call me. Amen.*

Tuesday, September 8 – Read **2 Corinthians 1:3-7**. Pet lovers often talk about our pet's capacity to offer comfort when we are sad, and there is research that supports the value of how our pets offer support. Today's reading reflects a very trying experience the apostle Paul went through in [2 Corinthians 1:8-11](#). The Corinthian Christians, people he had helped to follow Christ, were at odds with him for a time in [2 Corinthians 7:7-13](#). There's no evidence he had a pet, but it would have helped. He did have God, and he used the word “comfort” nine times in just five verses in today's reading!



Paul writes that God comforts us. Scholar William Barclay said in his *Daily Study Bible Series*, “Comfort in the New Testament always means far more than soothing sympathy. Always it is true to its root meaning, for its root is the Latin *fortis* and *fortis* means brave. Christian comfort is the comfort which brings courage and enables a [person] to cope with all that life can do.” When has God, or one of God's people, given you courage by the comfort you received? To see the resources Summit Church has to offer you comfort as needed, go to www.summitdurango.org/caring.



Paul did not describe “comfort” in terms of what he received. Instead, he wrote, “We offer the same comfort that we ourselves received from God... if we have trouble, it is to bring you comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is to bring you comfort.” How have you seen people use their own hard experiences to shape them into a source of comfort and courage for others? In what ways could you pass on the comfort you have received?

Prayer: *Compassionate and Caring God, thank you for the times you have strengthened me and given me new courage. Make me the kind of person whose caring strengthens others. Amen.*

Wednesday, September 9 – Read **Romans 7:21-25**. We love them, we play with them, we train them as much as we can. But most “good pets” at times remind us that they are still animals. They may tear up a shoe or couch pillow we value, wake us when we need sleep, or just refuse to get along with another pet. The apostle Paul wrote honestly about times when he realized that his human actions didn't match the ideals he truly held to. Like our pets, we sometimes fall short in our struggle to live the way God wants us to live.



In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson paraphrased verses 22-23 this way: “I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.” Can you recall times (though you might prefer to forget them) when those words described your experience? In what ways do times like that make God's ever-present grace particularly important to you?



Research shows that even when we think we're being strictly logical, like buying a car, we often act on inner emotional factors we aren't consciously aware of. That doesn't let us "off the hook" for our choices, but it helps to explain Paul's cry, "I'm a miserable human being." When has the realization that you've fallen short of God's (and your) ideal made you feel miserable? At those times, don't forget what followed in Paul: "Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Prayer: *Lord, I often wish you would just "flip a switch" and wipe out all the inner flaws I struggle with. Give me persistence to walk with you each day, growing the kind of character no flip of a switch could give me. Amen.*

Thursday, September 10 – Read **Luke 15:17-24**. There is nothing restrained or dignified about the way a pet who loves you welcomes you home after you've been away for a while. In Jesus' day, senior figures such as heads of household did NOT run. People thought it was most undignified. But when the long-absent son in Jesus' story showed up on the road home, his father ran to greet him. Jesus' story was about a God who doesn't worry about looking dignified. Jesus said God is thrilled and throws a party any time you take a step toward home.



In Jesus' story, the once cocky young man had hit bottom. He had no list of demands—he just hoped for a square meal in the servants' quarters. What does it do for you to have a pet greet you exuberantly when you come dragging home after a bad day? What does it say to your heart to picture God racing down the road to embrace you, even when you are dragging yourself home to God?



The son glumly said, "I no longer deserve to be called your son." The father wasn't worried about "deserving," any more than a pet is usually deciding whether you deserve welcome. Scholar William Barclay in his commentary on Luke said, "It should never have been called the parable of the Prodigal Son, for the son is not the hero. It should be called the parable of the Loving Father, for it tells us rather about a father's love than a son's sin." Can you trust that God's love welcomes you whether you "deserve it" or not?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, as the old hymn put it, I have a "wandering heart." But I want to keep turning toward home. And I rejoice to know that you are always eager to welcome me, even when I've wandered. Amen.*

Friday, September 11 – Read **Romans 5:6-11**. Today is the 25th anniversary of 9/11 and it is a good time to reflect upon the unconditional love of God which meets us in our most challenging moments where we experience pain and hurt, and we wonder where God is. Pet owners often speak of the way their pets love them unconditionally. Well, not quite—continued abuse or neglect can make an animal fearful, or even hostile. But the kind of love pets often offer can remind us that in God we find truly unconditional love. The apostle Paul taught that rebellious humans on their own couldn't close the gap between them and God. Only God could do that—and God did it! Scholar N. T. Wright wrote in his commentary *Romans for Everyone*: "When we

look at Jesus, the Messiah, we are looking at the one who embodies God's own love, God's love-in-action. Look at [Romans 5,] verse 8. What Paul says here makes no sense unless Jesus, in his life and death, was the very incarnation, the 'enfleshment' (that's what 'incarnation' means) of the living, loving God.... If the death of the Messiah shows how much God loves us, that can only be because the Messiah is the fully human being (how much more human can you get than being crucified?) in whom the living God is fully present."



Scholar William Barclay wrote in his commentary on Romans, "The coming of Christ and the death of Christ, is the proof of God's love. Sometimes the thing is stated as if on the one side there was a gentle, loving Christ, on the other an angry and vengeful God; and as if Christ did something which changed God's attitude to [people]. Nothing could be further from the truth.... Jesus did not come to change God's attitude to [people]; he came to show what it is and always was." Paul knew God did not have to be "talked into" saving you. He wrote about this in [2 Corinthians 5:18-19](#). We read in [Acts 26:9-11](#) that Paul had hated the people who said Jesus was the Messiah. He jailed and even executed some of them. But Jesus still loved Paul and sought him out on the road to Damascus in [Acts 26:12-19](#). Jesus' unconditional love totally transformed his life for the better. Do you join Paul in trusting and following Jesus and surrendering your heart to his love?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the old hymn asked, "What wondrous love is this?" It's hard for me to find words for my gratitude when I think about the work of Jesus on the cross. Allow it to wash over me so I can experience your grace on this day when we remember such tragedy from 25 years ago. I pray for the family of victims for whom this day causes them to ache. I offer you my loyalty, my love, my life so I might serve them and others sacrificially. Amen.

Saturday, September 12 – Read **Numbers 22: 21-34**. We looked at this story of Balaam and his donkey this last weekend in worship. It's an interesting story about listening to God and how we sometimes turn away from God. We find Balaam beating his donkey three times because the donkey won't do what he wants it to do but it's the donkey who is the one he should be following. The story is meant to be a bit humorous when we find God speaking through the donkey, reminding Balaam that the donkey has been there to serve him faithfully and asking why he is not paying attention.



What do you think God is trying to teach the opportunistic and spiritually blind Balaam through his loyal and spiritually alert donkey? Which was the greater miracle: God opening Balaam's eyes in verse 31 or his donkey's mouth in verse 28? Why do you think so?



Are you like Balaam or his donkey in life right now? How so? One of you suddenly and stubbornly found yourself opposing God, much to your surprise? How did God speak to you in those moments? How many run INS with God's Angel or roadblocks or donkeys did it take before your eyes were opened? Do you think it's possible to always know God's will every step of the way? Why or

why not? What are some ways we can attune ourselves to God's will for us?
Which of these will you begin incorporating into your life now?

Prayer: *Gracious God, forgive me when I get stubborn and want to do life my own way and on my own. Open my eyes to see your direction and will for my life and bring along donkeys when I need them to show me the way. Amen.*