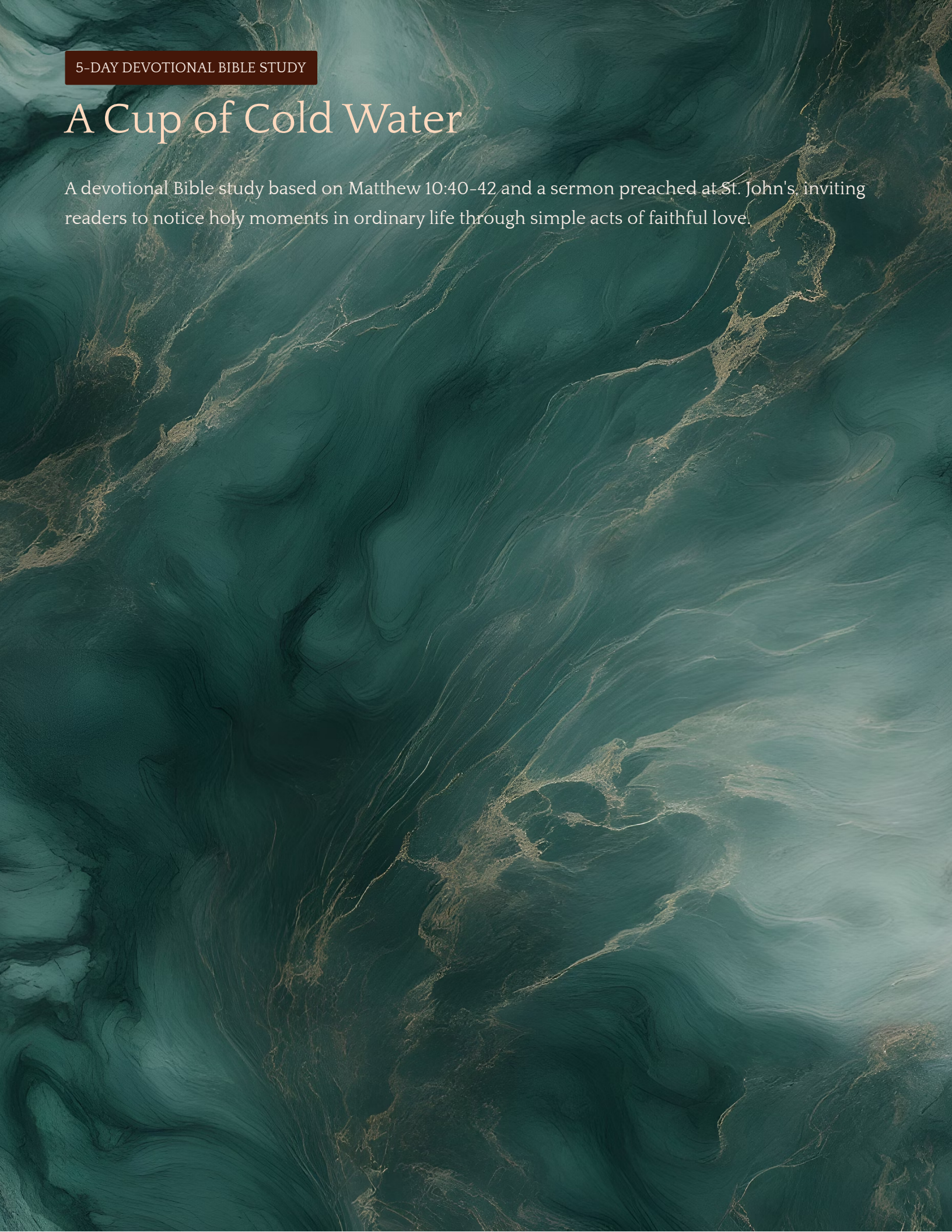




5-DAY DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY

A Cup of Cold Water

A devotional Bible study based on Matthew 10:40-42 and a sermon preached at St. John's, inviting readers to notice holy moments in ordinary life through simple acts of faithful love.

Showing Up

KEY VERSE

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." — Matthew 10:40

Devotional

There is something quietly powerful about a person who simply shows up. No fanfare, no announcement, no need for applause. They arrive at the hospital room. They slip into the kitchen after a funeral and start washing dishes. They drive two hundred miles to celebrate someone they love. They are just there, present and ready, asking one question: "How can I help?"

Jesus knew this kind of person. He built his entire movement on them. When he sent out the twelve disciples, he did not send them with armies or authority or impressive resumes. He sent them with his name and the expectation that ordinary people would open their doors and welcome them in. And in that welcome, something miraculous would happen: the very presence of Christ would enter that home, that life, that moment.

This is not a small thing. Jesus identifies himself so completely with his people that welcoming a disciple is the same as welcoming God himself. Think about that the next time someone quietly serves your congregation. Think about that the next time you are the one who shows up. You are not just being a good neighbor or a kind church member. You are becoming a vessel through which Christ enters someone else's story.

Faithfulness does not always look dramatic. More often, it looks like a person who shows up, week after week, year after year, generation after generation, because the work of God's kingdom is worth showing up for.

Reflection Questions

1. Think of someone in your life who has consistently shown up for you. How did their presence reflect Christ to you?
2. In what specific ways do you "show up" for your church community or neighborhood?
3. Is there someone in your life right now who needs you to simply show up? What is holding you back?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for being a God who shows up. You showed up in a manger, at a wedding, at a tomb, and at a cross. You still show up in the lives of ordinary people every single day. Give me the courage and the willingness to show up for others in your name. Let my presence be a reminder that they are not alone, and that you are near. Amen.

The Cup of Cold Water

KEY VERSE

"And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward." — Matthew 10:42

Devotional

A cup of cold water. Of all the things Jesus could have pointed to as a sign of his kingdom growing on earth, he chose this: a small, simple, utterly ordinary act of kindness offered to someone who is thirsty. Not a theological debate. Not a building campaign. Not a perfectly organized program. A cup of cold water.

It is easy to assume that what matters most in the life of faith is the big, visible, impressive stuff. The sermon that goes viral. The ministry that reaches thousands. The generous gift that gets a plaque on the wall. But Jesus consistently turns our attention back to the small and the simple. He honors what the world overlooks. He notices what headlines never capture.

The phrase "in the name of a disciple" is key here. It is not just the act itself that matters. It is the heart behind it. Giving a cup of cold water in someone's name means you are doing it because of who they are, because of whose they are. You see the person in front of you as someone claimed by Christ, and that recognition changes the act from a transaction into a sacrament.

Think about the cups of cold water you have received in your own life. A meal left on your doorstep during a hard season. A hand on your shoulder when you were grieving. A name remembered when you felt invisible. These are the moments where God's kingdom quietly, beautifully breaks through into ordinary life. And none of them, Jesus says, will lose their reward.

Reflection Questions

1. What is one "cup of cold water" that someone offered you that you still remember? What made it meaningful?
2. What small act of kindness could you offer someone this week that might feel ordinary to you but holy to them?
3. How does doing something "in the name of a disciple" change the way you think about everyday acts of service?

Prayer

Gracious God, forgive me for the times I have waited for a grand opportunity to serve you while overlooking the simple ones right in front of me. Open my eyes today to the small and holy moments you are placing in my path. Help me to offer what I have with a willing and loving heart, trusting that no act done in your name is ever too small to matter. Amen.

Every Person Is the Ministry

KEY VERSE

"The one who receives you receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me." — Matthew 10:40 (ESV)

Devotional

It is easy to think of ministry as something that happens during official church programs, led by credentialed professionals, scheduled on a calendar, and measured by attendance numbers. But Jesus has a much wider and more generous definition of where his ministry shows up. It shows up in the preschool parent dropping off their child on a Tuesday morning. It shows up in a teenager wandering onto a pickleball court after school. It shows up in a family finding their way to a community event on a Friday night.

These people are not interruptions to the ministry of the church. They are not problems to be managed or gaps to be filled. They are the ministry. Every one of them is someone in whom Christ is already at work, someone he is already drawing to himself. Our role is simply to recognize what he is doing and participate by offering a warm welcome.

When we see every person we encounter as someone Christ has claimed, it changes everything. The visitor sitting in the pew is not just filling a seat. The neighbor you pass on your morning walk is not just a stranger. The person struggling in the checkout line is not just an inconvenience. They are human beings made in the image of God, loved by Christ, and placed in your path for a reason.

Our privilege is not to manufacture holy moments. It is to notice the ones God is already creating all around us and step into them with open hands and an open heart.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever mistaken a divine appointment for an interruption? What happened?
2. Who might God be placing in your path that you've overlooked?
3. How does it change the way you see others when you believe Christ is already at work in their lives?

Prayer

Lord, give me eyes to see people the way you see them. Help me notice those you place in my path each day. Remind me that I do not need all the answers. I simply need to be present, welcoming, and trust that you are already at work. Use me today to reflect your welcome. Amen.

Simple Faithfulness

KEY VERSE

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things." — Matthew 25:21

Devotional

True faithfulness is often much quieter than we expect. We celebrate dramatic conversions, extraordinary miracles, and viral moments of faith. But the longer we walk with God and observe the life of a healthy congregation, the more we realize that the most important work is usually quiet, steady, and unglamorous. It does not make the news or go viral. It simply keeps showing up, year after year, in faithful ways.

Long before any of us were born, people gathered on church properties like yours to learn God's word, receive the sacraments, baptize their children, bury their loved ones, and pray for one another. They were not chasing headlines. They were simply being faithful. And because they were faithful, a community was formed. Because they were faithful, you are here today.

This is the nature of God's kingdom. It grows slowly and quietly, like yeast in dough, a seed in the ground, or a lamp shining in a dark room. It does not rely on noise or spectacle. It simply shines, faithfully, one ordinary day at a time. And the mission of sharing God's love belongs not just to pastors, staff members, or committee chairs. It belongs to all of us, living our everyday lives with simple, faithful love.

You do not have to be extraordinary to be used by God. You simply have to be faithful in the small things, trusting that he will tend to the rest.

Reflection Questions

1. Who in your faith community models quiet, faithful discipleship for you? How have they shaped your walk with Jesus?
2. Where might you be waiting for a bigger opportunity while overlooking the faithful work already in front of you?
3. What is one small act of faithfulness you could commit to over the next month?

Prayer

Father, thank you for the gift of ordinary faithfulness. Thank you for the quiet saints who came before me and paved the way through their steady, humble love. Help me to stop waiting for the spectacular and to embrace the simple. Teach me that the small things done in your name are never small in your eyes. Make me a faithful servant in the everyday moments of my life. Amen.

Christ Welcomes Us First

KEY VERSE

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28

Devotional

Before we ever welcome anyone else, before we offer a single cup of cold water or show up for someone in need, Christ welcomes us first. Every time we gather for worship, come to the table, and receive the Word and the sacraments, we are welcomed by Jesus exactly as we are, with all our weariness, doubt, ordinariness, and need.

Jesus does not give us a mere cup of cold water. He gives us the cup of salvation. He gives us his own body and blood, forgiveness and mercy, and the promise that we are not alone. Most of all, he gives us himself. This grace makes everything else possible. We do not serve others to earn God's love. We serve because we have already received it, freely and abundantly.

This is what sustains faithful service over the long haul. Not willpower, obligation, or the desire to be seen as a good person, but the experience of being welcomed by the God of the universe. When you know you are welcomed and loved that way, welcoming others becomes not a duty but a delight. You simply extend to others what you have already received.

So as you go out this week, remember: you go as one who has been welcomed, fed, and sent. You go nourished by grace. You go with a mission shared by all God's people. And you go one cup of cold water at a time, trusting that Christ goes with you into every ordinary, holy moment.

Reflection Questions

1. How does it change your understanding of service to know that Christ welcomes you first, before you do anything for him or anyone else?
2. In what ways has your own experience of being welcomed, by God or by another person, motivated you to welcome others?
3. As you close this devotional, what is one specific, concrete way you will offer a "cup of cold water" to someone in your life this week?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for welcoming me just as I am. Nourished by your grace, send me out this week to love others simply, faithfully, and generously. Let every small act of love bring you glory. When I grow weary, remind me to return to the one who always welcomes me home. Amen.