



MONDAY 2.15.16 Mark 1:9-11 Mark's gospel is concise and action-oriented, so it's no surprise that he gave the shortest account of Jesus' baptism we have. The text simply tells what happened, not what led up to it or how the participants felt. We sometimes think that the Holy Spirit didn't show up until Pentecost, after Jesus' resurrection. However, the Bible (using words that also mean "breath" or "wind") describes God's Spirit at work throughout history, even at creation (see Genesis 1:2). In what ways have you sensed God's Spirit guiding, comforting or encouraging you?

TUESDAY 2.16.16 Matthew 3:13-17 John (who called people to repent, and baptized them when they did) tried to stop Jesus from being baptized. He had said that the one coming after him would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). Jesus modeled baptism for us. We value our baptisms as a sign that we choose to follow Jesus, and let him direct our lives. Baptism is a type of washing. We come to God tired and defiled and are washed clean, given a fresh start. Jesus did not need that kind of baptism—he was sinless. Yet he humbly asked to be baptized anyway. Jesus did "what was necessary for us, humbling himself and identifying with our humanity (see Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 2:11-18). What does that tell you about how much he values you?

WEDNESDAY 2.17.16 John 1:29-37 The gospel of John focused more deeply on the meaning of events. Here we "see" Jesus' baptism when the baptizer points him out to his followers as "the Lamb of God," and recalls seeing the Spirit descend on him. We see the result of this powerful testimony, too. Two of John's disciples took his words seriously, and immediately began following Jesus. We don't read about any conflict when two of John's followers set off after Jesus. John saw his life mission being about leading people to Jesus (see John 3:28-30.) How can a desire for credit or status get in the way of your life carrying out its deepest mission?

THURSDAY 2.18.16 Romans 6:1-7 In Romans 5:20, Paul wrote that "where sin increased, grace multiplied even more." It seems that some of his opponents tried to discredit his trust in God's grace by saying, "Let's keep sinning, so that there can be even more grace." Absolutely not, Paul replied. We can't truly accept God's grace without dying to that old way of living, and our baptism is the way we show that we're serious about that. Christ's followers through the centuries have wrestled with the paradox that, even as we "walk in newness of life," we still fall short of God's ideal again and again. (Paul himself stated the other side of this paradox in Romans 7:14-25.) In what ways have you seen Christ's gift of new life break the ruling power of sin in your life? What are the ongoing areas of struggle in your life?

FRIDAY 2.19.16 Matthew 4:1-11 Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years before they entered the Promised Land. The Israelites gave in to the temptation to distrust God (see Numbers 14:28-34). Jesus, God's son, spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness. He, too, was tempted, but did not succumb. He loved and trusted God, and built his life on the Bible's principles. Unlike Jesus, you've probably never been tempted to turn stones to bread. The temptation "fit" him. In what ways have you been tempted to use your unique abilities and powers for our own glory and advancement, rather than to bless others and build God's kingdom?

SATURDAY 2.20.16 Luke 4:1-13 Luke slightly altered Matthew's account of the temptations. He said Jesus "was tempted for forty days by the devil." He also reversed the last two temptations, perhaps so that the sequence began and ended by emphasizing Jesus' standing as God's son, and the regular temptation to doubt that. Matthew contrasted Jesus' success in withstanding temptation to Israel's failure in the wilderness. Luke went even farther—his genealogy of Jesus ended, in Luke 3:38, with "Adam son of God." That son of God failed when tempted, but Jesus did not. Each wilderness temptation Jesus faced involved an easier path to being the messiah Israel thought they wanted. "Dazzle them with signs, impress them with your power, meet their material needs," the tempter whispered. "Why try to change their earthly focus, and face suffering and death?" In what ways are you tempted to follow Jesus only if it's easy, and doesn't create any risks? How are you opening yourself to Jesus' power to grow the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22) in your life, making it better both now and for all eternity?

Love—How do these devotions teach about the love of God and the love for one another?

Learn—What have you learned about where Jesus walked that helps you with where you walk?

Share—What key insights have you learned this week on how to share your faith with others?

Serve—Look at the prayer list. Who can you pray for? Who needs a little extra help in an area where you can make a difference?

Healing Strength: Earline Cougill, Rex Townsend, Chris Osborn (Ken and Sandy Grubb's daughter), Janet Coons (Donna's daughter)

Sympathies: Family of Wilbur Meyer

Congratulations: Travis Fuller & Whitney Writt on the birth of their daughter, Kinley Victoria

Homebound Members: Mary Hicks, Mary Schmidt, Joann Young, Jeanne Carman

Military Personnel: Adam Walters, Joseph Roberts, Lucas Lamkin, Adam Clark

Other: