

Day 1

December 4



Pray | Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your faith journey.

GOD'S CAPABILITIES are infinite and amazing. God can transform your life. Maybe you don't feel like you could ever believe in God, or maybe you are far from God right now.

God, through Jesus Christ, famously transformed the heart of the apostle Paul. Paul was formerly a man who hated Christ's followers so much he went so far as to beat, imprison or kill them. More recently, Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ*, among several other books, began as an atheist. His heart was transformed as he researched God's story. Both of these men were transformed; their hearts changed for the good of God's name. Paul would go on to write a majority of the New Testament, and Lee Strobel's books are often recommended reading for those seeking Christ.

Today's passages may help provide a better understanding of God's thought process into occurrences of individual and group faith transformations.



Read | Ezekiel 36:22-32; Acts 26:13-18



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions:

In Ezekiel 36:26-28, God tells the people of Israel he will give them new hearts, and he will put his Spirit in them. At this point in history, the people of Israel were severely disobedient and experiencing moral decay. Reflect on any experiences in your life that involved sin and disobedience, where God may have intervened to transform your heart or pour his spirit into you. How can you or have you shared these experiences with others?

In Paul's conversion story, Jesus never mentions the conversion was necessarily to save Paul. Instead, it was to appoint Paul as a servant of Christ to save others and to glorify God's name. If you are a follower of Christ, how have you used your faith to spiritually heal others or to speak of God's glory to others?

If you are a person who now follows Christ but previously did not know him or rejected him outright, what sort of transformation occurred in you to bring you to believe in Jesus Christ?

Day 2

December 5



Pray | Give praise to God for the gift of life.

SPIRITUAL DECAY results from God's people living their lives apart from him.

God restored the nation of Israel on *multiple* occasions throughout the Old Testament. Even though God's judgement is often severe, he always restores his people and gives grace.

Even though we may experience spiritual decay by disobeying God or not listening to him, he still restores us if we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.



Read | Ezekiel 37:1-10; Genesis 2:7



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions:

Keep in mind, once again, like so many times in the Old Testament, this point in Israel's history was miserable, desolate and seemingly hopeless. Why do you think God allowed his chosen people to be in these types of situations?

Sin can lead even some of the most faithful people to spiritual decay. In today's verses, God breathed life into human skeletons, but it was a process. They were not immediately brought to life; God first made the bones come together, then formed flesh, and then brought them to life by giving them breath. What process do you go through with God for him to restore you from your sins?

Maybe you are one who feels it is too late to form a relationship with Jesus Christ for whatever reason—you feel you are too old, you feel you are too bad of a person or you feel you don't understand anything about him. Know that if God can bring bones to life or form man from dust, he will take your sins and doubts away and form you into a saved person if you open your heart to him.

Day 3

December 6



Pray | Ask God to restore your faith.

WE ARE ALIVE when the Spirit of God is within our hearts. The only way hope is possible is with God.

Dire circumstances can cause hopelessness even if we are aware of God's presence. This is a human flaw. God does amazing things every day, yet we stray. God brought the Israelites out of slavery in the book of Exodus, yet they complained when they were in the desert and even indicated they would have been better off to be placed back into slavery.

Yesterday's verses and today's verses describe one circumstance of where God did something extraordinary. However, God seemed to know that his people still might not understand his timing and his true purpose for resurrecting skeletons.



Read | Ezekiel 37:11-14



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions:

What message do you think God was trying to convey to his people by reminding them that they are his people and repeating, "...you shall know that I am the Lord"? How can you apply this in your own life or when discipling others?

By raising the bones, God demonstrated his awesome power. How do you demonstrate to others that your God is so powerful he can open graves and raise the dead?

If you are a follower of Christ, what are some ways in which you can lead a life that is an example for others who might be seeking him? Why is it important to live your life as a reflection of Christ?

Day 4
December 7



Pray | Praise God for his word, The Bible.

GOD'S PLANS are centered in eternity. Eternity is a difficult concept to grasp. God has so much grace that he tries to help us understand his eternal mission by revealing his truths through the Bible.

Today's Scripture reading includes a message God sent to his people through his prophet Ezekiel. Many of God's messages had immediate meaning to the audience at the time, but what do these ancient messages mean for present-day followers of Christ?



Read | Ezekiel 37:15-28; 39:25-29



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions:

Looking especially in Ezekiel 37:21-22, perhaps God was looking all the way to the second coming of Christ through his words. What might this mean for God's purpose in your daily life?

At this point in history, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms or nations. Ezekiel's prophecy described a day when Israel would be united once again. Today's Christian church should also be united in Christ; however, this is not always the case. How can you speak a message of unity to your fellow Christian brothers and sisters?

God restates his covenant promises with the Israelites repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. What are some of the aspects about following Christ that you sometimes need repeated for you? Why?

Day 5

December 8



Pray | Give thanks to God for his reassuring presence.

GOD IS A MYSTERY to be sure. Some of the messages he conveys to us in the Bible seem cryptic or unclear. Even God, from time to time, has to remind us that not everything about him or his timing can be known or understood by humans.

There are several occasions, though, where his words are an absolute reassurance and a beacon of hope. On a few occasions throughout the Bible, he provides us with vivid descriptions of what his kingdom will look like, will feel like and even might sound like.

One aspect of God that is not cryptic or difficult to understand is his desire for his spirit to be poured on us and for our hearts to be open to his love and grace. God also makes his character and identity very clear. Hopefully, you can find your identity in him. In today's passages take note of how many times God states, "I will," or, "I am."



Read | Ezekiel 40:1-4; Revelation 21:1-7



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions:

With Christmas fast approaching, thoughts of Jesus as a baby come to the forefront. Thoughts of meek and humble beginnings abound. How might today's Scripture reading transform your perspective of the birth of Jesus?

If you reflect on all of this week's Scripture readings, a repeated theme is God stating that he, directly, will put his Spirit in his people and change their hearts. Think of people in your life who do not yet know God or are far from God. How might this theme reassure your hopes for their eternal salvation?

If you do not yet follow Jesus Christ or are seeking a relationship with him, realize that there is nothing promised about your earthly life being easy or comfortable. In fact, seemingly none of Jesus' followers had a life that could be described as enjoyable. Reflect again on Revelation 21:4. Know that the comforts of following Christ are assured in God's eternal kingdom!

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