

Devotional Calendar

APRIL 2020

Unit 11. God Promises a Just Kingdom

5th

Meditate: Psalm 98

Listen: "Lord, We Rejoice" by Darwin Hobbs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGzrygt-DUc>

Pray: Express to the Mighty God that You Rejoice in Him



19th

Meditate: Luke 19:11-26

Listen: "Celebrate the King" by Ricky Dillard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BFt7M7KUwE>

Pray: Express to God that He Is the King of Your Life



12th

Meditate: Isaiah 53:4-12

Listen: "Celebrate (He Lives)" by Fred Hammond

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcplHtZzQe8>

Pray: Thank the Living God for All that He Has Done for You



26th

Meditate: Isaiah 42:1-9

Listen: "Your Spirit" by Tasha Cobbs Leonard (featuring Kierra Sheard)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZT8jqsc8IQ>

Pray: Ask the Lord to Bring Justice across Our Nation by His Spirit



How to Do a Devotional

Daily devotionals are important to help you grow in your relationship with God. Pray, meditate, and read the Word of God, and you will grow spiritually. Devote ten minutes at the beginning of your day to clear your mind and heart and prepare to receive God. Daily devotions will prepare you for any obstacles that may come your way. Take time each morning to hear from God. Even Jesus used time in the morning to be with God. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35, NIV).

Background Scripture: Isaiah 61:8–62:12 • Print Passage: Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a

KEY VERSE: The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. (Isaiah 62:2)



When she was six years old, Antoinette learned that she had a reading disability. Reading was always difficult, especially when she had to read in front of her classmates. No matter how hard she tried, year after year, Antoinette struggled with reading and writing assignments in school. She was assigned to a special-education resource room for assistance with her reading and writing. Antoinette really liked the special-education teacher, but she did not like being teased by other students who would say she had to go to “the class for slow kids.”

When Antoinette turned nine years old, her grandmother gave her a journal for writing and a set of books about different countries around the world. Antoinette spent hours looking at the beautiful, colorful pictures in the books and reading to learn about diverse cultures and various facts about the different countries. Without realizing it, as

she spent more time reading, Antoinette’s reading ability gradually improved.

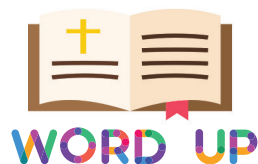
At the end of the sixth grade, Antoinette’s parents were notified that Antoinette no longer needed to go to the special-education resource room for help. Antoinette’s reading and writing had improved so much that her teachers believed they could monitor her and give her the needed assistance in the regular classroom. Not only did Antoinette no longer need special services, but also, Antoinette’s teacher told her parents that she was one of the strongest readers in her class. Antoinette was now reading better than many of the students who had teased her and called her names



because she struggled with reading and writing in the past.

After receiving the great news, Antoinette prayed and thanked God for allowing her to improve her reading and writing skills. She had a new reputation of being a strong reader, and she was grateful.

What is your favorite part about this story? Explain.



Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a

8 “For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. 9 Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.” 10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

.....

2 The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. 3 You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4 No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate.



In today's lesson, the prophet Isaiah prays for the salvation of God's people in Israel. For years, the hearts of God's people had wandered into disobedience and rebellion against Him. Although God planned to punish them for their sins, God never stopped loving them. In fact, God used Isaiah to tell the people that although they would bear the consequences of their sin, God would not abandon them completely. In time, God planned to show the nation favor and restore them. Cities and places that had been burned and destroyed would be rebuilt. Isaiah also spoke of how the people would have servants to help them accomplish daily tasks.

Instead of shame and dishonor, God planned to give Israel a double portion of prosperity and joy.

God's vision to Isaiah was so exciting that he vowed to keep praying for Israel. Isaiah knew that Israel had been disobedient down through the generations, but he was thankful that at some point in the future, God would give His people another chance for greatness. In Isaiah 62:12, Isaiah highlighted how God was going to change Israel's name to acknowledge restoration. Israel would be called the holy people and the people redeemed by the Lord. Jerusalem would be known as the desirable place and the city no longer forsaken. God wanted the people of Israel to know they were His people and that they would never be anything but the blessed children of God.

INSIDE OUT

Sometimes when negative situations linger for a long time, it is easy to lose hope and believe that things will never get better. Today's lesson reminds us that no matter how bad a situation may get, God never turns His back on us or leaves us without hope. The gift of salvation and righteousness can only come from God. Invite God into your difficult situations and trust that He will bless you. How can you stay encouraged when you face trials or difficult situations in life?



There's an App for That!

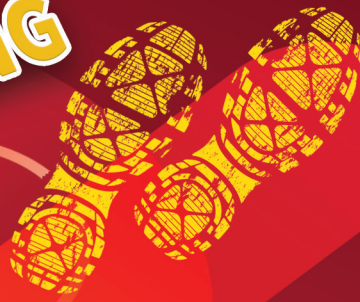
Isaiah's response to God's message was to pray and thank God for His grace and willingness to restore Israel. When God gives you a promise, do you take the time to thank Him? God does not have to bless His people, but He chooses to do so because He loves us. Believers should demonstrate love for God by talking to Him daily. Thank God for good days, bad days, and all days. Being able to pray and talk to God is a privilege. Honor God with your time, talents, praise, and worship. God is worthy of it all!



Walk Out

In today's "Wake Up! story, Antoinette was ecstatic about her academic progress. Antoinette no longer felt defeated because of her past failures. She worked hard to overcome her reading and writing challenges; and her hard work paid off. Do you have what it takes to work hard to overcome obstacles? How can you develop your faith to tackle tough challenges?

STEPPING OUT!



Like the nation of Israel, everyone sins and rebels against God's way from time to time. This week, your challenge is to think about the reasons why you fall short of doing what God expects you to do. For each reason, write a positive action that you can do in the future to avoid giving in to disobedience. Pray and ask God to help you obey in every situation. Trust that God will empower you to live righteously.

It's Game Time!

Let's talk about hope. Complete the following sentences and share your responses with the class.

1. I believe having hope is important because _____

_____.
2. Hope gives me the strength to _____

_____.
3. People who do not have hope _____

_____.
4. Putting my hope in God _____

_____.
5. I can help others develop a hopeful attitude by _____

_____.

Media Mission

Christians should put their hope and confidence in God, knowing He is in control of their lives. Conduct an Internet search using the phrase "Christian poems about hope." Take time to read several of the poems you find. Select one poem to use as inspiration for writing your own poem about hope. Share your poem with your friends.



INJUSTICE WILL BE PUNISHED

by Sonya Franklin Burney

And while we may be discouraged by the failures of our justice system, we cannot give up hope and stop fighting for equality and justice on earth. For when man's justice falls short, God's justice never fails.

WHAT IS JUSTICE? A DICTIONARY MIGHT DEFINE JUSTICE AS FAIR, IMPARTIAL BEHAVIOR OR TREATMENT. But in today's world, many have come to doubt whether true justice really exists anymore.

The claim of the United States Constitution is that "All men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." This bold statement suggests that every person should be able to live his or her life under the same rules and pursue his or her undeniable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religious affiliation, race, color, or gender.

Every human soul has been created by God, in the image of God. Therefore, every person deserves to be treated with dignity and fairness. And yet, because of the presence of evil and hatred, millions in every generation have suffered the indignity of injustice based on the very color or creed God gave them, or because of some other feature or difference within them that they cannot change or control.

In our times, it is no secret that American jails and prisons are filled with an overwhelming number of African Americans. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has published a Criminal Justice Fact Sheet that tells a sad story of racial disparity rooted in injustice. Statistics confirm that African Americans are sent to jail or prison five times more often than white Americans. Although African Americans represent nearly 13 percent of the United States population, black children represent 32 percent of children who are arrested, 42 percent of children who are detained, and 52 percent of children whose cases are sent to criminal court.

Philosophers claim that "justice is blind." However, injustice seems to have both eyes wide open, especially when the news is continually filled with story after story of the over-policing, unlawful arrests, and shootings and/or killings of innocent people in our community. The stories become so familiar that even though we are outraged, we are not surprised. And while we may be discouraged by the failures of our justice system, we cannot give up hope and stop fighting for equality and justice on earth—for when man's justice falls short, God's justice never fails.

Queen Esther rose to power as the Jewish wife of the king of Persia. God promoted her and then used her to promote justice among the Jews in Persia who were living under the threat of genocide (mass killing)—the scheme of Haman, one of the king's advisors. Haman held a short temper and a deep hatred for the Jews, and made plans to execute all the Jews in the kingdom. Some say that the more things change, the more they remain the same. Haman's plan for the Persian Jews was inspired by the same demonic spirit that drove the German dictator, Adolph Hitler, to start World War II and the Holocaust, a five-year, mass-murder campaign against more than six million European Jews. When Esther's uncle, Mordecai, warned her of Haman's plan, she knew she had to do something to save her people. Feeling confident that the king would support his evil plan, Haman ordered the construction of a hangman's gallows on which Mordecai was to be executed. But God had raised up Esther and put her in position to intervene, so that all of Haman's plans would be defeated!

Esther prayed and fasted for three days before God, then she approached the king, revealing her Jewish ancestry, and claiming the Jewish people as her own. The result was that justice prevailed—the Jews were spared, Mordecai was honored by the king, and Haman was killed instead on the very gallows that he intended for Mordecai's destruction. Proverbs 26:27a reads, "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it." This is similar to the popular saying that "the ditch you dig for someone else may very well be your own."

God is a God of justice, compassion, and mercy. In Psalm 82:3 and other places throughout Scripture, we are assured that God fights for those who cannot fight for themselves. More specifically, God stands with vulnerable people, defending "the weak, the fatherless, the poor, and the oppressed." He moves and intervenes powerfully in human affairs to promote justice and to demonstrate His love and compassion for suffering people. We are commanded "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly" (Micah 6:8). Our duty as Christians is not to wither in despair, nor is it to sit back and wonder why God is not working more quickly. Our Christian duty is to stand and speak up as Esther did, so that our resources—our hands, our hearts, our eyes, our feet, and our voices—might join with God in the fight for justice in our world.