

September 1

Mary

Matthew 2:1-12

Wise men from afar

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men (Magi) from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

When King Herod—who ruled Judea—heard this, he became worried. He quickly called together the chief priests and teachers of the Law and asked them where their King was to be born.

"In Bethlehem," they replied, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 'Out of you, Bethlehem, will come a ruler who will be a Shepherd for My people Israel.'"

Then Herod called the wise men to a secret meeting and asked them when exactly they had first seen the star.

What made the Magi follow the bright star?

What do you think made this group of wise men leave their homes and travel for weeks and months in the hope of finding a baby? And even if they did find a baby boy, how could they be sure that he was the one who would become a great king?

God had put a seed of expectation in their hearts—a hope that a mighty ruler would be born in their lifetime. Then one night, while looking at the stars, they saw it—a light, brighter than any star they had ever seen. They realized that this was the sign they had been waiting for; the sign of the Mighty King. Then the star started to move across the sky, and by faith they followed it, trusting that it would lead them to the newborn King.

Jesus, the bright morning star, is our sign of hope as He leads us to God. We can only find true joy when we, like the wise men, decide to follow Jesus the Light of the world.

Verse for today

*And we have the word of the prophets ... and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.
2 Peter 1:19*

September 2

Mary

Matthew 2:9-12

Gifts for the King

After the wise men had gone to King Herod to find out about the newborn king, the star they had first seen in the east went on ahead of them. The wise men's discouragement turned to great joy when they saw the star leading them to Bethlehem and stop over the place where Jesus was.

They came to the house and found the small child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures and gave Him gifts of gold, incense and myrrh.

Later, God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod to tell him about the child. So they returned to their country by another way.

Why did the Magi give Jesus such strange gifts?

If you were looking for a suitable gift for a toddler, you would probably go to a toy store or perhaps the kiddies section of a clothing store. Because you can't really ask a baby what it would like, you would have to choose something you thought was suitable.

Let's see why the wise men's gifts were probably the best gifts they could have given Jesus.

- *Gold* is a fitting gift for a king. Gold reminds us that Jesus is the King of kings.
- *Incense* was used in the Temple. The sweet smell of incense reminds us that our prayers and worship are like a sweet smell to the Lord.
- *Myrrh* is a spice that was used when someone died. This might seem like the strangest gift of all, but it reminds us that Jesus came to earth to die for our sins (see John 3:16 and John 19:39-40).

If you would like to give Jesus the very best gift, let Him have all of you—just as you are.

Verse for today

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Revelation 4:11

September 3

Mary

Matthew 2:13-23

Escape to Egypt

After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord warned Joseph in a dream to leave Bethlehem and flee to Egypt.

So Joseph and Mary left the town of Bethlehem during the night and headed for Egypt with Jesus.

When Herod realized that he had been tricked by the wise men—who didn't come back to tell him where the baby was—he was furious and ordered his soldiers to kill all the boys under two years of age in and around Bethlehem.

Meanwhile, Joseph and Mary stayed in Egypt where they lived in safety until Herod died. Then they returned to Judah, to the town of Nazareth where Jesus grew up.

Why was King Herod so afraid of a baby?

The wise men went to King Herod to find out about a newborn king, thinking that he was the most likely to know about the birth of a Jewish king. Meanwhile, Herod must have wondered if he had missed something. How had these wise men from the east found out about this baby while he knew nothing about Him? Why hadn't anyone told him?

Herod had not been chosen by the Jews to be their king. The Romans who had conquered their country put him in charge. When he heard that a Jewish king had been born, he became jealous and afraid. Herod's selfish attitude took away his peace. He became so afraid that someone would take his throne that he had many innocent babies killed.

How different Herod's attitude was to that of the wise men: they left with hearts full of peace and joy; Herod's heart was full of anger and fear. But Jesus had not come to take Herod's throne; Jesus wanted his heart.

Verse for today

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." John 18:36

September 4

Mary

Luke 2:41-50

Jesus was a child

When Jesus was twelve years old, Mary and Joseph took Him to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast, as they had done every year.

When the feast was over, his parents returned home with a group of relatives and friends. They had traveled for a whole day before they realized that Jesus was not with the other children, as they thought.

So Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem and found Jesus sitting with the teachers in the Temple, listening to them and asking them questions.

Did Jesus need to learn about God and the Scriptures?

This is a mystery we cannot understand; that while Jesus was on earth, He was completely human and completely God. From the time He was born until He went back to His Father in heaven, He was the only person to live a completely sinless life.

Jesus grew from a tiny baby to a young boy, and from a teenager to a young man. He had to learn things just as you do. As a toddler, He learned to walk; as a boy, He learned to play with the other kids; as a teenager He learned to help His dad. He learned to read and write and get along with those who were mean. Nothing was easier for Jesus just because He is the Son of God.

Although the Bible doesn't tell us much about the childhood of Jesus, we know that at the age of twelve, He knew enough about the Scriptures to be able to talk to the leaders in the Temple about the things of God. Even though by this time, Jesus knew that He was the Son of God (verse 49), it would seem that He didn't know everything, because He listened carefully to the teachers and asked them many questions.

Never think that you are too young to understand things about God. If you are not quite sure about something or you would like to find out more, ask questions like Jesus did.

Verse for today

And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:51

September 5

John the Baptist

Mark 1:1-8

A preacher with camelhair clothes?

When the time came for Jesus to start His ministry, the Holy Spirit led His cousin John to the desert where he lived on locusts and wild honey, and he wore clothing made of camels' hair.

Crowds went out to the desert to hear the word of the Lord. John told the people to turn from their sins so they would be forgiven. Those who owned up to their sin and asked for forgiveness, he baptized in the Jordan River.

He said to them, "There is someone coming after me who is more powerful than I am—someone whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

Why did John go live in the desert?

You may have heard people say that they can see and feel God by getting close to nature.

The peaceful mood of the beautiful countryside can help us feel close to God. However, this is not because God lives in the things He created, but rather, because the wonders of nature can help us to see how awesome God is.

Although a desert (or wilderness) may not be your idea of a beautiful surrounding, at least it is quiet out there. You would be excused for thinking that the desert is a strange place to preach to people, but here are possible reasons why John went there:

1. He preached in the desert because that's the way God said it would be (Isaiah 40:3-5).
2. John wanted to get away from the noise and busyness of the city to hear God's voice clearly in his heart and mind.
3. It was a good place for the people to hear John's message. Because they had walked so far to get there, they weren't likely to leave the moment John said something they didn't agree with.

Verse for today

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me." Malachi 3:1a

September 6

John the Baptist

Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus is baptized

While John was preaching, and baptizing people in the Jordan River, Jesus came from His hometown of Nazareth to be baptized as well. But John said, "You should baptize me, yet You are wanting me to baptize You?"

Jesus replied, "Do what I have asked, for I must do everything that is right." Then John baptized Jesus. As Jesus came up out of the water, heaven was opened, and the Spirit of God came down on Jesus like a dove. And a voice said from heaven, "This is my Son whom I love and with whom I am very pleased."

Why did Jesus ask to be baptized?

By being baptized, people show that they have asked God to forgive their sins and have decided to live a life that is pleasing to God. John baptized the people by dipping them under the water (in this case, in the Jordan River).

It is easy to see why John thought it wasn't right for him, an ordinary man, to baptize Jesus, who is sinless. Because Jesus had never sinned, He didn't need to repent for His sin and be baptized.

Yet, this was the start of Jesus' ministry and He wanted to obey the Law of God in every way—even if it meant doing what was expected of sinners.

Three years later, on the cross, Jesus took our sin on Himself. Although He was perfect, He died in our place as if *He* had done wrong.

From then on, the Law (the written rules of God) that condemned us as sinners was fulfilled (kept) by Jesus; and because His Spirit now lives in us, it is as if we have kept every part of the Law as well (Romans 8:1-4).

Jesus kept the Law for our part; that is why God sees us as perfect (Hebrews 10:12, 14).

Verse for today

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Matthew 5:17

September 7

Andrew

Matthew 4:1, 18-22

"Follow Me"

After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit led Him into the desert to be tempted by the devil. There, in the heat of the desert, Jesus fasted for forty days. Every time the devil tempted Him, Jesus used Scripture to make the right choice—He never sinned.

Then Jesus began preaching to the people, telling them that the kingdom of heaven is near. As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew. Jesus said to them, "Come follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they followed Him.

Later, Jesus saw two other fishermen, James and John, and called them too. Immediately, they left their boat and also followed Him.

Did the disciples know what it would cost to follow Jesus?

When people join a team or a club, they usually want to know what's in it for them. If they put effort or money into something, they usually expect something back, whether it is having fun, being honored, or getting a reward.

When the time came for Jesus to begin His ministry, He started choosing a team of helpers. These first disciples had no idea what lay ahead—and they didn't ask. Jesus simply said, "Follow Me," and they followed. They didn't know for how long, where they would sleep, or what they were expected to do. Even though they hadn't known Jesus for long, they saw something in Him that helped them trust Him. They trusted Jesus enough to leave everything behind and follow Him—empty handed.

When Jesus calls you to follow Him—trust Him! Then you will also become a 'fisher of men' by bringing people to Him.

Verse for today

Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Luke 9:58

September 8

Andrew

John 2:1-11

Jesus' first miracle

While Jesus was in a town called Cana, He was invited to a wedding, together with Andrew and His other disciples.

During the celebrations the wine ran out, so Mary the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no more wine!"

Jesus replied, "Why are you telling me? My time has not yet come." Later, Jesus told the servants to fill six big water jars with water. So the servants filled the jars to the brim. Then Jesus said, "Now scoop some out and take it to the master of the feast."

The servants did as they were told, and when the master of the feast tasted the water, it had been turned to wine. And he said, "People usually serve the best wine first, but you have kept the best wine till now."

Why did Jesus choose to turn water into wine?

A singer is always careful when choosing the opening song for a concert because it gets people to sit up and focus on what is to come.

We don't know if Jesus had planned this miracle before the wedding, or whether the Spirit led Him while He was there. We do know that He wasn't going to be rushed into something that wasn't God's will (verse 4).

We would think that His first miracle would somehow show that He, the Son of God, had come to save the world. Yet Jesus did a miracle that simply helped someone out of an embarrassing situation. Although Jesus had come to save the world, He had also come to live with people. Jesus wanted to show that everyone is important to Him, and that He is interested in every detail of our lives.

Jesus took water, used for everyday things like washing dirty feet, and used it to bless people. As we allow Jesus to take complete control of our lives, He takes our ordinary, everyday situations and uses them to bless us and others.

Verse for today

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

September 9

Nicodemus

John 3:1-8

Born of the Spirit

There was a man whose name was Nicodemus. He belonged to a group called the Pharisees—religious leaders who often cared more about their own rules than they did about people. They did not believe the things Jesus taught and were jealous because many people had started to follow Him.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night because he was afraid of being seen by the other Pharisees. "Master," he said to Jesus, "we know that you are a teacher from God who does miracles."

Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth: no one can become part of God's Kingdom unless he is born again."

"How can an old man be born again?" Nicodemus asked. "Can his mother give birth to him a second time?"

Jesus replied, "No one can come to God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

Can I be born twice?

It is obvious that you have been born once. The proof is that you are alive. However, you can be born a second time—and this time the choice is up to you!

1. The first birth - When you were born into a family as a tiny baby, you became part of your family and took on the family name (your surname).
2. The second birth - When you become a child of God, you are born into His family and take on Christ's name—you become a Christian (Christ's one).

To be born again you must *believe* in Jesus, *ask* Him to save you, and *trust* Him to give you new life. The proof that you have become His child is that the Holy Spirit comes to live in you. You won't feel Him inside you, but from that moment on, He will start changing your heart and help you to follow God's ways (1 John 3:24).

Verse for today

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. 1 John 5:18

September 10

Nicodemus

John 3:9-21

The Savior of the world

Nicodemus, a respected leader and teacher who should have known about spiritual things, could not understand the truths Jesus spoke about.

So Jesus explained it this way: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert to bring healing to those who looked up at it, so God's Son must be lifted up [on a cross] to bring healing to the world.

God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him will not die but have a new life that never ends. For God did not send His Son to earth to judge and to punish, but that every person can be saved through Him."

Did Jesus come to save our planet?

God, who created the world and everything on it, carefully watches every tiny part of His creation and keeps things going. He wants us to do our bit too by looking after our little part of this huge planet. We should care for animals and birds and plants, and be careful not to litter or waste.

However, when it says that God loved the world and sent Jesus to save it (verse 16-17), it doesn't mean that He sent Jesus to save this round planet we live on. The word "world" means all the people living on earth—the Eskimos, the Indians, the Africans, the Chinese, the Europeans, and everyone else living on the different continents of the world.

The Bible tells us that the world (the earth) will come to an end one day when God finally destroys it (2 Peter 3:10-12). God would not destroy something He loves, so we know that when we read, "God loved the world," it means that God loves every single person in the world—including you!

Verse for today

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13

September 11

Samaritan woman

John 4:1-14

Living water

When Jesus and His disciples left Judea and headed back to Galilee, they had to go through the countryside of Samaria. At midday, Jesus rested at a well while His disciples went off to buy food in the small town.

Just then, a woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

The woman was surprised that Jesus spoke to her because He was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan (Samaritans were hated by Jews). "Why do you ask me for a drink?"

Jesus said, "If you knew about the gift of God and who can give you this gift, you would have asked Him and He would have given you Living Water."

"Where would you get this Living Water?" she asked.

"Everyone who drinks of this water [from the well] will be thirsty again," Jesus replied, "but everyone who drinks of the water I give him will never be thirsty again!"

Can one drink Living Water?

Have you ever been really thirsty—so thirsty that your tongue feels completely dry? God created each person with a spirit that is 'thirsty' to know Him and that longs to have a relationship with Him (see Psalm 42:1). Only Jesus can take away that thirst by giving us Living Water: the Holy Spirit who comes to live in us.

Some people, like the woman at the well, try to satisfy their thirst for God in ways that aren't right, and so their spirits stay thirsty. When Jesus told the woman about the life-giving water He gives, she wondered whether this water was like the water she drew from the well every day. But the Living Water Jesus spoke of is not the water one pours into a glass; it is the unseen Spirit He pours into our lives (Acts 2:17).

Verse for today

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Matthew 5:6*

September 12

Samaritan woman

John 4:19-26

True worshipers

As the woman at the well spoke to Jesus she realized that He knew a lot about spiritual things. She thought He was a prophet, so she started talking about the difference between the place where the Samaritans worshiped and the place where the Jews worshiped, for she knew that Jesus was a Jew.

But Jesus said, "A time is coming when the place for worship will no longer be important. For God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come, and when He comes, He will explain everything to us."

Jesus replied, "I am He" [the Messiah].

How do I worship in spirit and truth?

Can a person who doesn't believe in God go to church, sing praise songs, put money in the offering basket, and say a prayer? Yes, even someone whose heart is cold toward God can do things that look like worship but are just meaningless actions.

Worship is not what we do; it is an attitude of the heart. That's why Jesus said that true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth. Those who want to worship God in a meaningful way must worship Him from their hearts (in spirit), with open honesty (in truth).

True worship comes from our love and respect for God. The Bible says; "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." In other words, we should love God with every part of us.

We should also be respectful in our worship, remembering that God is holy and powerful. And as we come before the One who created us and who saved us, we should remember that our lives are not in our own hands, but in God's powerful hands because we belong to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Verse for today

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. Psalm 29:2

September 13

Jesus

Matthew 8:5-15

Jesus heals the sick

When Jesus got to the town of Capernaum, a Roman officer came up to Him and begged for help. "Sir, my servant is sick at home and cannot move."

"I will go and make him well," Jesus said.

But the officer stopped Jesus. "I do not deserve to have You come into my house. Just give the order and my servant will be well again."

When Jesus heard this, He said to the people around Him, "I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this!" Then Jesus turned to the officer and said, "Go home, and you will find your servant well."

Later, when Jesus arrived at Peter's home, He found Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed with a fever. Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her. Then she got up and started to serve them and made them feel at home.

Can my faith make someone else well?

The Bible says that when we ask God for something, we must believe in order to receive what we have asked for (Matthew 21:22). But what if a person is so sick that he cannot pray? Will God answer the prayer of a friend who prays for the sick person? Yes! Asking God to do something for a friend is as easy as asking your mom to give your friend a lift home from school.

And if the person doesn't believe in God? There is a gap that separates an unbeliever from God. When you pray for your friend who doesn't believe in God, it is like standing in the gap between your friend and God (see Ezekiel 22:30). As God hears your prayer of faith, His grace will flow to your friend, helping him to put his faith in God.

Verse for today

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

September 14

Peter

Luke 5:1-11

"Because You say so!"

One day, Jesus stood on the shore of Lake Gennesaret and spoke to a crowd that had come to listen to Him. The people started to push in so close to Jesus that He got into Peter's boat and asked Peter to push the boat a little way out on the water.

When Jesus had finished speaking to the people, He said to Simon Peter, "Push the boat out into the deep water and let down your fishing nets."

"Master, we have worked hard all night," Peter answered, "and we haven't caught a thing! Yet, because You say so, I will let down my nets."

So Simon Peter and his fellow fishermen went out again. They let down their nets—and as they did, they caught so many fish that their nets started to break. Others came to help, and their boats almost sank with all the fish.

Does Jesus know and understand my world?

Peter realized that Jesus knew the Scriptures and had the power to heal; but Jesus grew up in the home of a carpenter in Nazareth—and Nazareth was not a fishing village! When it came to fishing, Peter knew everything there was to know—and this was definitely *not* the time to fish!

After a whole night of fishing, Peter had some doubts about the good of letting the nets out again, yet he listened to Jesus.

Do you sometimes feel that Jesus doesn't understand your world, your frustrations and your longings? Just as Jesus showed that He knew more about fishing than Peter did, He also knows more about your world than you may think.

When no one else seems to understand all the things going on in your life, why not talk to Jesus and trust Him to do something special in your world? He, the Master of the Universe, has complete control!

Verse for today

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. Colossians 1:16

September 15

Jesus

Luke 5:12-16

Jesus touches a man's life

While Jesus was in one of the towns, He met a man covered with a bad skin disease. When the man saw Jesus, he went down on his knees, and with his face to the ground begged Jesus to cure him. "If you are willing," he said, "You can make me clean."

Jesus reached out and touched the man. "I am willing," Jesus said. "Be clean!"

The leprosy immediately left him and his skin became pure and healthy again.

Although Jesus told him not to tell anyone about the healing, the news of what had happened spread all over. Many came to hear Jesus and be healed by Him.

Why did Jesus reach out and touch the diseased man?

Although being sick is never fun, what makes up for it in some way is the special care we get from those who look after us. But that's not the way it was for this leper. Everyone avoided him, as they did all those with the deadly disease. No one looked after him. No one touched him or even came close to him for fear that they too would get sick.

It wasn't his fault that he had leprosy, yet he suffered the pain of his dreadful illness, and the pain of being rejected.

The man desperately needed healing and wanted to be cured of his leprosy, but he also longed for a friend—someone who wouldn't be afraid to reach out and touch him.

When Jesus heals, He doesn't only get rid of the sickness, He becomes a friend. Jesus changes the lives of people by touching their hearts with His love. Jesus also heals the sickness of sin and makes our hearts so clean that not a single spot remains.

Verse for today

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. Psalm 103:2-3

September 16

Jesus

Luke 5:17-26

Sharing and caring friends

One day, while Jesus was teaching in someone's home, a group of men came along carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. Because of the crowd that had gathered, they couldn't get into the house, so they went up onto the roof and lifted off some roof tiles. Then they lowered their friend down on his mat with ropes.

When Jesus saw him, He said, "Your sins are forgiven."

Some of those watching got upset and whispered, "How can this man forgive sins? Only God can forgive sins." But Jesus knew what they were thinking, and to prove that He had the power to forgive sins, He told the man to pick up his bed and go home. And at once the man was healed!

How can sharing change someone's life?

Have you recently invited a friend to your home and had your room look like a disaster zone by the end of the day? And when your friend left, you had to tidy up the mess!

The person at whose house Jesus taught might have thought how nice it would be to have Jesus visit him in his own home. He had probably not imagined that a crowd of people was about to take over his house, or that someone would rip open his roof. Just imagine the mess after everyone had left. Yet, one crippled man walked out of his house that day— healed, forgiven, and changed forever! Wouldn't you say it was worth it?

You may never know how wonderfully God is able to use your kind acts to change someone's life. Be encouraged! Jesus sees when you have to clean up after everyone has left. The time and effort you spend to bless others will not go unnoticed!

Verse for today

But when you give ... do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:3-4

September 17

Matthew

Luke 5:27-32

Who needs a doctor?

After Jesus left the home where He healed the paralyzed man, He went and found a tax collector sitting in his small office. Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

So Levi got up, left everything and followed Jesus.

Later, Levi (Matthew) held a big feast at his house for his friends and fellow tax collectors, and invited Jesus as his special guest.

Some teachers of the Law complained to the disciples that Jesus was enjoying the company of tax collectors (who often cheated people by charging more tax than they should).

But Jesus answered them, "People who are well don't need a doctor, but those who are sick do. I have not come for those who are good enough [or think they are good enough], but for sinners who want to turn from their sins."

Does Jesus only want good people in His kingdom?

Did you know that everyone is a sinner—even the person who never seems to do a single thing wrong? (Romans 3:10-12). There are people who think they will get to heaven because they are not as bad as others. They don't realize that even the 'smallest' sin stains their heart as much as if they had broken every one of God's rules (James 2:10). No matter what they do or how hard they try, they cannot heal themselves or get rid of that stain.

Jesus is the only One who can cure the deadly disease of sin; He is the doctor of our souls. Jesus came to earth to invite all people to come to Him. He chooses sinners like us to become part of His kingdom. Jesus forgives all those who come to Him for healing. Then He makes us good (righteous) by placing His goodness into our hearts.

Verse for today

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. Luke 19:10

September 18

Jesus

Matthew 5:1-10

"Blessed are ..."

While Jesus was in Galilee, He took Peter and the other disciples up onto a hill and said to them:

"Blessed are those who rely on God completely, for they will become part of God's heavenly kingdom.

Blessed are those who are sad, for in their sadness they will experience the loving comfort of God the Father.

Blessed are those who are humble and gentle, for they will receive what God has promised.

Blessed are those who long to do what God wants, for God will fill them with His Spirit.

Blessed are those who show mercy and are quick to forgive, for God will be merciful to them.

Blessed are those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God and live with Him.

Blessed are peacemakers who spread the peace of God to others, for they will be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who are treated harshly because they love God, for happy days are waiting for them in heaven."

What is a peacemaker?

When the angels told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus, they said, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those with whom He is pleased" Luke 2:14. Jesus came to bring peace on earth and we, as His children, are peacemakers.

Being a peacemaker is more than stopping a fight at school or yelling at your friends to quit arguing. To be a peacemaker, we need to spend time with God so that His peace can fill our hearts. When we have peace in our hearts, our words of kindness and wisdom can bring peace to troubled situations around us. Pray for those who need God's peace in their lives!

Verse for today

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:3

September 19

Peter

Matthew 5:13-16

Salt and light

Peter and the other disciples sat listening to Jesus as He taught them things they had never heard before.

Jesus said to them, "You are like salt here on earth! But if you live like those who don't love God, you will be like salt that has lost its flavor and become worthless.

You are the light of the world! Just as a city on a hill cannot be hidden at night, so the light of your good deeds will shine for all to see. Don't hide your light, but let it shine all around so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father for the good deeds you do."

How can I become salt?

Becoming salt has nothing to do with Lot's wife who turned into a pillar of salt because she disobeyed God. In fact, it is only by obeying God that you become salt.

As you allow God to use you, you become the salt of the earth. That doesn't mean you will suddenly taste salty, but rather, that you will make as much difference to the lives of those around you as a tiny bit of salt makes to a plate of tasteless food.

As salt is sprinkled over food to flavor it, so God has spread believers across the world to flavor it with love. To check whether you have become salt, answer the following questions.

Do you:

- keep your friends from doing wrong?
- pray for those around you?
- tell others about Jesus or invite them to church?
- encourage those who feel down?

If you have said yes to one or more of the questions above, **YOU ARE SALT!**

Verse for today

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:6

September 20

Peter

Matthew 5:21-26

Peter learns about anger

Jesus continued to teach His disciples about how to live a life that is pleasing to God. This is what He said about anger: "You all know that if a person murders someone, he will be judged. But now I tell you that even if a person is angry with his brother, or calls someone a fool, he is in danger of being judged."

Then Jesus told them, "If you are about to offer a gift to God and you suddenly remember that a friend has something against you, first go sort out the problem with your friend, then offer your gift to God."

Is it okay to be angry?

God has created us with all the emotions we feel. Yet, unlike the emotions of happiness and love, anger seems like a bad emotion. You can, however, use your anger in a positive way. For example, you may be angry because the boy next door keeps kicking their dog. If your anger gets you to do something to stop that happening, you have used your anger in a positive way.

The Bible doesn't tell us not to be angry; but it does say that we must not let our anger cause us to sin. Showing your anger by breaking things, swearing, or hurting someone, is wrong.

On the other hand, when you become angry because someone has wronged you, don't push your anger deep down inside. Rather...

- Speak to the person who made you angry and tell him or her how you feel and why you feel that way.
- Forgive the person who hurt or disappointed you.
- Fill your mind with good things. Make something, read a good book, draw a picture, start a collection or play with your pet.

Whatever you do, don't go to bed with anger burning inside you: it will spoil the start of a beautiful new day in the morning.

Verse for today

*"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.
Ephesians 4:26*

September 21

Jesus

Matthew 6:5-15

Jesus teaches about prayer

Jesus was teaching His disciples the things they needed to know to be good followers. He showed them how to live a godly life in the real world. Then Jesus taught them how to talk to God, saying, "This is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven, we honor and glorify Your Name.

May Your Kingdom come, and may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Please give us the food we need for today.

Forgive us for all the wrongs we have done, just as we forgive those who have hurt us in some way.

Do not lead us into tough trials, but keep us from temptation and the power of the evil one; for the kingdom and power and glory are Yours forever and ever.

Amen."

Is the 'Lord's Prayer' an example of the perfect prayer?

Jesus prayed this prayer to teach His disciples the sort of things they should pray about. His prayer is also an example of the order in which we should pray about things. Jesus began His prayer by worshipping God, then He prayed for other things.

However, just because Jesus prayed this prayer, it doesn't mean that it is the only prayer we should pray. Although it is the best example of a prayer, God wants us to talk to Him personally and not just repeat words without thinking about what we're saying.

The relationship between friends grows stronger as they chat and get to know each other. You would not just say the same things over and over to your friend. In the same way, God wants to hear the words and feelings that come from your heart—and to God, that's what makes your prayer the perfect prayer.

Verse for today

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18

September 22

Jesus

Matthew 7:1-6

"Do not judge!"

Jesus and the disciples were spending some time alone on a hillside. As the disciples sat there listening, Jesus taught them truths about God's kingdom. "Do not judge others, or you will be judged," Jesus said. "For God will judge you in the same way that you judge others.

"Why do you get upset about the tiny speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, when you have a plank in your own eye? First take the plank out of your own eye, then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Should we correct someone who has a bad habit?

Jesus said that we should not judge others, because in God's eyes, we are all sinners and do not have the right to judge. So how can we keep our friends from doing things that are wrong if we never say anything to them about their faults? Sometimes, we need to make someone aware of a bad habit, but we should always be careful how we do it.

Pointing out faults:

- is discouraging;
- causes relationships to break down;
- focuses only on failure and weaknesses.

Coming alongside to gently guide someone:

- makes the person aware of a problem in a sensitive way;
- offers understanding and support;
- gives hope for the future.

Pray for friends who have a bad habit. Show them what the Bible says about the right and wrong way to live, and set a good example for them to follow. Remember, you don't need to judge someone—the Lord will take care of that.

Verse for today

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.

1 Corinthians 4:5a

September 23

John the Baptist

Luke 7:18-23

"Are You the one?"

King Herod had put John the Baptist in prison. While John was in prison, some of his followers went to tell him about the miracles Jesus was doing. Then John sent them to ask Jesus if He was really the One sent from God, or if they should expect someone else.

When John's messengers found Jesus, they asked Him, "Are you really the One whom the prophet spoke about, or should we keep on looking for someone else?"

Jesus answered them, "Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind can see, the lame can walk, the deaf can hear, those who have leprosy are cured, and even the dead are raised to life. And tell him how even the poor have heard the Good News of God's love.

How happy are those who have no doubts about me."

Is it a sin to doubt?

Everyone has doubts. If you were absolutely certain about everything, you would never need to exercise your faith. Without doubt there is no need for faith.

Doubts that help us look for answers can lead to faith when we look for the answers in the right place—the Bible.

Doubts that get us to disobey or take our eyes off Jesus, lead to sin. The Bible says that the person who keeps on doubting is like a wave that is tossed about by the wind (James 1:6).

John was in prison. He wasn't able to see the miracles that Jesus was doing. He may also have wondered why Jesus didn't do a miracle to get him out. But John did something about the doubts that were troubling him. He sent his followers to find out the truth from Jesus.

Verse for today

Jesus said, "... Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29b

September 24

Jesus

Luke 8:4-8

Scattered seed

Wherever Jesus went, from one town to the next, people kept coming to hear what He had to say. A large crowd had gathered around Him, so Jesus told the people a story to help them understand how the Word of God works in the hearts of different people.

"One day, a farmer went to sow seed. As he scattered the seed, some fell on the path where it was stepped on, and where birds ate it. Some seed fell on rocky ground. When the seeds sprouted, the plants dried up because the soil was hard and dry. Other seed landed among the weeds, which grew with the small plants and choked them. But some seed fell on good, fertile soil and grew into a large crop which gave a hundred times more seed than was planted."

Can a seed really grow in someone's heart?

The seed that Jesus spoke of is the Word of God. God's Word reaches the hearts of people as they hear it or as they read the Bible. The soil is compared to the heart of a person.

When God's Word touches a person's heart, it grows as the person thinks about it, understands it, believes it and then does what it says.

- Some people don't want to hear the Word of God and they harden their hearts so that the seed cannot even start to grow.
- Some people hear the words of Jesus and believe for a while, but when times of difficulty and testing come, they give up.
- Some people listen to the Word, but the worries, riches, and pleasures of life make them forget what they heard.
- But some people hear the Word and do what it says. They have a good heart where the words of Life grow and multiply!

Verse for today

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:9

September 25

Jesus

Luke 8:22-25

Jesus calms the storm

One day, Jesus got into a boat with His disciples and said to them, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake."

So they set out, and as they sailed, Jesus fell asleep. While He was sleeping, a strong wind started to blow, and as the waves washed over the side of the boat, it filled up with water.

The disciples woke Jesus, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

Jesus got up and said to the wind and waves, "Be calm!" At once, the wind died down and the big waves flattened out. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Where is your faith?"

But the disciples didn't answer because they were amazed and afraid. They said to one another, "Who is this man that even the wind and the waves listen to Him?"

Can Jesus calm stormy emotions too?

Emotions are feelings caused by things that happen *around* us or things that happen *to* us. Some situations can make us feel peaceful and happy; others make us feel sad, embarrassed, angry or afraid.

On a windless day, a sailing boat goes nowhere. A boat needs some wind to take it from one point to another. But wild storms can cause a boat to be tossed around like a cork.

At times you may feel as though you are in a storm because of something that has shaken your confidence. It may be a problem at school, or maybe there are changes happening in your life. Jesus calms the helpless feeling of being tossed about by waves of trouble!

Although your situation may not change straight away, Jesus can bring peace to the stormy feeling in your heart. The disciples had Jesus in their boat—you have Jesus in your heart! Knowing that He is with you can help you get to the other side more easily.

Verse for today

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

September 26

The disciples

Mark 6:7-13

Disciples go out in pairs

Jesus called His twelve disciples together and told them to go out in pairs to do God's work.

He said to them, "Don't take anything for the journey except a stick. Don't take money or food. Wear sandals, but don't take extra clothes.

"When you get to a home where people welcome you, stay with them until you leave that town. If you get to a town where people don't listen to you or welcome you, leave the town. Don't even let the dust of that town stick to your shoes."

So the disciples went out and preached the message they had heard from Jesus. They commanded evil spirits to come out of people, and they healed many who were sick.

Why is it good to do things as a team?

We don't know who went with Peter, but whoever went out with him must have had a great experience! The Lord knew that Peter would probably need someone responsible who would think things through—and perhaps stop him from doing something silly.

When we work together in pairs or teams, it isn't long before we realize that, in some ways, we are quite different. Each of us has certain strengths (things we are good at), and some weaknesses. By working in a team, we learn new ways of doing things by watching others do things they are good at. There are many advantages when we work together; here are just a few:

- We can encourage one another when things get tough.
- We learn to pray for each other's needs.
- We get things done that we couldn't do alone.
- We can laugh together (and have lots of fun)!

Verse for today

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Philippians 1:4-5

September 27

Jesus

Mark 6:30-31, John 6:1-13

Jesus feeds a great crowd

The disciples, who had gone out to teach and preach, returned to Jesus very excited and told Him all that had happened.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Come with Me to a quiet place and get some rest." They got into a boat and crossed the Sea of Galilee to get away from the crowd. But when the people saw them, they ran around the lake and met them on the other side.

Jesus went up a hill and sat down with his disciples. When He looked up and saw the great crowd coming toward Him, He asked, "Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?"

Peter's brother Andrew said, "There is a boy here with five small loaves of bread and two fish."

Jesus took the loaves and fish and gave thanks to God. Then He broke the loaves and gave the pieces to the disciples to hand to the people. After this, He divided the two fish in the same way. When everyone had eaten enough, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let nothing be wasted. Gather up the food that is left." When they had collected all the leftovers, they had twelve baskets full.

What did Jesus teach us about wasting and littering?

If Jesus could feed more than five thousand people from one boy's lunch, He could have made as much food as He wanted, whenever He wanted. Yet Jesus did not use His power to make loads of delicious food for Himself and His friends. In fact, one day while walking through a field, His disciples were so hungry that they ate kernels of grain (Luke 6:1). Jesus showed us that we should...

- not always want the best or most expensive things;
- not waste or throw away what others can use;
- not litter the countryside (or any other place);
- be grateful for what we have and give thanks to God.

Verse for today

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." John 6:48

September 28

Peter

Matthew 14:22-33

"Come, Peter!"

After Jesus had fed the crowd, He told the disciples to get into the boat and go to the other side of the lake. Meanwhile, Jesus went up the hill to pray. When evening came, Jesus was alone. By this time His disciples were far out on the lake and a strong wind was tossing their boat around on the waves.

Very early the following morning, while it was still dark, Jesus walked out to them on top of the water. When the disciples saw someone walking towards them, they were very scared.

But Jesus called out, "Don't worry, it's Me!"

Peter called back, "If it is really You, Lord, tell me to walk to You on the water."

"Come!" Jesus replied. So Peter got out of the boat and walked to Jesus on the water. But when Peter looked around and saw the wind and waves, he was afraid and started to sink. At once, Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter. "You of little faith," Jesus said, "why did you doubt?"

Then they got into the boat and the storm died down.

Why did Jesus let Peter sink?

Peter wanted to step out of the boat and walk to Jesus: this showed his *courage*. Peter asked Jesus about getting out of the boat: this showed his *wisdom*. Peter hopped over the side of the boat and walked out to Jesus: this showed his *obedience*.

Jesus is the One who created the laws of nature, and He can change those laws whenever He wants. And so, while Peter kept looking at Jesus, his faith was strong and he walked on the water. Why then, did Peter start to sink?

Peter looked around at the waves. His sudden fear swamped His faith, and without faith, Peter was affected by the laws of nature, which made him sink like a stone.

Remember; even if your faith is weak, Jesus is always there, and He will hold on to you!

Verse for today

When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3

September 29

Peter

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter gets it right

One day, Jesus asked His disciples an important question: "Who do people say that I am?"

His disciples answered, "Some say You are John the Baptist, others say You are Elijah. Then there are those who say that You are Jeremiah or some other prophet."

"What about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"You are blessed, Peter," Jesus said. "This truth was not shown to you by a person, but by the Father in heaven. You are Peter [the rock], and on this rock I will build my church; and not even the evil of hell itself will be able to stand against it."

Was Jesus a prophet?

If you heard someone say that Jesus was just a good man, or that He was a prophet, would you agree?

We know that Jesus was good. In fact, He was sinless! But was Jesus a prophet? A prophet is someone who hears a message directly from God and tells people what God said. Old Testament prophets often did miracles and told of things that would happen in the future. When something did happen as they said it would, it showed that their message was truly from God.

In some ways, Jesus was a prophet. He spoke the Word of God; He did many miracles; and He told us of things that would happen in the future.

However, Jesus was not just a prophet. He is the Son of God! All the other prophets died and were buried: Jesus lives forever and sits at the right side of God the Father.

Verse for today

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.... Hebrews 1:1-2

September 30

Peter

Matthew 17:1-13, (Luke 9:32)

Peter's amazing experience

Jesus went up a high mountain with Peter, James and John to be alone and to pray. While they were on the mountain, a change came over Jesus: His face shone like the sun and His clothes were dazzling white. Just then, Moses and Elijah appeared and started talking to Jesus.

Peter, who had dozed off, woke up and blurted out, "Lord, it is so wonderful to be here! I can make three shelters: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While Peter was still speaking, a shining cloud came over them, and a voice said, "This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased—listen to Him!"

The terrified disciples fell with their faces to the ground, but Jesus touched them saying, "Don't be afraid."

How did Jesus make His face shine?

On a rainy day, when the sky is a misty gray, we say that the sun isn't shining (because we can't see it). Yet if we could rise above the clouds, we would see that the sun is shining, and has never stopped shining.

Jesus has never stopped shining either! From before time began, the brightness of His holiness has been shining, and will carry on shining forever. His light is so bright that we won't even need the sun to give us light in heaven. "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light" Revelation 22:5.

Just as we suddenly see the sun beams shine through a break in the clouds, the three disciples were allowed to see the glory of Jesus for a short while. As the rays of light streamed from His body, they saw the glory of His holiness. Jesus didn't have to do anything to shine: He IS the Light of the world (John 8:12). And as we become more and more like Jesus, we start reflecting more and more of His glorious light (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Verse for today

The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. Numbers 6:25