

The End of the Beginning: Do You Have Spiritual Need?

5-Day Devotional

Day 1: The Hope That Anchors Us

Reading: Hebrews 6:17-19

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain.

Devotional:

Viktor Frankl observed that people without hope did not last long, even when their bodies were strong. Hope is not a luxury. It is a necessity of the soul. But the kind of hope that holds is not hope in wealth, status, or comfort. Those things shift and eventually disappear. The hope the writer of Hebrews describes is fastened to something outside of time, outside of circumstance, outside of what can be taken from us. It is anchored in the mercy and faithfulness of God. Today, examine what your hope is resting on. If it is resting on something that can be removed, ask God to shift your anchor to something that cannot be shaken.

Reflection: What has your hope been anchored to this week? Is it something that can be taken away, or something everlasting?

Day 2: Mercy Over Sacrifice

Reading: Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Devotional:

The Pharisees walked into a room looking for a line. Who is acceptable? Who is not? Who belongs here? Jesus walked into the same room looking for a different thing entirely. He was looking for who needed to be loved. That distinction is not small. It is the difference between a religion of performance and a faith of grace. When Jesus said he desired mercy and not sacrifice, he was telling us something about the heart of God. God is not tallying your works. God is reaching toward you with love. The call to follow Jesus, as Matthew discovered, is a call to receive that love and then to carry it into every room you enter.

Reflection: When you walk into a room, are you more likely to evaluate people or to look for ways to love them? What would it look like to enter spaces the way Jesus did?

Day 3: Called by Name

Reading: Isaiah 43:1-3

*But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your stead.*

Devotional:

Matthew was sitting at his booth, surrounded by wealth he had accumulated through corruption, when Jesus walked up and said, follow me. That moment was not an accident. Jesus saw Matthew. He called him specifically. And in that call was an implicit message: you are worth calling. You are worth pursuing. The same is true for every person who has ever felt disqualified, overlooked, or too far gone. God does not call the qualified. God qualifies the called. Whatever you have done, whatever you have accumulated in the wrong places, whatever booth you are sitting at today, the voice of Jesus is still saying, follow me. There is a new life waiting on the other side of that invitation.

Reflection: Have you ever felt too far from God to be called? How does the story of Matthew challenge that feeling?

Day 4: Hope in the Midst of Loss

Reading: Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Devotional:

Viktor Frankl lost nearly everything in the concentration camps. And yet he emerged not without hope, but with a deeper understanding of it. He discovered that the most durable hope was not rooted in recovering what was lost but in love that could not be stripped away. Paul describes a similar journey. Suffering is not the end of the road. It is, remarkably, part of the road that leads to hope. This is not a call to pretend suffering does not hurt. It

does. Every loss is real. Every grief is valid. But for those who trust in God, suffering does not have the final word. Love does. And love, Paul says, has already been poured into your heart.

Reflection: Think of a season of loss or difficulty in your life. Looking back, can you see any ways that God was working something deeper in you through that experience?

Day 5: The End Is the Beginning

Reading: Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Devotional:

Jesus said from the cross, it is finished. And yet the story was not over. The ending became the greatest beginning the world has ever known. That pattern runs through the entire Christian life. Every ending, every death, every letting go, is not simply a loss. It is a doorway. The resurrection tells us that God specializes in new beginnings. The man who loved building furniture and giving it away found hope because he believed there was something worth building toward. Norman, at 85, found love again because he believed new life was still possible. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is the same God who is making all things new, including you.

Reflection: What ending in your life might God be inviting you to see as a beginning? What would it look like to trust him with that today?