



LGC Daily Devotion Guide 2010

Week 1: First Sunday of the New Year
January 3 – January 9

I. Adoration

1. Invocation Prayer

“O Lord, the house of my souls is narrow; enlarge that thou mayest enter in. It is ruinous, O repair it! It displeases Thy sight; I confess it, I know. But who shall cleanse it, or to whom shall I cry but unto Thee? Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord, and spare Thy servant from strange sins.

2. Adoration through Psalm One

(We'll use this Psalm, not for today's Bible reading, but for the sake of focusing our thoughts on God)

- Read slowly this passage at least three times and gather a different thought about God's character or deeds each day and translate it into a prayer of adoration.

II. Confession

Pause now and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to your sins and ask for forgiveness.

III. Thanksgiving

List, one by one, things that you should give thanks for.

IV. Scriptural Reflection: Based on the Gospel of Luke

Reading slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day:

January 3: 1: 1-23

- (1) What do we learn from the preface (i.e. vv.1-4) as to (a) the sources of Luke's information, (b) the care which he took to verify his facts, and (c) the importance which he attached to giving a truthful record?
- (2) What was the mission assigned to John the Baptist? What was the nature of his greatness (v. 15)? See also vv. 66-67.
- (3) *What do you learn about "total surrender" today?*

January 4: 1: 24-38

- (1) Vv.31-33 and 35. What seven things are said in these verses about the person and destiny of the promised Child?
- (2) Contrast Mary's reception of the angel's message with the attitude shown by Zechariah. Cf. v.45
- (3) *What do you learn about "total surrender" today?*

January 5: 1: 39-56

- (1) What three divine attributes does Mary extol in vv.49-50?
- (2) What principle of God's ` shine forth in this song?
- (3) *What do you learn about "total surrender" today?*

January 6: 1: 57-80

(The song of Zechariah may be divided thus: vv. 68-70, thanks to God for the coming of the Messiah; vv. 71-75, the purpose of the Messiah's coming; vv. 76-77, the mission of John; vv. 78-79, further picture of Messiah's coming.)

- (1) The song refers primarily to the Jewish nation. On what principle has the Christian Church appropriated it for its own use? See Romans 15:8-9; I Peter 2:9.
- (2) What divine attributes are extolled in Zechariah's song?
- (3) What according to vv. 74-75 and 77-79 is the *purpose* of salvation? Who, in the application of the song to ourselves, are our enemies? How much of the salvation here spoken of

are we experiencing? (Note: the horn of salvation refers to one who has strength to affect salvation; the horn of an animal was a common symbol of strength and power.)

(4) *What do you learn about “total surrender” today?*

January 7 2: 1-20

- (1) Vv. 1-7 How do these verses illustrate the control of God over all, bringing to pass His won purposes through the free action of men? See 1:70; Micah 5:2; Titus 1:3
- (2) What may we learn from the angel’s message and the rejoicing of the heavenly host concerning the *importance* of the birth of Jesus?
- (3) How are the shepherds an example to us in the manner of their response to the divine word of revelation?
- (4) What do you learn about “total surrender” today?

January 8 2: 21-39

- (1) In what ways did Mary and Joseph show their punctilious obedience to God’s law? (There were two rites being observed here: the circumcision (Exodus 13:2, 13; Numbers 3: 44-47), and the sacrifice of purification for the mother? (Leviticus 12)
- (2) What did Simeon see in the child that lay in his arms? When had the aged saint this insight?
- (3) *Luke could have skipped recording the two old saints, but what significance did the two old saints’ appearance have to Mary and Joseph?*
- (4) *What do you learn about “total surrender” today?*

January 9 2: 40-52

- (1) What consciousness of a unique relation to God shines out in Jesus words, and what does He say must be the necessary consequence in His life? How far do His words apply to us, who are sons of God in Him? Cf. John 20:21.
- (2) How does this portion show the Lords’ perfection at each stage of His human growth?
- (3) *What do you learn about “total surrender” today?*

V. Meditative Reflection

January 3

This morning I started out fresh, by finding a rich experience of God in the sunrise. Then I tried to let Him control my hands while I was shaving and dressing and eating breakfast. Now I am trying to let God control my hands as I pound the typewriter keys....There is nothing that we can do excepting to throw ourselves open to God. There is, there must be, so much more in Him than He can give us.... It ought to be tremendously helpful to be able to acquire the habit of reaching out strongly after God’s thoughts, and to ask, “God, what have you to put into my mind now if only I can be large enough?” That waiting, eager attitude ought to give God the chance he needs.

Oh, this thing of keeping in constant touch with God, of making Him the object of my thought and the companion of my conversations, is the most amazing thing I ever ran across. *It is working.* I cannot do it even half a day — not yet, but I believe I shall be doing it some day for the entire day. It is a matter of acquiring a new habit of thought. Now I *like* God’s presence so much that when for a half hour or so he slips out of mind — as He does many times a day — I feel as though I had deserted Him, and as though I had lost something very precious in my life.

January 4

Many of us make the mistake of assuming that intimate communication with God ended with biblical times. The testimony of Frank Laubach and others throughout history, including Francis of Assisi and Julian of Norwich, shows that this is a false assumption. Dallas Willard wrote in *Hearing God*,

Today I continue to believe that people are meant to live in an ongoing conversation with God, speaking and being spoken to. Rightly understood I believe that this can be abundantly verified in experience. God’s visits to Adam and Eve in the Garden, Enoch’s walks with God and the face-to-face conversations between Moses and Jehovah

are all commonly regarded as highly exceptional moments in the religious history of humankind. Aside from their obviously unique historical role, however, they are not meant to be exceptional at all. Rather they are examples of the normal human life God intended for us: God's indwelling his people through personal presence and fellowship. Given who we are by basic nature, we live—really live — only through God's regular speaking in our souls and thus “by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

We may no longer be able to literally live with God in the garden, but we have available to us many other methods of conversing with him. Make a list of the ways you communicate with God — for example, worship, Bible study, receiving communion, prayer. This week try to be aware of all the times you communicate with the Creator, adding to your list as you think of new ideas. Some may surprise you. You might find that you are connecting with God when you have a conversation with good friends, when you admire a sunset, or even when you complain about a task you don't like doing. Think about your patterns of communication. Are you often alone when you find yourself talking with God or do you find yourself connecting with God most easily when you are around others? Does quiet help? Does being outdoors make a difference?

As the week progresses, consider what, if anything, may be hindering your communication with God. For example, our motives for seeking to hear from God may not be the right ones. We should not seek God as we would a fortune-teller, to be assured of our future or our own comfort. Nor should we seek to hear God so we can brag about it to others. Moreover, our communication with God can be impaired if we misunderstand God's nature and his intent for us. God desires relationship with us, not to be our puppet master. He wishes to guide us, not to make all our decisions for us. Think about each of these. Are any of these attitudes, or another obstacle, hindering your fellowship with God?

What were some of the ways you found yourself communication with God? What obstacles to that conversation did you identify?

January 5

The story of Adam and Eve begins with an idyllic life in the garden. When it becomes apparent that Adam is going to be lonely, God makes a companion for him, one who shares his privileges and duties. Together they have dominion over the whole of the plant and animal kingdom. Adam and Eve's only work is to take care of the garden, which provides all the food they need.

Not only does the LORD God provide for Adam and Eve's physical needs, but He also becomes their companion. He speaks to them on a variety of topics, from pronouncing a blessing upon them to giving them instructions about what they can and cannot eat in the garden (1:28ff and 2:16-17). The only biblical record of any response, before the account we just read, from either Adam or Eve is Adam's exclamation when God brings Eve to Him:

This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken. (2:23)

We can surmise that God gave Adam and Eve instruction on a variety of subjects, and in the Scripture Reading, we have more than instruction or guidance. This passage describes a two-way conversation, through which we can glimpse the intimate conversations that took place. The story suggests that God is physically present with Adam and Eve, perhaps even face-to-face. Adam and Eve actually hear the sound of God walking in the garden and then physically hide themselves from Him, ashamed of their newly discovered nakedness and embarrassed by their disobedience. He still calls to them, however, and draws out of them the story of their disobedience.

January 6

The conversation God had with Adam and Eve hardly represents humankind's proudest moment. Adam and Eve had just deliberately disobeyed the only rule they were given, and they promptly blamed everyone else for their disobedience, including God (although indirectly – "The woman whom *you* gave" [Gen 3:12, emphasis added]). How many of us have imagined what we would have done if we had been there? It is easy to think from a distance that we would have rejected that proffered fruit. That Adam and Eve blew it big-time. They had everything, didn't they? Companionship, food, meaningful work, face-to-face conversation with God. But before we get too critical of Adam and Eve, as they hide among the trees after their one terrible mistake, picture God looking for us in the garden, fully cognizant of all of our flaws and failures. How far would we run?

Like us, Adam and Eve were given the gift of freedom – the freedom to make their own choices, even the freedom to throw away all of God's other good gifts. What they did not have, however, was an understanding of the power of freedom. They did not know the consequences of actions that conflicted with God's plan for their lives. They did not yet have the character to handle the knowledge of good and evil provided by eating fruit from the forbidden tree. God's relationship with them was one of guidance and apprenticeship. The purpose of His conversations with Adam and Eve was to form their characters, to teach them how to handle the responsibility of their freedom to make choices, so that they could work in companionship with Him. Having been created as fully formed adults, Adam and Eve had bypassed the process of having their characters and spirits formed in the context of a family or religious community. So God gave them instructions about how to live. Subdue the earth but take care of it. Have dominion over the animals but be friends with them. Fill the earth with your progeny. Eat from the plants and trees. Till the garden so you will have plenty to eat. In your freedom, cooperate with me to make this a successful enterprise. Then and

now, God has no interest in robots. He gave instructions but did not force Adam and Eve to obey them.

Their characters, like ours, could be formed only by God allowing them to make choices in response to what He put before them. And this left the possibility of disastrous results. When they made the wrong choice, they had to face the consequences, and so do we. Yet the very fact of their disobedience makes the subsequent conversation all the more remarkable. God still sought them out. God knew of their disobedience; He also knew they were hiding. Yet God called out to them, gave them both a chance to confess to Him. Their defiant act did not end the learning; the conversations continue, even into future generations, although at a greater distance.

What does Adam and Eve's interaction with God teach us about our own communication with God?

January 7

Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden in no way marked the end of intimate, one-to-one conversation with God. The Bible contains numerous stories of such conversations, but there are also many modern examples. Before he wrote the journal entries in this chapter's Devotional Reading, Frank Laubach had an experience in which he believed God spoke to him through Laubach's own mouth. Laubach was working as a missionary in Mindanao, a remote island in the Philippines. This area was considered so isolated and dangerous that Laubach's family stayed behind in a larger city. Alone, Laubach became discouraged with his initial lack of progress. The people he was working with were Muslim and deeply skeptical of Christianity. One night Laubach climbed a hill behind his cottage and sat, brooding over his lack of success. There he had a life-changing experience of communication with God:

My lips began to move and it seemed to me that God was speaking.

“My Child,” my lips said, “you have failed because you do not really love these Moros. You feel superior to them because you are white. If you can forget you are an American and think only how I love them, they will respond.”

I answered back to the sunset, “God, I don’t know whether you spoke to me through my lips, but if you did, it was the truth.”

Laubach described the experience as erasing his prejudice and making him color-blind. Not only did it rejuvenate his ministry, it marked the beginning of Laubach’s journey toward the goal of staying constantly in touch with God.

January 8

The individual with-God life is all about pursuing a close relationship with God like the one He had with Adam and Eve in the garden. Just like Adam and Eve, we live in a world where we are tempted to do many things that aren’t good for us or for those we love. Often, we make the wrong choice. Yet the guidance and instruction we receive from God through reading and studying Scripture, talking with Him, listening to Him, and walking with Him helps form our spirits so that we will be able to respond like we should when confronted with challenges and problems. But communicating with God is much more than just knowing what to do in difficult situations. The better our communication becomes, the closer we approach Fran Laubach’s goal of staying constantly in touch with Him, of *living* with God. Then we can better ask Laubach’s question: “God, what have you to put into my mind now if only I can be large enough”

What does living with God mean to you?

This concludes our look at living with God. We will turn our attention to another avenue of connecting with God – prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation,
for you I wait all day long.

“Come,” my heart says, “seek His face!”
Your face, LORD, do I seek.

Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.

Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,

for to you I pray. Amen. (PSS 25:1, 4-5; 27:8; 5:1-2)

January 9

Like Adam and Eve, Christians today are still meant to live in conversational relationship with God. Yet many of us spend much or even all of our prayer time talking to God, rather than listening for Him. Think about your own prayer life. Are you listening for the voice of God or do you find that your conversations are mostly one-way? This week make a special effort to balance your words to God with periods of listening for His response, His guidance.

We read that Adam and Eve could hear God approaching. Their hiding implies that they could see God, or at least that He could see them. What senses do you use to intuit God’s presence? Can you sometimes feel or hear him? If so, in what ways?

This privilege of face-to-face communication with God, which Adam and Eve had and lost, is our natural state of being. Imagine for a moment a life of constant fellowship with God. Is the idea blissful? Is it a little intimidating? What might that type of fellowship change about your life?

After Adam and Eve committed the first sin by disobeying God, they hid from Him. Sin obscures God from our view. Think of a time when you made a wrong choice that changed the course of your life. What could you have done to avoid it? What did you have to do to correct it? Did you talk with God about it? Take a few minutes to reflect. Are any ongoing sins, or sins from your past, affecting your fellowship with God?

VI. A Time for Silence

You have mediated much today with your intellectual faculty today. Now have a moment of silence (the length is up to you, 5 or even 30 minutes), and ask God quietly, “Lord, is there any important message from you today that I might have missed? Show me, your servant is listening?”

VII. Supplication

Use the following chart to cover people and ministries that you want to remember before the Lord:

	Your family	Other people	Church Ministries	Other Ministries	City & World	Others
Sunday						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wed						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						

VIII. Benediction

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.” (Numbers 6:24-26)