SELAH

A Cool Heart

Five mornings, October 19 to 23

MONDAY CROWNED.

TUESDAY FED.

WEDNESDAY TRAINED.

THURSDAY SEALED.

FRIDAY HELPED.

Each morning has a place to write. A notebook works. So does the notes app on your phone. Ten minutes is enough.

NW Hills
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY

SELAH

CROWNED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

Sunday we talked about the one fruit with “self” in its name, and why the Spirit is the one who grows it. This is the first of five mornings with that idea. Your week is already pulling at you, and that's fine. Stop anyway. Nothing on your list is going anywhere in the next ten minutes. For now, the only thing to do is sit still and give God the first part of your day.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Before you read anything, notice what your body is doing. Are your shoulders up? Is your jaw tight? Let them go. Breathe slowly, and let each breath out be a little longer than the one before.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, “Lord, you crowned me with honor...”

As you exhale, pray, “...let nothing else rule me.”

LOOK

On Sunday you heard that Psalm 8 puts human beings in between: a little like the animals, a little like God. Here's a detail that didn't make it into the sermon. Proverbs 16:32 says the person with self-control is “one who rules his spirit.” The Hebrew verb for “rules” there is the same verb behind “rulers” in this psalm. The God who made you to rule his world wants you ruling yourself first.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *When I consider your heavens,*
> *the work of your fingers,*
> *the moon and the stars,*
> *which you have set in place,*
> *what is mankind that you are mindful of them,*
> *human beings that you care for them?*
> *You have made them a little lower than the angels*
> *and crowned them with glory and honor.*
> *You made them rulers over the works of your hands;*
> *you put everything under their feet:*
>
> Psalm 8:3–6 NIV

ASK

Before you ever did anything right or wrong, God crowned you with glory and honor. You were made to rule, not to be ruled by whatever you happen to want most.

Ruling here never means pushing people around. It means caring for what God made, on his behalf, the way he would. And if something has been ruling you for a long time, that doesn't cancel the crown. The psalm is about what God did when he made you, and nothing you've done since has undone it.

- Read the psalm again slowly. Which phrase catches you, and why?
- Do you think of yourself as crowned with glory and honor? What makes that easy or hard to believe?

- What has been sitting on the throne in your life lately: an appetite, a habit, a mood, a screen?
- What would it look like today to treat that thing as something you rule, with God's help, instead of something that rules you?

Write a short prayer thanking God for the crown he gave you, and naming one thing you want off the throne.

Or, if you struggle to believe God sees you with glory and honor, write a short prayer asking him to show you how he sees you.

HEAR

Listening is hard on a Monday. Your mind is already running ahead to everything you have to do, and that's normal. Don't fight it. Each time it wanders, bring it back. Sit quietly for a couple of minutes and ask, “Lord, what do you want to rule in me today?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

TUESDAY

SELAH

FED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

A lot can happen in a day. Maybe yesterday went better than you expected, or maybe it went sideways by noon. Either way, you came back, and coming back is the whole point of these mornings. Take a minute to stop before today gets moving.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

On Sunday you heard an old acronym: hungry, angry, lonely, tired. Check in with yourself honestly. Are any of those true of you right now? You don't have to fix them before you breathe. Just notice them, and breathe slowly.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

> *As you inhale, pray, "You fed them in the wilderness, Father..."*
>
> *As you exhale, pray, "...feed me with your word today."*

LOOK

When Jesus was hungry in the wilderness, he answered the devil with a line from this passage. On Sunday you heard it secondhand. This morning, read it where Moses first said it, to people who had spent forty years learning it the hard way.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*
>
> Deuteronomy 8:2–3 NIV

ASK

God let his people feel hungry, and then he fed them, every single morning, for forty years. The hunger wasn't the point. The lesson was: you need more than bread, and God is the one who feeds you.

Two things this passage does not mean. It isn't a call to skip meals or to treat your body as an enemy. God fed them. And it doesn't mean every hard season is God punishing you. The manna came every morning, even while they were complaining.

- What are you hungry for right now? Think beyond food: attention, rest, approval, relief, control.
- When you're hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, what do you usually reach for first?
- Jesus answered his hunger with his Father's word. Is there a verse or a phrase from God you could carry with you into today?

- Where has God fed you in a season when you didn't expect it?

Write a short prayer telling God what you're hungry for, and asking him to feed you with what you really need.

Or, if you feel like you're living on scraps right now, write a prayer asking God to show you where his provision is already showing up.

HEAR

Silence can feel unproductive on a Tuesday, when real work is waiting. But this is part of being fed. Sit for a few minutes and ask, “Lord, what word do you have for me today?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

WEDNESDAY

SELAH

TRAINED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

You're halfway through the week. By now something has probably tested you: a craving, a short fuse, a moment you'd like to have back. You don't have to clean it up before you sit down. Bring it with you, and stop for a few minutes.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Athletes learn to breathe on purpose. Slow, steady, controlled. Try that now. Breathe in for four, out for six, and let your body learn the pace before your mind catches up.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, "Your grace is training me..."

As you exhale, pray, "...teach me to say no today."

LOOK

On Sunday you heard Paul compare himself to an athlete in training. In this letter to his friend Titus, Paul says who the trainer is. The word translated “teaches” is the word for raising and training a child. And “self-controlled” here is a close cousin of Sunday's word. It means a sound, steady mind.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*
>
> Titus 2:11–14 NIV

ASK

Grace doesn't only forgive you. It trains you. The same grace that saved you is teaching you to say no, patiently, the way a good parent teaches a child. Willpower runs out. Grace doesn't.

Training isn't punishment. A coach who loves you doesn't beat you up when you miss. If you live with ADHD, an addiction that runs in your family, or trauma that changed how your body reacts, your training may look different from someone else's, and getting help is part of it.

- Where do you most need to learn to say no right now?
- Do you usually think of grace as something that trains you, or only something that forgives you? What changes if it's both?
- Paul says Jesus is purifying “a people,” not a collection of loners. Who is training alongside you?

- What is one small yes to God that could make today's no easier?

Write a short prayer asking God's grace to train you in one specific area today.

Or, if you're tired of failing in the same place, write a prayer telling God that honestly, and asking him to be patient with you while you learn.

HEAR

Halfway through the week is a good time to notice what God has been doing since Monday. Monday you read that you were crowned to rule. Tuesday you read that God feeds his people. Today you read that his grace is training you. Sit quietly and ask, “Lord, where have you been training me this week?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

THURSDAY

SELAH

SEALED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

You may be getting the hang of this by now. That's good, but it can also turn into a routine you rush through without really stopping. So be intentional today. Slow down before you start, and give these next minutes your full attention.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Today's passage is about your mouth and your anger. Before you read it, notice whether you're carrying either one this morning: words you wish you hadn't said, or a heat that hasn't cooled. Breathe slowly, and let each breath out cool it a little.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

> *As you inhale, pray, "Holy Spirit, you sealed me as yours..."*
>
> *As you exhale, pray, "...I don't want to grieve you."*

LOOK

On Sunday you heard that this verse sits in the middle of a paragraph about what comes out of your mouth and what you do with your anger. This morning, read the whole paragraph. Notice what comes right before the Spirit, and what comes right after.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
>
> Ephesians 4:29–32 NIV

ASK

You were sealed. The Holy Spirit marked you as God's own, and grieving him doesn't mean losing him. But he's a person who loves you, not a battery, and the way you talk and the way you handle your anger reach him.

Being kind and forgiving never means staying where someone is hurting you, or pretending that harm didn't happen. Forgiving someone and trusting them again are two different things.

- Which line in this paragraph is hardest for you to read right now?
- Think about the last time your words or your anger got ahead of you. What was going on underneath?
- What would “only what is helpful for building others up” look like in one conversation you're likely to have today?
- How does it change things to know that the Spirit who grieves with you is also the one who sealed you?

Write a short prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guard your mouth and cool your anger today.

Or, if you've been carrying words you regret, write a prayer receiving God's forgiveness, “just as in Christ God forgave you,” and asking whether there's someone you need to make it right with.

HEAR

Listening is hard when your mind keeps replaying a conversation. If that happens, don't scold yourself. Each time it comes back, hand it to God and return to the quiet. Then ask, “Holy Spirit, what do you want me to say today, and what do you want me to leave unsaid?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

FRIDAY

SELAH

HELPED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

This is the last of five mornings. Look back at the week: crowned, fed, trained, sealed. Every one of those was something God did for you. Today is about where you go from here, and who goes with you. Stop one more time before the weekend starts, and let God have this space.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Breathing out is a kind of letting go. You can't take a fresh breath in until you release the old one. As you breathe this morning, let go of the idea that you have to fight alone.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, “You know my weakness, Jesus...”

As you exhale, pray, “...give me grace in time of need.”

LOOK

On Sunday you heard about Jesus in the wilderness, hungry, tempted, and full of the Spirit. The writer of Hebrews looked back at that same Jesus and saw a high priest. A couple of chapters earlier he says it plainly: “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*
>
> Hebrews 4:14–16 NIV

ASK

Jesus knows what temptation feels like from the inside. He isn't shocked by your weakness, and he doesn't roll his eyes at it. You can come to him with confidence, and he helps.

On Sunday you were asked to find your way out before you need it, and to tell one person what it is. This passage is the first door. The rest usually have names: a friend you text, a group, a counselor, a sponsor, a doctor. And if what you're fighting is alcohol or certain prescription drugs, talk to a doctor before you quit. Stopping suddenly can be dangerous, and asking for that help is wisdom.

- What is the temptation you'd least like to admit to? Tell Jesus about it, plainly. He's been there.
- What is your way out? Write it down specifically.
- Who is the one person you'll tell? If you haven't told them yet, when will you?

- Is there someone in your life who needs you to be part of their way out? What could you do for them this week?

Write a prayer asking Jesus for grace to help you in your time of need, and naming the person you'll tell.

Or, if you feel like you're the only one who struggles the way you do, write a prayer asking God to show you that you're not alone, and to bring you one person you can trust.

HEAR

You've stopped five mornings this week, and that's worth noticing. This practice doesn't have to end today. Before you finish, sit quietly one more time and ask, “Lord, how do you want me to carry this into next week?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.