

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 5/27/18

Prayer - Use this prayer to begin your time with God each day.

O Lord, you have poured out your Holy Spirit on me and given me the words to speak the Good News to people in my life. Lead me to people who need the hope you have given me through Jesus Christ. Give me the courage and the willingness to offer hope to people by sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with them. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Monday – Read Genesis 1:1-2, 2:4-7. The Hebrew word, *ruach*, is translated as *wind, breath, or spirit*. Genesis 1:2 says that *a wind / breath / spirit from God swept over the face of the waters*, and Genesis 2:7 says that *the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the wind / breath / spirit of life; and the man became a living being*. It is the Holy Spirit who breathes life into us and who has power over life and death. This is the same Holy Spirit who descended to us on Pentecost to empower us to speak the Good News of what God has done through Jesus Christ. Hold your hand in front of your face and feel your breath as you breathe in and out. As you pray, thank God that the Holy Spirit is as close as your breath.

Tuesday – Read Psalm 137:1-4. Ezekiel knew what it felt like to suffer. He was ripped away from his homeland and taken into Babylonian captivity with God's people. He understood the sad song of the psalmist. He suffered with God's people, and he suffered from personal loss as well. His wife died, and God commanded him to mourn her without shedding a tear. Then God called Ezekiel to speak hard truths to God's people because the people had sinned and turned away from God even while they were in captivity. During this time, God's people lost hope. They gave up. They wanted to die because they couldn't find a reason to live. God hears us when we cry out in despair, and God will lead you through the valley of darkness into the light of God's future. As you pray, share your pain with God and know that God will lead you to a better place.

Wednesday – Read Ezekiel 37:1-6. There had been a battle in the valley a long time ago, and the bones of a defeated army were still laying there, exposed on the ground. The bones were dry and brittle, and if Ezekiel touched any of the bones he would be ritually unclean.

The place reeked of death. What situations in your life cause you to feel hopeless and barren? The Lord said to Ezekiel, "*Mortal, can these bones live?*" He answered, "*O Lord God, you know.*" Then the Lord commanded Ezekiel to preach a message of hope to the dry bones. ⁵ *Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause wind / breath / spirit to enter you, and you shall live.*" In the midst of death and hopelessness, God partners with us to bring hope and new life. Ask God to bring resurrection to the dead places in your life.

Thursday – Read Ezekiel 37:7-10. As Ezekiel preached to the dry bones, something happened. The bones began to rattle and come back together. Decomposed bodies were restored and made whole. ⁹ *Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the wind / breath / spirit, prophesy, mortal, and say to the wind / breath / spirit: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O wind / breath / spirit, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."* And the wind / breath / spirit came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Where we see death, God sees life. When we lose hope, God gives hope back to us. When we break our covenants with God, God makes a new covenant. When we are unable to do anything for ourselves, God lifts us up and gives us the strength to go on. As you pray, thank God for the times God has lifted you up when you were low.

Friday – Read Ezekiel 37:11-14. God comes into our lives and helps us to see with eyes of faith. Where Ezekiel saw dry bones, God saw living people. God doesn't just fix all of the problems in our lives. Instead, God invites us to participate in restoring our lives and bringing hope to the world. God speaks and acts through us, and the dry bones begin to rattle. Our God is the God of the second chance. Even when we sin and suffer the consequences of our actions, God still loves us. When we are low, God offers us forgiveness and promises to restore us. As you pray, confess your sins and ask God to forgive you, restore you, and lift you up.

Saturday – Read John 11:1-45. Jesus is Lord over life and death. When he came to Lazarus' tomb, Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many people believed in Jesus when they saw that he had power over death. We find hope in our belief that those who confess that Jesus is Lord will rise again on the day of resurrection. Spend some time thanking God for the hope we have in resurrection.

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17.

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