



Lenten Devotional 2020

WEEK FIVE

DAY #	DATE	DEVOTIONAL TEXT	ACTION STATEMENT <i>Let Us...</i>
23	Monday, March 23 rd	Exodus 16 <i>(focus 4-5, 11-12)</i>	Embrace the shift as we Feed
24	Tuesday, March 24 th	Exodus 17:1, 5-6	Respond to God's Call
25	Wednesday, March 25 th	Exodus 17:8-13 and 16 ^a	Stay in the Fight
26	Thursday, March 26 th	1 Corinthians 13:4-8a	Be Loving
27	Friday, March 27 th	Romans 12:9-18	Live the Life
28	Saturday, March 28 th	Galatians 5:13	Be Service Minded

Day 23

Monday, March 23rd

Paradigm Shift: Feeding Your Faith

Exodus 16 (focus 4-5, 11-12)

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day...⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

Today, I feel compelled to return to scriptures from last week's devotionals, Exodus 16 and 17. Throughout this past week I meditated... repeatedly visited these texts. In the process, I noticed an undercurrent flowing from the texts into our present context. While the Israelites then and some persons today have allowed the uncertainties of the day... of the moment to overwhelm them, we who claim to be heirs of the Most High God, ought to tune our ears and turn our hearts to God's promises, being sensitive to the move of the Lord at all times. For amidst all of this... everything we have and will go through, God is still at work. Amidst the upheavals and unrest, God has initiated a paradigm shift for the purpose of feeding our faith.

A paradigm shift is a definitive change, sometimes abrupt upheaval, in the standards and perspectives, the set of suppositions and ideals that have served as the basis, the foundations of our living. Paradigms inform how people function. Paradigms undergird and influence virtually every aspect of our being, how we view and live our lives. It is the disruption, the overturning of these paradigms, coupled with uncertainty of what the future holds, that troubled Israel then and challenge us today as we struggle to regain our footing. Whether or not we trust God has everything in hand... our present and our future, is evidenced in how we respond to life's uncertainties. Like Israel, some of us are prone to panic. It was in the grumbling, fits of anxiety expressed in anger, when the Israelites accused Moses and Aaron of trying to starve them, that Israel's lack of faith showed through (see Exodus 16:2-3). Yet, in what they saw as lack and insufficiency, God used as an opportunity for a paradigm shift. God's feeding program not only met their physical need for food, but God used the plan as a tool for re-educating Israel, changing their understanding as to the true source of their supply, how to handle the Lord's provision, the purpose of the Sabbath and what it means to observe it. The Lord presents all this and more through this single circumstance, this single shift.

Let Us ask God, "Lord, what are you seeking to teach us in this season of shifting?" "What changes are you calling for us to make or embrace as you permit and/or promote shifting in our lives, worship, through our relationships with others and our communion with you?"

Let Us Pray

Lord God, you are the one who holds creation in your hands. Help us to hear, see and accept the paradigm shifts you are orchestrating. Help us to refrain from freaking out, lashing out or loosing it. Instead, help us to draw strength and courage to lift-up our hands, our hearts, our very lives in faithful worship, faithful service to you our Healer, Saviour and Lord. AMEN!

Let Us ... Embrace the shift as we Feed.

God established a new paradigm for Israel centered on how they were to partake of physical food. Teaming-up with others in your family or social circle, review Exodus 16. Discuss how you might use this as a model, informing how you can better partake of spiritual food? Then, decide on a spiritual feeding plan to which you'll commit for the rest of this Lenten season.

Day 24

Tuesday, March 24th

Paradigm Shift: Reform at Rephidim (Pt. 1)

Exodus 17:1, 5-6

¹ *The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.*

⁵ *The LORD answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.*

After the Israelites move on from the Desert of Sin (chap. 16), they make camp at Rephidim. There, despite the fact their complaining had not ceased, the Lord continued with the shift. In stage two, God instructs Moses saying, “*Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel...*”. Whereas, every Israelite household took part in stage one of the paradigm shift, the gathering of food, a much smaller contingent of elders... of leaders is called to stand up front with Moses during this next stage.

As the shifting continues, as the Lord reveals successive phases, new stages, new shifts and new paradigms in the church, our communities and the world, anticipate receiving a call. Expect the Lord’s call for you to stand up, step up and represent your family... your community... persons that may not be able to stand and speak for themselves. The Lord will always call upon the church, challenge the body of Christ to step up and be witnesses.

Let Us be sober-minded, not given to emotionalism and hysteria. *Let Us* use the reports we’ve been hearing detailing the number of COVID-19 cases, the need for resources, etc. as targets to be bombarded with prayers unto God. As stated yesterday, *Let Us* ask God, “Lord, what are you seeking to teach us in this season of shifting?” “What changes are you calling for us to make or embrace as you permit and/or promote shifting in our lives, worship, through our relationships with others and our communion with you?” Additionally, Lord, “Who would you have me to stand for, speak up for in these troubling times?” Whoever it is... whatever the cause, I am willing to go. For I trust that wherever you send me, you will go and stand before me.

Let Us Pray

Lord God, you have all things in hand. What appears to be chaos and confusion to us, are small matters at best to you. Lord we look to you. We trust that you will continue to be our hope and our help. Please enable us to stand firm. Bless us to be witnesses to the outpouring of your grace. We pray to you in Christ Jesus’ name... AMEN!

Let Us ... Respond to God's Call.

The statement for today is, “Lord, I’m available to you!”. Using the e-communication app (platform) of your choice, partner with family, friends, church or community members to meet the expressed, tangible needs of an individual, family or entity such as a hospital, nursing home or shelter.

Day 25

Wednesday, March 25th

Paradigm Shift: Reform at Rephidim (Pt. 2)

Exodus 17:8-13 and 16^a

⁸ The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. ⁹ Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

¹⁰ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. ¹³ So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

¹⁶ ... “For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD...”

In stage three of God’s paradigm shift, Israel is made to confront an enemy as never before. For the first time in their freedom journey, they must fight to keep the liberty the Lord secured for them in their exit from Egypt. They must engage in physical combat against an opposing force that is battle tested. Heretofore, it was the Lord alone who fought Israel’s battles. It was the Lord who defeated Pharaoh’s army. Now, with nothing to remotely suggest that these men are familiar with warfare, they prepare to fight. Weapons in hand and lifting their arms, their battle against the Amalekites begins.

Right now, our nation, virtually the entire world is engaged in a battle the likes of which we have never seen before. We must engage in this fight against sickness, against disease and, ultimately, against fear. We must do so employing strategies that are strange, unfamiliar and have yet to be discovered. Still, we must maintain a sense of hope, a sense of confidence in the one on whom we have always depended, the one who has never lost a battle... never lost a fight. For the Lord God is the One who stood and supported Israel in their battle then and is the same God who support the people of the earth now.

So, *Let Us* remain in the fight. *Let Us* continue to support our leaders in prayer, and partner with them in service. *Let Us* also support those persons in the trenches and on the frontlines in this life and death battle, while lifting our hands in prayer for their well-being and seeking the same for their loved ones as well.

Let Us Pray

Lord God, we pray victory in this fight for the health and souls of your people everywhere. Grant those on the frontlines, in hospitals, healthcare facilities and laboratories the knowledge needed to end this pandemic and save lives. We pray to you our Saviour, Healer and Lord... Amen!

Let Us... Stay in the Fight.

Commit to the fight as we seek to end this health crisis. Returning to the individual, family or entity you identified to support yesterday, continue your work in support of them while lifting them up in prayer.

Day 26
Thursday, March 27th

Love's Litmus Test

From LIVING A SPIRIT FILLED LIFE Lenten Devotional 2011

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails.

Among my list of “go-to” passages in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13 is one of my favorites. While the words are frequently used in weddings by couples confessing the depths of their love for one another, the attributes and characteristics of love expressed in these verses is not limited or exclusive to the affections shared between husbands and wives. The love revealed here is the God-sized, all-encompassing kind of love communicated through the Greek word agape. It is the love that is evidenced in a way and at such a level that it is the standard of what love is to be. It is the kind of love that ought to be reflected in the lives of all those who profess to be the children of God. If you ever want to know whether your love is reflective of God's standard, I want to encourage you to subject it to love's litmus test.

In science, or chemistry more specifically, a litmus test is used as a decisive means of testing for the presence and levels of acidity or alkalinity in a solution. When litmus paper comes in contact with a solution containing these elements, the paper undergoes a change. Are people positively affected by the things we say and do? As we engage others, would they be able to attest to being cared for, heard, respected, supported, encouraged, or treated kindly? If such questions would receive a favorable response, the litmus paper of 1 Corinthians 13 will undoubtedly confirm that God's love is present and at work in you.

Let Us Pray

Lord God, thank you for your word. Thank you for a means through which I can learn of you and what you most desire. Lord, help me to internalize the lessons on love shared through 1 Corinthians 13. Help me to not only remember the words and message, but to live them, so that by doing so, I feed the spirit and soul of those around me and bring glory and honor to your name. For Christ sake I pray. AMEN!

Let Us... Be Loving.

Put love into action as an agent for God.

Be a protector of souls, a safe place where others can share heart concerns and partner in prayer.

Day 27
Friday, March 27th

Living the Love Life
(From Lenten Devotional 2019)

Romans 12:9-18

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Yesterday's devotional, "Love's Litmus Test" (inspired by 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a), spoke of detecting the presence of love at work in us. Do you recall the analogue between the litmus paper and the people in our lives? How if love is present and at work in us it ought to be evidenced, revealed through our relationships, just as litmus paper proves the presence of an acid or alkaline?

Well today, our devotional text moves us from the proverbial laboratory into life. Romans 12:9-18 shares, in very concrete language, the mindset, heart-set, behaviors and practices that our lives should exude if our love is sincere. Any scientist or inventor would tell you that it is only when a discovery or development has been moved from the controlled environment of a lab, out into the uncontrolled environment of the world that the efficacy and viability of the discovery or development in question, can be proven.

THE LAB: Engaging persons with whom we enjoy good relationship and positive experiences. Connecting and working with persons that are supportive of us and with whom we find it easy to work.

TEST QUESTION: How consistently, effectively are you able to exercise love here?

THE WORLD: Engaging persons with whom relationships maybe uncertain, challenged or downright hostile. Connecting and working with persons that do not necessarily acknowledge you, that have little or no regard for your personhood and contribution to the organization for which you work. Having to navigate a minefield of attitudes and emotions on the job, in the community and perhaps even at home.

TEST QUESTION: How consistently, effectively are you able to exercise love here?

Romans 12:9 lets us know that our practice of love, if it is a sincere love, ought not to change or diminish due to changes in our environment. Sincere love will still move us to cling to what is good, to honor one another above ourselves, to maintain our zeal and keep our spiritual fervor in service to the Lord. Sincere love will compel us to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer, to bless those who persecute us and not repay evil for evil. Sincere love..., godly love..., agape love..., compels us to do what is right in the eyes of our God... no matter what.

Let Us Pray

God of glory... God of unfailing mercy and grace, we are ever grateful for the love you continually pour out on us all! We pray that your love will not only be felt by us, but through us by all with whom we come in contact. May we exude your love at all times and in all situations, for sincere love has the power to overcome any and every evil. Lord we thank you for your presence, your power and your peace within us. May we honor you with how we love and how we live. This we pray in Jesus name. AMEN!

Let Us... Live the Life.

*Romans 12 lists traits and behaviors that ought to be exhibited by Christ's disciples.
Review the list. Identify areas where growth is needed, then pray.*

Day 28
Saturday, March 28th

Freedom to Love
(From Lenten Devotional 2019)

Galatians 5:13

*¹³ You, my brothers, were called to be free.
But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature;
rather, serve one another in love.*

Did you know that you have a calling on your life? I'm not talking about a calling in terms of a vocation or career path. Nor am I referring to a calling or call to ministry in a formal sense. While such vocations and occupations may indeed be valuable and worthwhile, none are the cause for which Christ sacrificed, suffered and laid-down his life. Instead, he did so because of a higher calling. It was for Love's sake... And, it was for the freedom that Love purchased on our behalf, thus canceling our debt of sin and our burden to uphold a law that no person in their own strength could ever do. Yes, it is for love and to love that we have been called.

Galatians 5 offers us insight into this love calling. Verse 1 says that, *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."* Verses 13-14 continue, *"You, my brothers, [and sisters] were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

You and I have been freed from the bonds of sin by Love (Jesus Christ who is love personified) in order to love. Therefore, we are to serve Love by serving one another in a spirit of love.

Let Us remember the lessons and instructions from our devotional texts in recent days: 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 and Romans 12:9-18. *Let Us* uphold the cause of Christ by living a life of love... sharing the message of love with persons near and far.

Let Us Pray

Lord God, it was for love's sake that Love set us free. We are indebted to you, O Lord. We are indebted to love others as you have loved us... serve others in a way that they will come to experience love, know love, reciprocate love and spread love in a world that is in desperate need of Love's touch. Lord, we pray that we will bring honor to your name and stand faithful as we respond to Love's calling on our lives. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN!

Let Us ... Be Service Minded.

*Commit to finding a place in the community
where you and some friends can share your time and talents.
Set a date and serve.*