

## **October: Walk in Love in the Beauty of Nature**

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### **Verse:**

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Psalms 19:1 (ESV)

### **Upward Gaze:**

Heavenly Father, thank you for each new day. You give us the blessing of another opportunity to see all of Your creation. Despite the craziness of the world around us, through nature we are reminded that You are the Master of all things. In Christ's most holy and precious name, Amen.

### **Development Theme:**

October is one of my favorite months. Our church has a family retreat to Camp Clark Williamson in Jackson, TN. The leaves are beginning to change colors. The weather is cooling off. I start to come alive. I'm drawn outside more with all these changes.

God is the Creator of all things. Go to Genesis and begin reading about creation. He created every tree, plant, flower, animal, ocean, sea, river, stone, dirt, bird, worms, ladybugs, and on and on and on. He has provided all the materials through nature for us to survive as well as enjoy. Seeing a deer walk across my front yard just takes me to a happy place. Seeing a rainbow in the sky with amazing clouds around brings a smile to my face. Beautiful, colorful sunrises remind me of an amazing Creator. I love to look around after it rains. Everything looks so clean and sparkles when the sun comes back out. Like God was washing away the dirt to reveal the beauty that was hidden.

We have much to learn from nature. Nature takes time out. It rests during certain months, seasons.

Take a moment and read the popular scripture from Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 9. Yes, it is familiar, but read it slowly. Stop after each phrase to meditate on it.

The animals know when it's time to store away for winter. They also know when it's time to come out. The trees shed their leaves for winter and then spring forth life again in spring. The same for the flowers and grass.

We could take some lessons from nature. We are on the go for 24/7. We forget to take a break. We tell ourselves, maybe after this next project. Maybe when the kids get a little older. Maybe after the next promotion. Maybe after the next ministry need. Maybe after...you fill in the blank.

Job 12:7 – 10 (ESV) "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." Nature also shows us how to minister to others. Let's face it, a tree is not very beautiful in the winter. Most people don't paint beautiful pictures of a tree with no leaves. What if we judged that tree based off the few months it's without leaves? We would judge it harshly by its appearance.

Now take that thought and think of people around you. Do you look to see what is hidden within?

The LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)

God looks deeply into our hearts. He sees us, the true us, the us we don't let others see. We need to be looking into the heart of those who bother us, who hurt us, offend us, look different than us, talk different than us, worship different than us. We need to come alongside those difficult people, different people in our lives, and ask God how He wants to use us. It might surprise you to find out that He is actually using the other person to minister to you, and bring you closer to Him.

Children amaze me about how they see the world. Working in our church office, I have the wonderful opportunity to minister to people in need, but I have seen how it is easy to get caught up in fulfilling the need and missing the person. One day my daughter surprised me and came up to a person I was helping and just hugged her. This woman was very dirty, but Leslie didn't see the need for this woman to shower. She saw the need this woman had to be loved. I pray to have a childlike love for those around me, and to see as God does their heart and not their appearance.

**Inward Glimpse (Reflection):**

Take a walk or a hike with God. Pray as you walk reflecting on the beauty around you. Listen for Him to show you how nature is ministering to you. Look at how God is providing for nature, remembering that you are as precious if not more.

While sitting outside, use your journal or draw a picture to show how you are being impacted by nature.

**Outward Glance (Discussion):**

Share situations where you've been able to see beyond another person beyond their appearance or attitude and the result of that situation.

Get a group together and volunteer at a rescue mission or soup kitchen.

Brainstorm about areas where you could minister to your community in difficult places

During colder weather, visit homeless shelters. I know of one woman who is a beautician, and she offered to shave the men and give everyone haircuts. She thanked God for her gift and wanted to share it with others.

We are all blessed with gifts/talents find where you can put yours to use to help someone less fortunate. There are so many needs. Financial support is one way to Walk in Love, but see where you can actually Walk in Love face to face.

**One more peek:**

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 6:26 (ESV)