

LENTEN

devotionals

FIRST MONDAY OF LENT FEBRUARY 22, 2021

Today is the first week of Lent.

*Take a moment to pause and
breath in and out slowly.*

Intentionally.

*Rest in and welcome God's
grace-filled presence.*

Henri Nouwen writes:

"As long as I keep running about asking: 'Do you love me? Do you really love me?' I give all power to the voices of the world and put myself in bondage because the world is filled with 'ifs.'

The world says: 'Yes, I love you if you are good-looking, intelligent, and wealthy. I love you if you have a good education, a good job, and good connections. I love you if you produce much, sell much, and buy much.'

There are endless 'ifs' hidden in the world's love. These 'ifs' enslave me, since it is impossible to respond adequately to all of them. The world's love is and always will be conditional. As long as I keep looking for my true self in the world of conditional love, I will remain 'hooked' to the world—trying, failing, and trying again. It is a world that fosters addictions because what it offers cannot satisfy the deepest craving of my heart."

What stirs in you when you hear this declaration on the world's type of love? This conditional love.

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"Do you love me? Do you really love me?" Have you ever asked this question to God? Why?

Sometimes our families can bring us great pain and great sorrow. They can encourage and discourage. They can be examples for us to live up to or embarrassments for us to hide.

Have you ever thought how your immediate and extended family have shaped your own relationship with God? What of your family history do you downplay or celebrate? How has it shaped you?

†

Read today's Scripture.

As you read the family history of Jesus—Jesus the Messiah the promised one from God—we are reminded again and again of how God honors his circles of commitment (called covenants to us) even when we as poor-choice ridden humans take things in our own hands, God continually pursues us to enable us to draw us back to his circles of commitment to bless us so we can bless others.

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

*Judah the father
of Perez and Zerah,
whose mother was
Tamar,*

Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law and bore two of his children. Tamar was used by God.

*Salmon the father of
Boaz, whose mother
was Rahab,*

Rahab was a prostitute. Rahab was used by God.

*Boaz the father of
Obed, whose mother
was Ruth,*

Ruth was a Moabite— a non-Israelite. Ruth was used by God.

*Obed the father of
Jesse, and Jesse the
father of King David.
David was the father
of Solomon, whose
mother had been
Uriah's wife,*

Uriah's wife was Bathsheba whom David committed adultery with. Bathsheba was used by God.

*This is how the birth
of Jesus the Messiah
came about...*

Matthew 1 annotated

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As you hear this annotated reading of the genealogy of Jesus, the One who brings in God's New Covenant, what surprises you? Why?

†

How does this stand in contrast to the "endless 'ifs' hidden in the world's love," as Nouwen shared earlier?

Read today's Scripture again.

While reading, think of your own family. Those stories you keep hidden. How is God enabling you to become more than your past because He is creating your future?

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,

Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law and bore two of his children. Tamar was used by God.

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,

Rahab was a prostitute. Rahab was used by God.

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Ruth was a Moabite—a non-Israelite. Ruth was used by God.

Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

Uriah's wife was Bathsheba whom David committed adultery with. Bathsheba was used by God.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about...

Matthew 1 annotated

In these final moments today, talk to Jesus about any feelings of being discounted or unworthy because of poor choices in the past. Ask Jesus to open your eyes and heart to God's unconditional love as you allow yourself to be fully embraced by God's loving circle of commitment for you.

**Lord Jesus, search us,
and know our hearts;
test us and know
our anxious thoughts.
Point out in us anything
that offends you,
and lead us along
the path of everlasting life.
Amen.**