2026 Monthly Devotions

November 16 -- 21 2026

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Hummelstown, PA
Pastor Dave Schreffler

November 16, 2026 -- Devotions – Does the Bible Say…?
Does The Bible Say King Eglon is Really, Really Fat?

"Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did this evil the Lord gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel. Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years. Again the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and he gave them a deliverer—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite. The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a cubit long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing. He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab…" Judges 3:12-17

The story of the Israelites is a story of repeated obedience and disobedience. They would listen to the word of the Lord for a period of time, sometimes years upon years, and then they would fall away. This is apparently what had happened once again, for the Lord gives the Israelites into the hands of Eglon, the king of Moab – for eighteen years. After those eighteen years, the Lord finally heard the cries of the people and gave them a deliverer – Ehud the Benjamite. He was a powerful man – left-handed as the text tells us, which as you may have determined, has some significance. In 1 Chronicles 12:2 it mentions that a squad of soldiers, also Benjamites, who were ambidextrous. Others in the Bible are mentioned to have left-handed abilities as they are described as being able to draw a sword with their left hand. (2 Samuel 20:8-10)

When Ehud approached the room to see Eglon, he would have been inspected by the guards. Since being right-handed was more common then as it is today, his guards would have searched his left side for a concealed weapon more carefully than the right. A right-handed person draws a long blade from the left side. Apparently, upon seeing the left side was clear, they didn't search the right for hidden weapons. After all, it was unlikely that he could draw and use a blade from that side. Now there is one other point about this strange encounter, and it has to do with the size of Eglon.

"Eglon king of Moab…was a very fat man. After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way those who had carried it. But on reaching the stone images near Gilgal he himself went back to Eglon and said, "Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you." The king said to his attendants,

"Leave us!" And they all left. Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his palace and said, "I have a message from God for you." As the king rose from his seat, Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it. Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, "He must be relieving himself in the inner room of the palace." They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key and unlocked them. There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead." Judges 3:17-25

I just love it when the bible throws in these little details that make scripture come alive. The writer did not have to tell us that Ehud was left-handed, or that Eglon was morbidly obese, but they did – and the story comes alive in our minds as we picture the encounter. After all, this is the "living word of G-d" – and the bible should always come alive in our minds.

Pastor Dave

November 17, 2026 -- Devotions – Does the Bible Say…?
Does The Bible Say Axes Can Float?

"Now the company of prophets said to Elisha, "As you see, the place where we live under your charge is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, and let us collect logs there, one for each of us, and build a place there for us to live." He answered, "Do so." Then one of them said, "Please come with your servants." And he answered, "I will." So he went with them. When they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a log, his ax head fell into the water; he cried out, "Alas, master! It was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float. He said, "Pick it up." So he reached out his hand and took it." 2 Kings 6:1-7

I have a problem dropping my phone into cups of coffee. I have done this probably four times in my lifetime. Four times I have dropped my phone

into a cup of coffee. It is ridiculous. Yes, I am a klutz. Yes, I do not learn some lessons quickly in my life. But if I could have one super-power, I would like to be able to make things float. Or, at least have the power to make things levitate.

This miracle attributed to Elisha is yet another in the long line of miracles for the prophets of G-d. He healed Naaman the Syrian — he brought back to life the Shunemmite boy — and he fed many prophets — among other miracles. But the raising of the ax head is by far the strangest. As the story goes, it happened that the iron head of an ax, used by one of the builders in cutting down a tree, fell into the waters of the Jordan. The young prophet was greatly distressed because the ax was borrowed. Seeing how dear this prophet held the property of his friend, Elisha came to his rescue. He cut a wooden stick, and threw it into the water, and the next moment the wooden stick slowly sank to the bottom, and the iron levitated to the surface, and was retrieved by the young prophet.

There is no end to the ability of the prophets of G-d — and there is no end to the power of G-d in our lives as well. No, we may not be able to levitate a phone, but we can call others to join us to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Pastor Dave

November 18, 2026 -- Devotions – Does the Bible Say…?
Does The Bible Say Eutychus Died From a Boring Sermon?

"On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead." Acts 20:7-9

I have always been concerned that my preaching could have negative results on the health of certain people. At the end of a worship service during my internship years, I was confronted by a parishioner who believed that my sermon was misleading and inappropriate. At another church one of my parishioners would fall asleep as soon as I began my sermon.

Sermons are one of the last enduring rights of free speech that we all participate in every Sunday. Sermons are a powerful opportunity for the word of G-d to reach people – and because they are individualized by each pastor standing in a pulpit or free-wheeling in the Nave, that power has enormous potential. It has enormous potential to inspire, to provoke, to enthrall and…….to bore.

Eutychus was listening to Paul preach one day, and for some reason he thought the best seat in the house was in the open windowsill on the third floor. Paul was on a roll, preaching the word of G-d with power and persistence. In fact, he was so empowered with the spirit he just kept preaching, and preaching, and preaching. And while he continued to preach on and on about the workings of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, Eutychus grew increasingly tired. Finally he fell asleep – so asleep that he relaxed and did the unthinkable – he fell out the window, three stories to his death. It was a tragedy.

But all was not lost. *"…Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left. Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted."* Acts 20:10-12

The raising of Eutychus is one of the great miracles attributed to Paul. But Paul does not linger over the miracle. He returns upstairs to break bread with the people, and then he moves on. But Paul was not one to sit still long — unless he was in prison. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul performs another miracle and keeps moving on toward his own death.

I realize I have tremendous power when I am preaching. I just hope I do not bore people "to death".

Pastor Dave

November 19, 2026 -- Devotions – Does the Bible Say…?
Does The Bible Say "Prophet, You Shall Spend a Year on Your Side"?

"And you, son of man, take a brick and set it in front of you. Inscribe a city on it – Jerusalem. Lay siege to it! Build siege works against it. Erect a siege ramp against it! Post soldiers outside it and station battering rams around it. Then for your part take an iron frying pan and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face toward it. It is to be under siege; you are to besiege it. This is a sign for the house of Israel. Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it; you shall bear their punishment for the number of the days that you lie there. For I assign to you a number of days, three hundred ninety days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment; and so you shall bear the punishment of the house of Israel. When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, one day for each year. You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and with your arm bared you shall prophesy against it. See, I am putting cords on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege. And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread for yourself. During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred ninety days, you shall eat it. The food that you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; at fixed times you shall eat it." Ezekiel 4:1-10

Ezekiel is directed to act out what one of my seminary professors called a "Prophetic Sign-act". When performing such an act, the prophet was told to do something (wear stocks, walk naked for three years, or lay on their side for 390 days). In this case, Ezekiel is told to perform a mock siege against Jerusalem. He was told to be mute so the prophet's strange actions would communicate G-d's message. This was to be a sign to the people of Judah living in captivity — and there was no doubt that word of Ezekiel's actions would spread.

As part of his "Sign-act", Ezekiel is told to lay on one side for 390 days, figuratively bearing the iniquity of the house of Israel, and then for 40 days on the other side, bearing Judah's iniquity. Each day of lying down is said to represent a year. G-d then tells Ezekiel what he is to eat for the next 390 days—a mixed-grain bread. G-d first told him to bake it in a defiled way, cooking it over dried human waste, in order to symbolize the defiled state of

Israel and Judah. But after Ezekiel expressed his revulsion at this, G-d allowed him to instead cook the food over cow manure, “a common fuel then as now”.

Today, people will do “stunts” to raise money for certain causes — they might live atop a billboard for several weeks, participate in a dance marathon for forty-eight hours, or walk across a tight-rope strung across a gorge. But these are different kinds of acts than the ones performed by the prophets of G-d. If the people would not listen to the words of the prophets, perhaps their acts might get them to think twice about their obedience to G-d. It makes me think about my own actions — and the choices I make in my relationship with G-d. Do I believe that my faithful acts are just stunts to make G-d think I am paying attention, or are they truly acts of worship and praise? It should make us all think…G-d is not interested in stunts — G-d is interested in deeds of praise and acts of love.

Pastor Dave

November 20, 2026 -- Devotions – Does the Bible Say…?
Does The Bible Say You Can Catch Fish With Coins in Their Mouths?

“When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?” He said, “Yes, he does.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?” When Peter said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the children are free. However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me.” Matthew 17:24-27

I once attended a fishing trip with a couple of friends. We flew into a small fishing camp close to rural Nestor Falls, Canada for six days of fishing, fishing, and more fishing. The fish we were after were not small fish — we were looking to catch some Northern Pike, Walleye, Small Mouth Bass, Lake Trout, and the elusive Muskellunge (Muskie). Catching many of these fish takes some real knowledge of their habits and their appetites. You usually must spend time understanding a fish, knowing their habitat, what they feed on etc. if you plan to catch a fish that is worthy of a picture to

show to your friends back home. But just imagine if you boated a fish — took it back to the local cleaning station — cut it open and found a roll of one-hundred-dollar bills in its stomach. I believe this would really catch your attention.

Consider the power of Christ in obtaining the money from the fish's mouth. Either He put it there (which is a miracle in and of itself) or Jesus knew it was there because, well, Jesus knows everything. In either case, this is evidence that Jesus is Lord of all. He chose to take the money out of a fish's mouth, even though he could have received it from any of a multitude of sources — and fishermen from all over the world envy his luck. Even though the coins amounted to just enough to pay the tax for Jesus and Peter, don't you think commanding a bag of money in the mouth of a large fish would have made a more significant impact?

Perhaps there is a lesson in this odd story. Perhaps Jesus is teaching us to be content to have just enough for our current needs — and not to constantly strive for too much. We are to trust G-d, even if we have to live from hand-to-mouth. If we have enough for today, *"let tomorrow take thought for the things of itself."*

Look, if I happen to catch a fish whose stomach contains a roll of bills (American, not Canadian) I will certainly thank the Lord for the bounty given to me. But I am constantly reminded that striving for an abundance of money or goods or property is nowhere comparable to the abundance of love, mercy and Grace that G-d gives to me every day through Jesus Christ. And my friends, that is no "fish story".

Pastor Dave

November 21, 2026 -- Devotions – Does the Bible Say…?
Does The Bible Say Isaiah Walked Around Naked for Three Years?

"The Lord revealed the following message during the year in which King Sargon of Assyria sent his commanding general to Ashdod, and he fought against it and captured it. At that time the Lord announced through Isaiah son of Amoz: "Go, remove the sackcloth from your waist and take your sandals off your feet." He did as instructed and walked around in undergarments and barefoot. Later the Lord explained, "In the same way

that my servant Isaiah has walked around in undergarments and barefoot for the past three years, as an object lesson and omen pertaining to Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, both young and old." Isaiah 20:1-4

If you read any of the book of the Prophet of Isaiah, you will learn that Isaiah did what the Lord told him to do — even if he was not too thrilled with what the Lord demanded of his prophecy. Isaiah was instructed by the Lord to prophesy by performing one of those "Prophetic Sign-acts" I spoke about a few devotions ago. Isaiah is told to take off all of his clothes — or at least to strip to his underwear. Then he was told to walk among the people stark naked for not an afternoon in the sunshine, nor a week in all weather, but for three whole years. This is why Isaiah was a great prophet, because he didn't care what others thought, but only cared about the Lord — and so even though this would have been profoundly embarrassing, Isaiah listened. But what do we make of this "walking naked". From the commentaries we learn that Isaiah was not walking nude but walking "without his special prophetic garment". So, it does not mean that he was in a state of entire nudity — he was simply directed to lay this garment – this emblem of his office – aside. The word "naked," is often used in the Scriptures not to denote an absolute destitution of clothing, but that the "outer" garment was laid aside (see the note at John 21:7).

Have you ever said to someone "I felt alone, like I was standing naked in front of a crowd"? There are times when we feel as if the challenge in front of us is so daunting, and we feel so unprepared, that we are as fragile and vulnerable as if we were naked. Being naked in any situation is putting oneself in a vulnerable position. No one likes to feel this way. But Isaiah, though he was not naked as such, he was to walk for three years barefooted and without his "prophetic garment". In other words, Isaiah was stripped of the emblem of his office.

There is an ongoing conversation between pastors whether we should wear a clerical collar or not. The clerical collar is a symbol of our office. For many it is supposed to demand a sign of respect — and to open doors that might be closed to others, like the hospital ER. There are times when I forget to take mine with me, and I will admit that I feel "naked" without it. The clerical collar may be a symbol of our office, and it may let people know we serve a particular profession, but there are many people in the world today who do not respect the collar or even know what it stands for. If I choose to

wear it or not means nothing to the deeds and words I am called to do and proclaim. I will do them and proclaim them with or without a collar — it is only a piece of plastic. Whether people respect me as a pastor will be dependent on my obedience to G-d and my calling.

G-d's message to the Jews in Isaiah 20, graphically illustrated by the "Prophetic sign-act" of walking naked and barefoot, exhorts the people to trust fully in G-d. This message is echoed some 2,700 years later, when the writer of Hebrews urges Jewish Christians not to return to Old Covenant practices but to trust fully in Christ and His finished work on the cross. Just as the Jews of Isaiah's day would watch the Egyptians and Ethiopians be taken captive by the Assyrians and ask, "How shall we escape?" so the writer of Hebrews tells first-century Christians to remain faithful to Christ or face His divine discipline. We cannot put our trust in outer symbols or deeds prescribed by the law — we must put our trust in Jesus and the redemption that comes through his saving cross.

Pastor Dave