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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 36 | SEPTEMBER 6-10



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Deuteronomy 32:4; James 4:12; Psalm 19:7–9; Psalm 103:19](#)

Biblical justice is doing what the Lord requires of us. It's a requirement to drive with a state-issued driver's license. It's a requirement to take specific classes in high school in order to graduate with a diploma. Biblical justice is a requirement of God. It requires Christians to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

In order to understand what biblical justice is, we must understand what it is not. Biblical justice is not social justice. Social justice does not pursue righteousness, compassion or humility. Instead, it promotes ungodliness, hostility and pride by excluding people based on who God created them to be. Social justice is incompatible with biblical justice.

Will you draw a line in the sand and do what is required of the Lord?



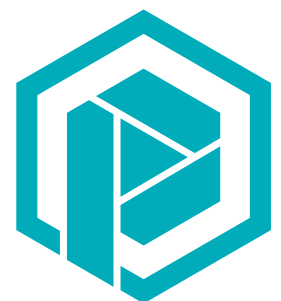
Tuesday

[Genesis 1:27; Acts 17:26](#)

Being created in the image of God is the very definition of freedom! To know that every person ever born on this earth was born with the same propensity to imitate the Creator of the universe is quite remarkable. People and friends from all nations, race and tongues share the same traits as our Lord. We have the ability to love the unlovable, achieve the impossible, and to do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us. Let the beautiful illustration of the creation of mankind guide your decisions to treat everyone with kindness, mercy and love. We were all created by a loving God who wants all of us to experience freedom that can only be found in Him.

Instead of looking at the differences of others, how can you start looking at the similarities that make us all who God says we are?

Do you get caught up in race sometimes? Is this beneficial or harmful to your relationship with God?

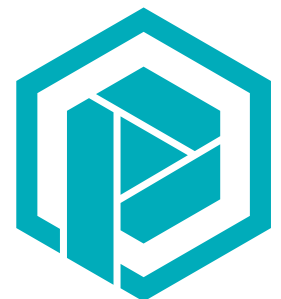


Wednesday

[Romans 5:12; Romans 3:22–24; Revelation 7:9–10](#)

I recall being in a very shameful, relationship once when I was a teenager. I remember sitting there with tears in my eyes, and asking, “How did I get here?” Sin is only a three-letter word, but it is what separates men and women from God. Lies, violence and sexual immorality – sin – are at an all-time high today in America. All mankind is guilty of sin, and when sin is left unchecked, we grow cold and hateful toward one another. The only solution for the world’s problems is redemption through Christ Jesus. God’s purpose for creating us in His image was to have fellowship with Him. It’s time for families and America to be reconciled to God, and we have a part to play in this reconciliation. It starts with you.

Have you talked to family and friends about sin lately? How can having a discussion about sin help others be reconciled to God?

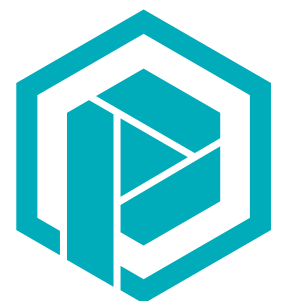


Thursday

[Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:10–22](#)

I once worked for a very famous recording artist and met many other famous entertainers because of my position. It was both exciting and disheartening. I was prejudged by many people who called me “the help” rather than my name. My value was judged by both my appearance and net worth, which wasn’t much at all. It’s a very good thing that I understood who I am in Christ Jesus. There’s nothing superficial about God because He looks at the heart. God created all men and women equal, regardless of gender or race. May God give us eyes to see people with a loving heart that is quick to forgive and make peace.

Make a list of ways you can build unity at home and school. How do you react when someone mistreats you?



Friday

[Matthew 28:18–20; Jeremiah 22:3; Galatians 6:10; Leviticus 19:34](#)

While on a mission trip to Haiti, my life was forever changed. For the first few days of the trip, I visited various orphanages, and sang songs with Haitian children. Our last visit was to Cite Soleil, in the heart of Port-au-Prince. It was called Tent City at the time, because victims from the 2010 massive earthquake were still displaced and living in tents together. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by countless toddlers, naked from the waist down, and with no shoes.

Immediately, I began to sob uncontrollably. I knew this nation needed God's hope, love and authority. The commission to make disciples is not a suggestion, but a command from Jesus. The kingdom of God is for everyone. It's a beautiful place where there will be no more sorrow, pain or lack. Everyone must be given a chance to learn about Jesus and come to Him. If you don't go and share Him with others, how else will they know?

As many new people groups move into our communities, we have a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus with them. Devise a plan (with your family/friends) to go out and share the Gospel with people living on your street. Pray and ask God to make you bold and courageous enough to go and share Him with others.



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 37 | SEPTEMBER 13-17



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Deuteronomy 10:17–18; 32:4; Psalm 89:14](#)

Throughout social media, we see a call for justice. We have within us a desire to see fairness. When someone is treated unjustly, there is a sense of indignation until the wrong has been corrected. Did you know that the drive within you for rightness is actually a God-given desire? The dictionary defines justice as “the quality of being just (guided by truth, reason, justice, and fairness); righteousness, equitableness or moral rightness.” But who decides what is considered right? To whom do we listen for direction and clarification? Who defines our moral standard? Dallas pastor and best-selling author Dr. Tony Evans says, “There is no clear and right definition of justice that excludes God. So to grasp justice, we must go to God’s Word.” God defines justice for us and gives us a constant and trustworthy measurement by which to live our lives.

How would you define justice?

Why do you think it is vital for God’s Word to be the lens through which we look at justice?



Tuesday

[Psalm 82:3-4; James 1:27; Psalm 146](#)

As believers, we should fight for justice. But we must understand there is a difference between biblical justice and social justice. Social justice is defined as “justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities and privileges within a society.” While on the surface this may sound great, we must realize that if we are allowing society to tell us what fair distribution is, we are basing our foundation on sinking sand. If human beings determine what is distributed to whom, then there is a lot of room for bias and personal hurt to interfere with those decisions. Biblical justice looks to God’s Word for what is right. Also, biblical justice has a lot to do with restoration instead of distribution: “Most of the time, the Bible uses the word to refer to restorative justice. That is when those who are wrongfully treated are restored and given back what was taken from them” (The Bible Project). Biblical justice gives us the responsibility to help others: “The combination of righteousness and justice that God dictates means a selfless way of life in which people do everything they can to ensure that others are treated well, and injustices are dismantled” (The Bible Project). Instead of allowing the world to define justice, we can look to the Bible to give us a clear, impartial, loving and lasting guide for how to achieve justice.

How does God’s Word define justice?

How can you put biblical justice into action this week?



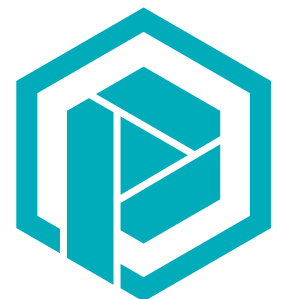
Wednesday

[Micah 9:1–8; Proverbs 28:5; Isaiah 1:23](#)

God demands justice – it is not optional. In fact, injustice is sin. Therefore, we must understand clearly what is just. Having a misconception about justice or merely seeking justice socially is dangerous. We can find ourselves fighting for things that do not completely align with God’s best. We can expend our energy on something that seems life-giving but in the end is hollow and does not have an eternal or God-glorifying impact. If we aren’t careful, we will end up “beating the air” (see Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9:26–27; 14:9). Biblical justice is rooted in and driven by what is just and right. In contrast, social justice is driven by emotion. Society shifts its ideas on what is right and true – it is not unbiased and not acting selflessly. The only one who is selfless, loving and true is God. Therefore, we must allow Him to define what is just. Dr. Tony Evans wrote, “Righteousness is God’s standards for humanity which He has laid out in Scripture, while justice is a term used for ‘what is right’ or ‘as it should be.’ When you put those two together, biblical justice becomes an action of applying God’s moral standards toward each other.”

In what area of your life do you think you need God’s moral standards the most?

How can you apply God’s moral standards in your life this week?



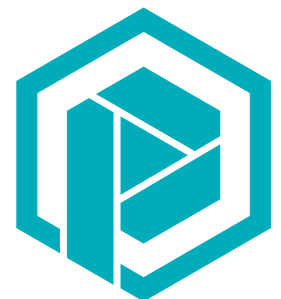
Thursday

[Isaiah 61:1–2](#); [Luke 4:18–19](#); [Romans 1:16–17](#); [1 Corinthians 15:1–4](#); [Mark 2:1–12](#)

Followers of Christ are commanded to share the Gospel. As we saw yesterday, God demands justice. Biblical justice always advances the Gospel. We, as believers, are called to meet people's physical needs in the here and now AND to share the Good News of Jesus that impacts eternity. If people are starving, they may not be able to hear the truth of the Good News of Jesus over their hunger pangs. But how remiss would we be if we only met their physical needs and left them in their sin when we have the answer of lasting hope in Jesus? There is a two-fold nature to the Gospel. Salvation is found only through a personal faith in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross - this brings forgiveness of sins and restores our relationship with God for all eternity. Daily we are being made to look more like Jesus. Christ cared both about one's eternal destination and his/her physical problems. We then must seek to imitate Christ in how we share the Gospel and seek biblical justice.

Which do you struggle with more: sharing the Gospel or seeking justice?

How are you going to seek to be more like Jesus this week in how you advance the Gospel?

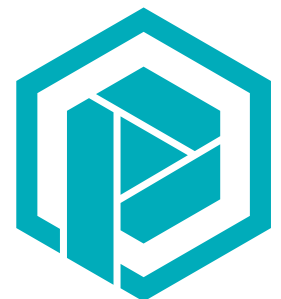


Friday

[Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; Deuteronomy 16:20; Proverbs 2:6–11](#)

It is easy to talk about justice – it is harder to live it out. But this is exactly what those of us who love and follow the Lord are called to do. We are called to step in and stand for those who are treated unfairly – we are to love as God loved and take action as God calls us to rise up. The Bible tells us to “do good to everyone,” so justice extends to anybody who is being treated unfairly. So when we see situations that are not right – going against God’s moral standards – it is our duty as believers to take action. We can’t just talk about justice; we must do justice. That is why Micah 6:8 says, “Do justice.” It sounds like the Nike motto: “Just do it.” When you are pursuing justice, you will stand up for people who might be ignored by society, such as orphans and widows (Isaiah 1:17). Look for chances to give a voice to the voiceless. Is someone you know being bullied? Tell a trusted adult and ask for help. Look for chances to meet the physical needs of other people. Did someone at school forget to bring a lunch? You could share your lunch and open the door to having a Gospel conversation with that person. The opportunities are all around you if your eyes are open to see them!

What ways can you put biblical justice into action this week to help others?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 38 | SEPTEMBER 20-24



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[James 4:1-4; Romans 7:18-19](#)

Most of us spend a lot of time talking about what is wrong with the world or what is wrong with other people. We may tend to criticize others and point out their mistakes or sins. But how much time do we spend talking honestly about what we are doing wrong? Do we acknowledge our own struggles with sin?

James tells us that there are passions at war within us, meaning that there are desires that are competing inside our hearts and minds. Those desires, also called appetites, can be for things such as food, pleasure, sex or power. Sexual desires can be a strong temptation. When sex becomes a goal in your life rather than a gift from God enjoyed in His proper timing, you will feel at war within yourself. Paul says that we experience an internal struggle of wanting to do what is right, but we often find ourselves doing what is evil. Let God fight this battle against sexual temptation with you and for you. Trust Him to help you overcome the desires that are misplaced and competing for your attention. Give God all your attention, and He will strengthen you.

Is there a desire that is competing for your attention and distracting you from your relationship with God? What can you do this week to make God your first priority?



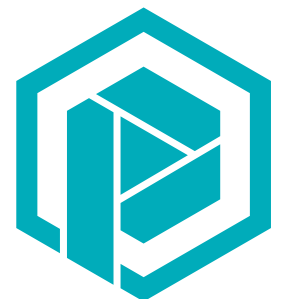
Tuesday

Romans 1:21–28

In our world today, we are seeing the consequences that occur when people do not honor God, the same consequences that Paul talked about nearly 2,000 years ago in the book of Romans. When people worship and idolize something above God, then God will allow them to continue in their sin and be consumed by it. They will begin to lose the ability to think well and understand what is right and true. Specifically, people who do not honor God will seek after sexual sin and homosexuality. This passage in Romans clearly states that homosexuality is wrong because it is not God's design. It is not God's best for us. Be cautious of Christians who tell you otherwise; they are deceived. People may try to tell you that there is another way, that love is love, and that we can't tell people who they should be. But we know that our identity is grounded in God. He created us, and He knows exactly who we are and who we are meant to be. When God says something is wrong for us to do, then that is the truth, and we can trust it.

Why do you think people choose to do something they know is wrong?

How would you defend what the Bible says about homosexuality?



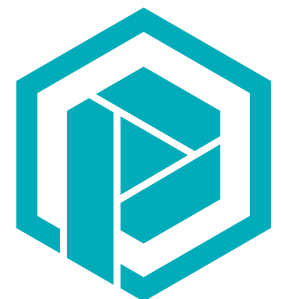
Wednesday

[Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31–32; Hebrews 13:4](#)

In Genesis 2, God creates His original design for mankind. Adam and Eve are the first man and first woman, meant to support and protect one another. They are meant to bond with one another and become one flesh. This is the first marriage. It establishes the pattern for all future marriages. Marriage has a special purpose. Marriage between one man and one woman represents God's relationship with the Church. That relationship is a union between two different entities – Jesus and the Church. The man represents Jesus, and the woman represents the Church. This is why a homosexual relationship does not work: two people who are the same – two men or two women – cannot represent the relationship between Jesus and the Church.

We know what a marriage is supposed to look like because we see in the Bible how Jesus loves His people the way a husband should love his wife, and the Church (the people of God) respects Jesus the way a wife should respect her husband. Sexual immorality, or sexual acts or thoughts that do not follow God's original design, destroys what marriage is supposed to be. Even if you think the sexual sin you are committing now will not affect your future marriage, it will! Even if the sexual sin is only in your thoughts, it will still affect your relationships. Surrender your heart to God and ask Him to help you follow His plan for a pure life that honors Him.

What sexual sin do you need to confess to God today?



Thursday

1 Corinthians 6:18–20

Why should we obey God's plan for our lives and our sexuality? Paul tells us in the clearest way possible: YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN. You do not belong to yourself, and you are not in charge of your own body. God created you and designed you. He bought you with a price when Jesus died to save you from your sins. The price He paid for you was the sacrifice of His one and only Son. Jesus suffered and died for you. You belong to God! You did not get to decide when you were born, whether you were born a boy or a girl, who your parents were, how tall you would become, and so many other things! God made you to be wonderful and unique, and only He can give your life purpose and meaning.

If you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, then your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is there with you every moment of every day, and that means He is aware of your sin. Pray and ask Him to help you turn and run from sexual immorality, so that your temple can be pure and clean.

What does it mean that you are not your own? How does knowing that you belong to God change your life daily?



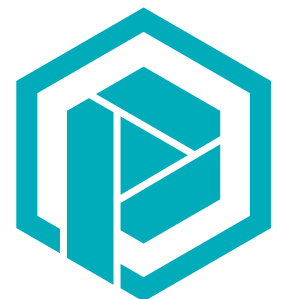
Friday

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

God has called Christians to be holy as He is holy. Holy means “set apart for a purpose, cleansed from sin, and pure.” The process of becoming holy is called sanctification. If you are a follower of Christ, then you have a calling on your life to be holy. You will not become holy overnight; it is a lifelong process as you follow Jesus and draw closer to Him. It requires commitment, discipline and surrender. Part of becoming holy is staying away from sexual immorality. Things such as watching pornography, having lustful thoughts, masturbating, having sex outside of marriage – these are all examples of sexual immorality. If you struggle with any of these things and you need help overcoming them, please reach out to your adult leader or a staff member. There is no shame in struggling with these things. We are all broken human beings! We can help one another pursue holiness together.

Is there a struggle with sin that you have been too ashamed to tell anyone about? Who is a trusted adult you can talk to about this struggle?

What is the greatest challenge ahead of you as you pursue holiness?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 39 | SEPTEMBER 27-31



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

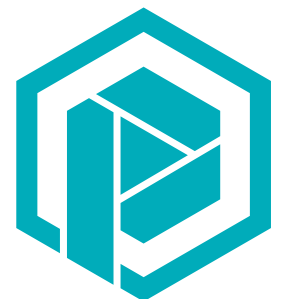
Monday

[Psalm 40](#)

This psalm is a statement of the faithfulness of God and an invitation to respond to His faithfulness with patient waiting, even in tough circumstances. But waiting patiently is not waiting idly—David was seeking God, and God responded (v. 1). God’s response wasn’t immediate, given that David had to wait. Neither was the delay the result of God ignoring David. David knew who God is and trusted His care for him (v. 17). He declared that his waiting patiently was not a testament to his personal strength but confidence in his trustworthy God.

Patience is a gift no one seems to want but God is eager to give. Patience is rooted in the reality and grows in the faith that while we are limited, God is not. Therefore, we must acknowledge our limitations by adopting a posture and ethic of not forcing what we desperately want but trusting God to provide what we absolutely need. God is wise and merciful; His holy character and ability are worthy of our faith and patience.

How is God’s past faithfulness cultivating present patience in your life?



Tuesday

[Esther 1:1-3:15](#)

God's powerful and guiding hand and activity in the affairs of all history can be unsettling at times. This feeling of angst may come from wrestling with whether or not God's guiding hand is good all the time in all situations. The story of Esther is a powerful reminder that God is faithful for His glory and our good. God was setting up the work of redemption for the Jews before the need of rescue was even realized. God was orchestrating experiences of good before the encounters with evil took place. His hand was good before and even in environments of evil. What would have been seen as random blessings in real time are seen clearly from the perspective of hindsight as the very things God would use to accomplish His saving work.

This reality invites us to cultivate confidence in knowing God is working for our good in ways we can't yet see or understand. Furthermore, we should be motivated to deepen present faithfulness because in doing so we honor God in the here and now.

How can you focus on the goodness of God and cultivate present faithfulness in light of His sovereignty?

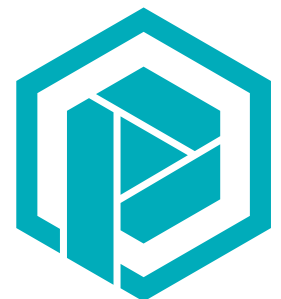


Wednesday

[Esther 4:1–6:14](#)

Thus far, Esther's identity as a Jew had remained hidden at the command of Mordecai (2:10). Concealing her identity had cost her nothing in the presence of the king, but revealing it, as Mordecai later requested, could cost her life. Certainly she could've gone as just Esther, but there was something powerful and personal about going before the king not just as Esther the Queen but as Hadassah the Jew. There's a power associated with personalized intercession. In fact, intercession involves a willingness to identify with others. Esther chose to share in the fate of the Jews—"Spare us," she pleaded, not just, "Spare them." Whenever God calls someone to go on behalf of another, it's not in a detached theoretical way devoid of intimacy or risk; rather, it involves authentic relational identification. We see this with Jesus in His identification through incarnation. With us it must be no different as we intercede for the lost.

How can you better identify with the people on whose behalf you are interceding?



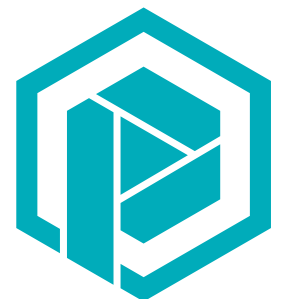
Thursday

[Esther 7:1–10:3](#)

Haman's evil plan was about to be unleashed, which would result in the Jews being wiped off the face of the earth. God's people were on the proverbial ropes, teetering on the precipice of extinction. But God was not unaware of His people's plight. All the while, God had been providentially working to position Joseph, the son who was believed to be dead, in a position of influence to intercede for his family and spare them from death. In the same way, although He is not mentioned directly in the Book of Esther, God was at work once more. God was aware of Haman's edict, and He worked providentially to place Mordecai and Esther in positions of influence to intercede for their people and spare them from death.

Neither Pharaoh in Egypt nor Haman in Persia would stop God's plan; indeed, neither could. God's sovereign work is unstoppable. He would provide His Son, Jesus, to make intercession for people through His death and resurrection so we might find eternal life.

In what ways might God be positioning you to intercede for others through prayer and sharing the gospel?



Friday

[Isaiah 26](#)

Waiting is an exercise and expression of dependence because your actions are tied to those of another. That dynamic often produces an experience of frustration and anxiety in the heart. Yet Isaiah 26:3-4 says there's a different experience available for people who are dependent on the Lord—a promise of peace. God's peace is perfect, providing everything necessary for continued focus as we live with and for Him. This peace doesn't come from the absence of anxiety but from an active pursuit of God. God's peace is granted to those with an active and intentional resolve to depend on Him, not those with a passive circumstantial resignation. God's immutability—He is unchanging, unwavering, an everlasting rock—provides a solid foundation for us to rest on. This promise of God's peace is available to all who desire it and who come to Him in faith, namely, to those who have come to God through faith in Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:7).

In what situations do you actively need to place faith in the person of Jesus to experience God's perfect peace?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 40 | OCTOBER 4-8



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Nehemiah 1:1-11](#)

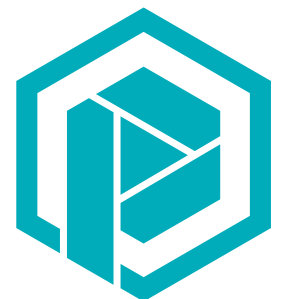
Twice Nehemiah asked the Lord to be attentive to his prayer (vv. 6,11). He was desperate for the Lord's help with the burden on his heart and also on behalf of his suffering people. Yet he grounded these calls for attention not in Himself, but rather in who God is (v. 5).

First, the Lord is the God of the heavens. He is the transcendent Creator over all that He has made. Second, the Lord is the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps His covenant with His people.

In light of who God is, Nehemiah confessed the sins of his people in hope that the Lord would restore them. Furthermore, he based that hope for restoration on the Lord's own words in the Law of Moses (Deut. 30:1-5). Finally, he asked for blessing and success as he was about to act on the God-given burden weighing down his heart.

All of Nehemiah's petitions were shaped by his first confession about his good and sovereign God. Adoration of the Lord fuels the faith we express in our prayers to Him.

How are you cultivating a growing view of God as your Father in heaven?



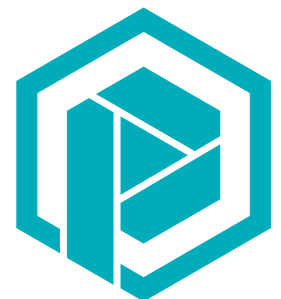
Tuesday

[Nehemiah 2:1-20](#)

Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 acknowledged the powerful hand of God in redeeming His people out of slavery in Egypt (1:10). In chapter 2, Nehemiah recognizes that God's hand was on him as he spoke to the king regarding his plans for rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem (2:8). The Lord's powerful hand was gracious in steering the heart of the king to be favorable toward Nehemiah and his bold requests. Later, Nehemiah's testimony of God's gracious hand served to strengthen the hands of the people for their work of rebuilding Jerusalem (2:18).

The need for strength presupposes the presence of weakness. In our human value systems, we consider personal weakness to be unbecoming and offensive. Yet weakness is only a liability if we hide it and don't go to God for strength. The picture throughout Scripture is that God generously and graciously gives strength to those who come to Him in faith. The Lord strengthens those who come to Him not for personal power but for grace (Rom. 16:25-27).

Where in your life do you currently need the grace-filled hand of God to strengthen you?



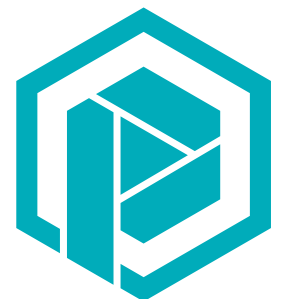
Wednesday

[Nehemiah 3:1–4:23](#)

In Nehemiah 4:4-5, we see Nehemiah's honesty when praying to God in the midst of opposition. The task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem didn't take place in a field of roses but on a rugged hilltop where threats and opposition were regular and increasing. Nehemiah's first response was to pray to the Lord, and he asked for vengeance and judgment. He prayed to God for the exile of his enemies from the promised land. No withholding. No sugarcoating. He honestly laid his heart and emotions before God.

God is not intimidated by our emotions or prayers, and when we withhold these parts of our hearts from the Lord, we actually keep ourselves from intimacy with the Lord. Nehemiah trusted the Lord for their vindication, and so did Jesus (1 Pet. 2:23), but where Nehemiah prayed for judgment, Jesus prayed for forgiveness (Luke 23:34). Let us be honest with the Lord in prayer, and let us also seek to have the mindset of our Savior in prayer.

What parts of your heart do you withhold from God in prayer?



Thursday

[Nehemiah 5:1-19](#)

This passage shows that while the work on the walls was progressing, it was taking a severe toll on the people. The difficult situation was exacerbated by social injustice among the people of God. Leaders of the people were taking financial advantage of the workers and inhabitants of Jerusalem. The outcry didn't escape Nehemiah's ears and he confronted them, pointing out the hypocrisy and wickedness of their actions. He indicted them for their lack of fear of God as he stood up for those who were oppressed by them.

Nehemiah's confrontation led to repentance and celebration, but before he acted on what he was hearing, he considered carefully the course of his actions. We would be wise to follow the pathway he created when surrounded by prevailing and pervasive injustice. We should weep with those who weep and seek the Lord's direction for how to confront evil and bring the light of the gospel and God's justice to the dark places in the world.

In what areas of your community are people crying out for justice from their oppression?



Friday

[Nehemiah 6:1–7:73](#)

Not everyone is ecstatic about the work of God being accomplished in the world. In fact, many will try to frustrate His plans, but no one can stand in His way (Job 42:2; Isa. 14:24-27). He is the sovereign God; He is the covenant-keeping God. No one can stop Him from fulfilling His promises and plans.

On numerous occasions, Nehemiah's enemies tried to intimidate him to keep him from his work of leading the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They planned harm against him; they lied about him; they tried to deceive him. But each attempt failed because Nehemiah relied on the Lord for strength and wisdom. Attempts at intimidation even came after the walls had been completed.

When enemies try to frustrate the work of the gospel in your community, what will your response be? The temptation will be to fight back in your own strength, but as Nehemiah prayed, the next step should always be toward the Lord for His strength and wisdom. Our plans may fail, but God's never do; so seek His kingdom and trust Him to fulfill His plans in the face of opposition and intimidation. The Lord always accomplishes what He sets out to do.

How do you need to trust God's sovereign power as you share the gospel in the world?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 41 | OCTOBER 11-15



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

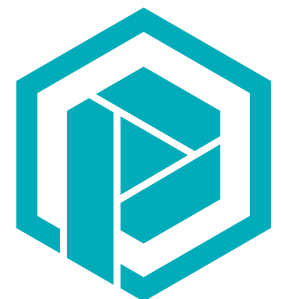
Monday

[Nehemiah 7:73b–8:18](#)

The Scriptures are always after the heart; they are directed beneath the surface of the hearer to the seat of the soul. This is why, as you read or hear the Scriptures, you interact with them differently based on the state of your heart. If your heart is dull or hard to the things of God, then the words of God may not affect you. But if your heart is soft and ignited by the Spirit of God, then the words of God often come alive in your heart in unimaginable and powerful ways.

The Israelites who had returned from exile were eager to avoid yet another exile for their disobedience, so they turned their hearts to the Word of God to know what God expected of them. The posture in which they requested, received, and responded to the reading of God's Word revealed the inner workings of their heart. Their faith in the Lord was deepened through personal, intentional, and thoughtful interaction with the Scriptures followed by joyful obedience. Their posture and practice are a pathway to be considered and followed as we read and hear God's Word.

What rhythms do you have in your life for personal, intentional, and thoughtful interaction with the Scriptures?



Tuesday

[Nehemiah 9:1-38](#)

The Israelites had been told not to weep or grieve at the initial hearing of God's law (Neh. 8:9-12). But there was a time to weep for their sins. God had given them commands to obey, and the people's disobedience had wrecked them over and over and over again, and the consequences for their sin were still being felt.

Yet they came to God in prayer and praise with hope because of who He is. Their song of blessing proclaimed the Lord as the Creator, the covenant-maker and keeper, and their deliverer. Their song also confessed with honesty how the people had failed to honor the Lord in obedience. But this highlighted yet another reason to praise the Lord—He is gracious in His forgiveness and faithful in His patience.

This prayer of praise summarizes the storyline of the Old Testament, and this is the story of God and His work in the world. The truth of these Scriptures grounded their requests and their steps going forward.

How does Scripture ground your requests before God?



Wednesday

[Nehemiah 10:1-39](#)

The revival of the people resulted in a commitment to obedience. It is necessary for us to see that their commitment to obey wasn't just affirmation of duty but an expression of delight—an expression of their renewed faith in their Creator and Savior God (Neh. 9:5-37).

Whenever we commit to obey God it should be for the same reasons—duty and delight. We find ourselves in a dangerous space when we reduce obedience to duty (I only obey because I must) or delight (I only obey when I want to). Obedience for the Christian must be both, an outworking of our faith in Christ and an expression of our love for God.

To desire, delight in, cherish, and value God is to obey Him. Our obedience to His commands is evidence of our relationship with Him as our Father, and that relationship is grounded in faith (1 John 5:1-4). Only by faith in the one true God and His Son sent for our salvation can we obey the Lord from duty and delight.

What are some reasons you resist obedience to God, and how can you grow in your faith to obey from duty and delight?



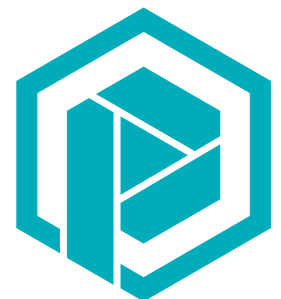
Thursday

[Nehemiah 11:1–12:47](#)

Even though the wall around Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the city was still sparsely populated (Neh. 7:4). The pride and joy of Judah, the city for the Lord's dwelling in the temple, remained impoverished. The people did not want to live there, and given the incredible opposition from enemies while the walls were being built, who could blame them. Yet God had promised a restoration of His people and His promised land, and that required people living in the capital city.

The bulk of chapters 11–12 is a listing of names and numbers of people who were called out by the casting of lots to pick up from their hometowns and move into Jerusalem. These verses testify to the faithfulness of God and the privilege of obedience. The Lord populated His city, and the people who came were recorded in Scripture and blessed by their countrymen.

How are you being called to obey in ways you may not want to?



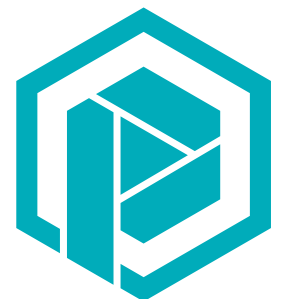
Friday

[Nehemiah 13:1-31](#)

The people in the promised land had committed themselves to obedience to the Lord's commands and signed their names to this promise (Neh. 9-10). But that didn't stop some of the people from disobeying once again. Chapter 13 contains examples of people dishonoring the temple, the Sabbath, and God's law about marrying idol worshipers (those who rejected their idols were allowed to worship the one true God along with the people of God; see Ruth; Ezra 6:21).

As Nehemiah called people to account for their willful disobedience, he called on the Lord to remember him for his faithfulness (Neh. 13:14,22,31). If he had wanted to be remembered by the people he governed, he could have enabled their disobedience, approved of it, and even participated in it. But his focus and desire was on the Lord, to be remembered by our faithful and compassionate God. This ought always to be our desire as Christians—not to please human beings but the God whose favor is everlasting (Gal. 1:10).

How does the gospel of Jesus Christ figure into our favor with God?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 42 | OCTOBER 18-22



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Malachi 1:1-14](#)

Ever since the days of Adam, we as human beings have been finding ways to find fault with God so we can feel justified in going our own way. Sometimes our departure is physical. The Israelites often turned to idols, forsaking the Lord. People today may leave the church altogether. Other times, our departure is emotional, often characterized by people just going through the motions.

For instance, even though the people were full of familiarity with the grace of God in making promises to Abraham, in rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, in establishing them as a people and nation in the promised land, in forgiving them over and over and over again, and in restoring them from their exile back to the promised land, they still found fault with God. Their sin-tainted perceptions of God's care led them to halfhearted worship.

Their indictments and questioning of our good God should cause us to examine the view we have of God in our own hearts. Yet no matter how many factors may contribute to a lessened view of God, one factor is definitive in fighting these sinful tendencies—an accurate picture of Jesus, the Son whom God sent for our salvation.

How does God's love in Jesus help us to see God rightly?



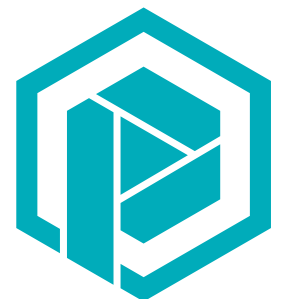
Tuesday

[Malachi 2:1-17](#)

Faithfulness among the people of God stems from the fear of God, a recognition that God is both tender and terrifying. He is holy, just, merciful, patient, wise, sovereign, and loving. Being that these attributes reflect His being, He is worthy of our worship and our obedience—worthy of our faithfulness. Yet the priests and people of restored Israel in Malachi's day chose paths of unfaithfulness because there was no fear of God in them.

For the priests, their forefathers in the tribe of Levi received a covenant from God for their faithfulness, namely, the faithful acts of Phinehas for the Lord's honor and glory (Num. 25:1-13). They feared the Lord and acted on His behalf for the blessing of the nation. They honored God and taught His truth. But now they turned from the Lord and contented themselves with His curses as they led others astray. Woe to those who cause others to stumble (Luke 17:1-2).

What are some circumstances that challenge your faithfulness to the Lord, and how does the gospel help steer your heart for God's honor?



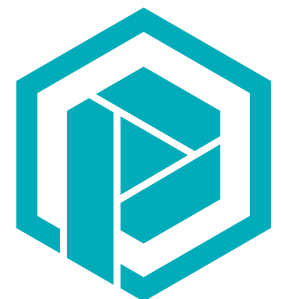
Wednesday

[Malachi 3:1-12](#)

Every day we wake up, a war of faith rages in our hearts. It takes many shapes and forms, but this war is centered on the trustworthiness of God. Our sinful hearts wonder, “Can God be trusted, and if so, how much and for how long?” One arena of battle in this war is the area of finances.

The fickle approach we take to God’s commands concerning how we view and manage our resources is due to our sinful hearts. God clearly, compassionately, regularly, and authoritatively invites us to a generous life anchored in His generosity. God, through Malachi, tied the Israelites’ lack of experiencing and expressing generosity to their misconception of God; in their minds, He wasn’t powerful or generous enough—they didn’t fear Him (v. 5). If we don’t trust the Lord to take care of us, then we won’t be free to honor Him with our finances as He calls us to use them.

How has the generosity of God emboldened you to pray and freed you to give?



Thursday

[Malachi 3:13-18](#)

Foolishness rears its ugly head in our lives when we misunderstand the nature of God and His actions, and foolishness defiles a person before God like every other sin.

To speak harshly about God is foolishness, as is pleading ignorance of having done so. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Provider for all that exists. Who has the right to speak back to Him? No one (Job 42:1-6; Rom. 9:20-21). To consider obedience to the Lord as useless is foolishness. He rewards those who seek Him in faith (Heb. 11:6). Those who fear the Lord and honor Him will receive His compassion and blessing.

To be envious of the arrogant and the wicked is foolishness. God is holy and just; He will punish those who reject and defy Him. His justice often does not come when we want or expect it, but it will come. His patience is a time for sinners to repent and believe in His Son, for this is wisdom (2 Pet. 3:8-13).

What are some ways you will serve the Lord in faith because of who He is and what He has done and will do?



Friday

[Malachi 4:1-6](#)

There is coming a day when eternal destinies and consequences will be sealed. The sun rising on that day will either rise to consume or rise to heal. The difference will lie in how people have chosen to respond to the Lord of Armies, the great Creator and Savior God.

Those who reject His commands, refuse to honor Him, and run along their own paths will find the Day of the Lord to be a day of ruin. The imagery here is stark, and we cannot help but connect the fire on this day to the fiery descriptions of hell and final judgment (Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:4-10).

Those who fear the Lord, however, have nothing to fear from this coming day. It will be marked by full restoration and joy. To fear the Lord is to know Him, and to know Him is to obey Him. And the obedience He requires is to obey the gospel, to believe that Jesus Christ was sent for our salvation and to love as we have been loved (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 John 3:23).

How will you love others with the love God has shown you in Jesus Christ?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 43 | OCTOBER 25-29



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Genesis 2:23–24; Mark 10:6–9](#)

Our hearts as believers should be aligned with God’s heart when it comes to marriage. God’s design is for one man and one woman to be united as one. Marriage is designed to reflect Christ and the Church. The purpose of marriage is to point people to Christ. Marriage also provides an opportunity to grow in selflessness as you serve one another. The Bible says, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). This is the first time in the story of creation that God says something is not good. God looked at Adam’s isolation and knew what was missing, and so God created Eve, the first woman. Then He created marriage so we could reflect the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church. Adam would not be able to reflect this relationship by himself.

Remember this: Marriage does not complete you, and it never will. Only God can complete you.

How can you align your heart with God’s today?

What are ways that you can grow in selflessness this week?

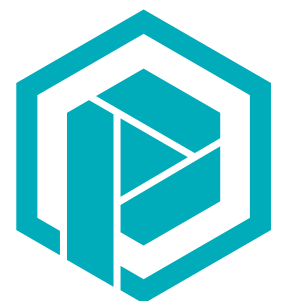


Tuesday

[Ephesians 5:22–33](#)

The verses in Ephesians we are reading today often can be taken out of context. When Ephesians 5:22 talks about submission, a woman should first look for a man she can respect and love – and a man who loves the Lord – before she marries him. The man should do the same. Love and respect within a marriage are the summary of what a healthy marriage looks like. There is a mission for the Christian marriage: to obey and glorify God. Through this mission, love and respect for one another will overflow. The husband and the wife have to put God first in order for everything else in the marriage to work properly and fall into place. They need to submit to God first, being willing to obey His instructions, which show them the best way to live. Then they submit to each other, always choosing to be kind and to forgive. That is what real love is all about – selflessness and sacrifice.

How can we show love and respect to those around us?



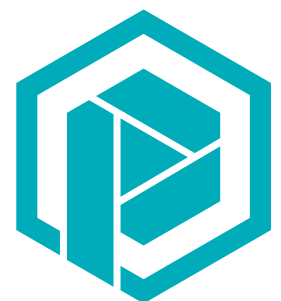
Wednesday

[Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4; Mark 7:20–23](#)

We are to honor God in all that we do, especially with our bodies as a living sacrifice (“living sacrifice” means dying to the desires of our flesh and giving honor to God through all that we do with our bodies). When we realize our bodies are not our own because they are the Lord’s, then we can begin to be living sacrifices. Sexual immorality and adultery are things that our culture deems OK, but according to God’s design, they are not. Sexual immorality and adultery break God’s heart because 1) they are sin, 2) these sins separate us from God, and 3) these sins hurt others. Other people are affected by those sins, even when we think they are not. God loves His creation, and God’s heart breaks when our hearts break. Therefore, we need to cling to the truth of Scripture and flee from sexual sin.

Has anything happened to you that has broken your heart? Know that God is there for you, ready and able to comfort you.

How can you live your life as a living sacrifice today?



Thursday

[Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1–3](#)

“Honor your father and mother” is a wise and good command because this is a building block for the rest of the relationships in your life. Not only is this command for children, but it is also a call for parents to teach obedience, respect and reverence to their children. No matter how old you are or what your personal differences are, you are supposed to honor your parents. If you are reading this today, your parents (guardians or caregivers) may not be believers in Jesus, and if they do not know Jesus, pray that they will come to know Jesus one day soon. Until then, love them the way they are. Be the hands and feet of Jesus to them. The Lord is with you. Pray and ask Him for the strength and patience to love your family the way He loves you.

How can you show honor to your parents (guardians/caregivers) today?



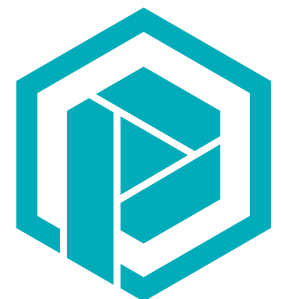
Friday

James 1:27

As believers in Jesus, we are to care for those around us. This includes those without a family because no one is forgotten in God's eyes. That is the purpose of the Church - to love the people who feel unloved or unlovable. If we are truly walking with the Lord, that will be displayed in the practical ways we take care of people, such as orphans and widows. James refers to this as true or pure religion. People often see religion in a bad light these days, but James shows us what religion is truly supposed to be - loving and taking care of others, and not allowing the world to affect you negatively. The world should recognize Christians by our love for others. Love should be our most defining characteristic.

Do you think that Christians are recognized by love in the world today? Why or why not?

How can you show love to anyone you know or meet this week?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 44 | NOVEMBER 1-5



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18, 24](#)

This week's devotionals are centered around God's design for the family unit and the purposes He has given for it. God has designed a beautiful purpose for the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters. What does God's Word say about this design and how should we respond when the brokenness of this world finds its way into our family?

In the very beginning of God's Word, we see God forming the family unit starting with Adam and Eve in the first-ever wedding ceremony. The Scriptures above describe the design and purpose of marriage to be a permanent relationship between one man and one woman to complement one another, fill the earth, and reflect the image of God. However, today's culture attempts to define marriage in every way other than God's design. Because we live in a world broken by sin, we should expect the world to attempt to alter God's design, but God's plan for the family and marriage is so that our lives can be completely centered in Christ and be satisfied in Him. God is powerful to redeem all brokenness if we seek Him first and His plan for us.

What false messages is the world spreading about the purpose of marriage?

What does the Bible say about marriage?



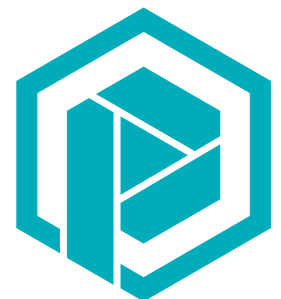
Tuesday

[Ephesians 6:1, 4; Colossians 3:20–21; Ephesians 5:15–21](#)

Everyone loves independence and the freedom to make their own choices. We anticipate the day we receive our driver license to get our own car, our own cell phone to text our friends, our own job to make our own money. No one likes to be told what to do and submit to authority. However, the call to submit is throughout Scripture and especially within God's design and purpose for the family. Why?

Submission is throughout Scripture in many ways: submission to God, submission to others in order to walk in peace, children submitting to their parents, etc. Submission is everywhere mainly because the call of every Christian is to grow in likeness of Christ. How can you grow your relationship with God and fulfill His desires when you are so focused on fulfilling your own? Within the family design, children are commanded to honor their parents even if they don't want to obey. Our parents will make mistakes because we are all in need of God's grace, but we are called to submit to our earthly fathers to show honor to our heavenly Father. Remember, for Jesus to increase in us, we must decrease.

What are some of the ways you struggle to submit to authority? Take time to pray and ask God to help you respect authority and obey.



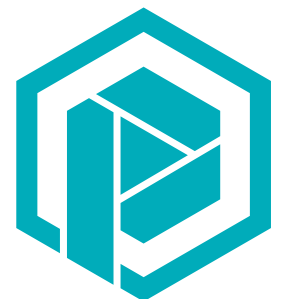
Wednesday

[Genesis 16:3–6; 37:3–4; 2 Samuel 12:16–19](#)

There is something about appreciating a movie more when we know it is based on a true story. Knowing that what we are watching actually took place with real people in real places helps us connect with the story all the more. The same is true with Scripture. The Bible is full of stories of real people and their struggle with sin as God redeems them to Himself. This should provide comfort for us as we continue to study the design and purpose of families through the lens of Scripture.

There are many occasions in the Bible of siblings fighting, troubles with parents and children, marriage problems and even families that are displaced. However, what makes the Gospel “Good News” is how God uses broken things and makes them beautiful. Even when we were dead and hopeless in our sin, He provided a way to salvation through faith in Jesus. God makes the impossible possible. If you are experiencing hard times in your family, be encouraged today by examples in Scripture that God rescues the broken and redeems people who are far from Him when they trust in Him.

Do you ever feel that you are too messed up or broken to be saved? Now that you know God can redeem anyone, how does that change your view of yourself?



Thursday

[Psalm 68:5; Romans 5:8; Psalm 31:7](#)

As we continue to study God's Word, learn more about God and what He is like. In doing so, we learn that the God of the Bible goes by many names. Yahweh, Jehovah, LORD, and King of Kings are only a few of the names we find referring to God. He has multiple names because each name shows a different characteristic about Him. For example, Jehovah Jireh means "The God That Provides." In light of our study of God's design and purpose for the family, there was one name that we should take note of: heavenly Father.

This specific name may not sit well with some because they may not have a great relationship with their earthly father. The reason God is referred to in this way in the Bible is because He shows the characteristics of what a perfect father should be: one that protects and provides and loves His children deeply. No matter what the relationship looks like between you and your earthly father, God has a way of fulfilling our every need when we trust in Him.

What areas of your life do you need to trust God with today?



Friday

[2 Corinthians 5:17–21](#); [Matthew 5:23–24](#); [Matthew 18:21–35](#)

There were once two swimmers who raced to see who could be the first to swim from California to Hawaii. One swimmer swam 10 miles before drowning and the second swam 15 miles before drowning. Who won the race? Neither of them did because they both fell short.

Even though we are all sinners in need of grace, we tend to compare our sin to others, especially if we have been wronged by someone. Because we have *all* sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the playing field is level for all mankind. Even if someone sins “worse” than we do, or their sin is directed at us, we tend to think of ourselves as better than they are, when in reality, what we all deserve is an eternity separated from God because of our sin. Within the family unit, conflict is bound to arise, but Christians ought to live with a spirit of reconciliation because we have been reconciled to God for so much more. If God has forgiven all your sin, ask God to help you forgive those who have wronged you.

Who is someone in your life you need to forgive and reconcile with?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 45 | NOVEMBER 8-12



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

Galatians 4:4-7

An orphan is a child left in harsh and unfortunate circumstances. Orphans have faced trauma of some sort and are now left with no one. Adoption is the process by which another family chooses to love them and bring them into their forever family. God saw us in our broken circumstances. He knew we were slaves to sin, and we were left with no hope apart from Him. So in His love and compassion, He adopted us into His forever family through the blood of Jesus. When we believe in Jesus and give Him our lives, we become God's sons and daughters. Rather than leaving us in our sin with nothing, God has given us everything through Jesus. He now sees Jesus and His righteousness in us, so He sees us as His child. He becomes our *Abba Father*, our provider, our counselor, our strength and our hope.

Think about how amazing it is that God would adopt us as His sons and daughters. Do you find your true identity as God's child?

Do your daily actions and attitude reflect a grateful heart that, even in the midst of your sin, He calls you His child?



Tuesday

[Ephesians 1:3-7](#)

You did nothing to earn God's love. The Bible teaches us that even before the beginning of time, God chose us to be adopted into His family through Jesus. He has always loved you and will always love you. As His children, He freely gives us His unconditional love and unending grace. To redeem means "compensate for one's faults." Jesus gave His life to redeem us of our faults or our sin. God always had a redemptive plan. Scripture says it was "His pleasure and will" to adopt us through Jesus. He wanted you; He chose you; and He sent His Son to die for you.

Do you have confidence that you are dearly loved and forgiven?

What lies does the Enemy try to feed you to make you think otherwise?



Wednesday

[Ephesians 1:11-14](#)

Before Jesus returned to heaven, He told His disciples He was going to send them a helper – the Holy Spirit. Once you believe in Jesus and confess Him as your Savior, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes to dwell inside you. The Spirit is a “must have.” We must have the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture, to have the conviction of sin, and to love others the way we should. The Spirit marks us as God’s kid. Just as a father longs to help his child and give the child what he or she needs, God longs to give you everything you need through the power of the Spirit. The Spirit gives us wisdom, strength, patience, endurance, courage, and all we need to live as Jesus has called us and to love others the way He did. Not only does the Spirit help us here on earth, but He also acts as a deposit for what is to come: our inheritance in heaven!

Do you ask the Holy Spirit for help in your daily struggles?

Are you using the power of the Holy Spirit to love others the way Jesus loves you?



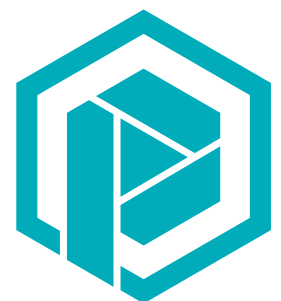
Thursday

[Romans 5:1-4](#)

While God has adopted us into His family through the redemption of Jesus, this does not mean life will be easy. In fact, the Bible tells us we will all face persecution and have struggles. We live in a broken world with broken people, so we are going to face trials. However, our heavenly Father uses these trials to shape and mold us to look more like Him. We can actually thank Him for our sufferings because we know He is using them to build our character and reveal more of Himself to and through us. We become more aware of His presence and rely on Him more when we face hard stuff. And He has given us the hope of heaven that allows us to endure any trial because we know it is only temporary.

What struggle are you facing today?

Spend time praying and thinking about what God could be doing through the struggle. Could He be rooting out sin or pushing you to depend on Him more? Or perhaps could He be using it for you to be a light to others?



Friday

[Ephesians 4:1–3, 24–32](#)

Have you ever known people who act just like their parents? Perhaps they have the same sense of humor or do things a certain way because they saw their parents do it that way. As God's dearly loved children, we are called to look and act like Him. Through Jesus we are a new creation, and so our old ways – our worldly desires and behavior – must stop. We must show the world that we belong to Him by the way we act. All that we do and say must reflect Him and His character – the way we act toward our parents, our siblings, our teammates, our friends, and even strangers or those who do us wrong. Our actions and reactions should always point people to Jesus.

Just as children repeat things their parents do, would people know you are God's kid by the things you say and do?

Do you spend enough time with Him – in His Word, in prayer, and in church – so you know how to reflect Him in all situations?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 46 | NOVEMBER 15-19



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Luke 15:11–32](#)

In this story, we see two sons who got caught up in an inheritance that wasn't as important as a relationship with their father. The younger son blatantly asked his father for his inheritance before it was due to him. The older son was willing to stay to "work" for it. However, the father just wanted a relationship with his sons. He gave the younger son his inheritance because there was no point in forcing a relationship with him. The same is true with us. We are God's children. If we choose to walk away from Him, our heavenly Father will be patient until we return. If we choose to stay in His house but not go deeper in our relationship with Him, God will also wait for us to turn to Him. All God wants is a relationship with His children.

Do you find yourself to be more like the younger brother or the older brother?

How can you make sure you are constantly turning to God to have a constant relationship with Him?



Tuesday

[John 1:12; 1 John 5:1-2; John 3:16-17](#)

In Christian communities, we often toss around the phrase “child of God,” but what does that mean? And how do we become a child of God? The answer is simple: by becoming a believer in Christ, we become a child of God. When sin entered the world, sin separated us from God. We could no longer have a relationship with Him. Therefore, God sent His one and only Son to die on a Cross to save us from our own sin (John 3:16-17). God has already done His part for us to become His child. Now we just need to believe in Him and what He has done for us. Once we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are His children. We have become a part of His kingdom and we can never lose that title.

Have you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, you can pray the prayer below and then tell a Prestonwood Students staff member so he or she can help you with the next steps.

God, I realize that my sin has eternally separated me from a relationship with You. I cannot fix this on my own. I need You! I believe that You have sent your Son to come and die on the Cross for my sin. Because of my belief in what You have done for me, I am ready to enter an eternal relationship with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you are a believer in Christ, don't be afraid to go out and share with others how they can become a child of God.



Wednesday

[1 John 3:6–10; Ephesians 2:10; 5:1–2](#)

Yesterday we learned how to become a child of God. Today is about what it looks like to be a child of God. As seen in the above Scriptures, we, as Christians, are called to do good works. What does that mean? The answer is plainly laid out in Matthew 28: We are called to build the kingdom of God. That includes everything from sharing the Gospel with your unbelieving friend to helping your elderly neighbor do his yard work. Christ has asked us, as His children, to sacrifice ourselves for one another just as He did for us (Ephesians 5:1–2). These good works are not something we should use to measure who is a good Christian or not because that is not our job. That is God's job. Instead, our good works should only be the result of our salvation in Him. We should want to sacrifice ourselves for His kingdom.

Has your faith in Jesus Christ resulted in good works for the kingdom of Christ? Why or why not?



Thursday

[John 1:10–11; John 15:18–19; John 16:33; 1 John 5:4](#)

Jesus Himself makes it very clear: Being a Christian is no walk in the park! The Scriptures set before you today paint a beautiful picture of a loving Savior who calls us to be set apart, and our Savior is more than willing to help us in that process. As children of God, we are called to be different from the world in our morals, our thoughts, our words and our actions. Our tendency to go against the secular grain is sure to be noticed by others. It's easy to think of an example of this in today's world. Even though the world may not be willing to accept these differences, Jesus has been sure to let us know that He is on our side! He fills us with peace, strength, victory and a deep understanding of what we're going through when we are hated by the world around us. Being a child of God is not something to fear. The Creator of the universe Himself is giving us everything we need to be set apart for His name!

How will the world respond to the children of God? How do we handle that?



Friday

[Philippians 2:14–16; Matthew 5:14–16; Matthew 28:19–20](#)

Becoming a child of God changes our identity, as we have learned earlier this week, and it also changes our purpose! Our focus turns from inward-facing desires to an understanding that our purpose as a child of God is to “let [our] light shine for others.” Why? So that they might see that light and “give glory to [our] Father, who is in heaven.” Our new, sole priority is to make disciples and bring people into the kingdom of God through the light of His love that shines through us. Whether this light shines while we’re flipping burgers, serving coffee, babysitting, doing our homework, or hanging out with friends, our choice to live out our purpose has an eternal impact on those around us! Throughout the rest of the day, pray and ask God to show you the areas of life in which He is calling you to step out in faith and shine for His glory.

What is your purpose? How do you sense God calling you to live that out?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 47 | NOVEMBER 22-26



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Micah 4](#)

This week we look at what happened in the 400 years between Micah 4:6 and Matthew 1:1. This period in history is represented by a single blank page in your Bible. These 400 years have been known as the Silent Years because God was quiet. For generations upon generations, God had been speaking to His people through creation, through Moses, through prophets, through poets, and through seers. He sent different people at different times in different ways to minister to His people. But then there was silence.

The silence began in such a harsh way. If we read the prophet Malachi's last words, we see him speaking about the prophet Elijah's return before the Second Coming of Jesus. The last word we read in Malachi 4:6 is "destruction." Think about that being the last word you hear from God before 400 years of silence. That would be tough, wouldn't it? But as we will see this week, even though God was silent, He was still moving and working.

Why do you often feel as though God is silent in your life?

What can you do to reach out to God and communicate to Him?



Tuesday

[Daniel 7](#)

For the next three days, we are going to look at what was happening during these silent years. Today we are going to focus on what was happening politically. At the close of the Old Testament, the Persians are in control of the world, the temple has been rebuilt, and the Jews are back in their land. At the opening of the New Testament, the Romans are in control of the world, the Jewish religion looks different, and even the language is different.

None of this was new to God, though. Back in Daniel 7, we see all this foretold. During these 400 years, the world would go through three different kingdoms. At the time of Daniel, it was the Babylonians (the lion with eagle's wings). At the time of Malachi, it was the Persians (the bear with three ribs). During the 400 years, it was the Grecian empire (the leopard with wings) and the Roman empire (the legs of iron). Each empire changed the landscape of the world by bringing in new leadership, new laws, and new views of the Jewish people. A lot can change over the course of 400 years.

**How has the world changed from the end of the New Testament until now?
What are the political differences we see every day?**



Wednesday

[John 19:20](#)

Yesterday we looked at the political differences from the beginning of the Silent Years to the end. Today we will focus on the cultural differences. The world is under Roman rule but, due to the Greeks having ruled the world before the Romans, the culture and language is still Greek. This explains why there were three different population bases at the beginning of the New Testament: Roman, Babylonian and Egyptian.

When the Jews fled under Babylonian rule (Daniel), about one million fled to Egypt (this is why Joseph and Mary went there after Jesus was born to escape Herod's edict to kill all newborns). As the Jewish people lived in Egypt, they began to speak Greek, and the Hebrew language began to die off. This was the reason the Old Testament needed to be translated from Hebrew to Greek, which gave us the Old Testament that Jesus and the apostles used (the Septuagint).

Therefore, Judea (where Jesus comes from) was a multicultural area that was a mixture of Roman people, Greek culture and Hebrew language. One of the primary ways we see this in Scripture is to look at the simple sign that hung above Jesus when He was crucified. The sign was written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew so that all three cultures could read it!

**How has the world changed from the end of the New Testament until now?
What are the cultural differences we see every day (especially in our area of North Texas)?**



Thursday

Need Scripture

We have looked at the political and cultural differences. Today we will finish by looking at the religious differences. In the book of Daniel, the Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem when they conquered the area. When they did this, they took away the chief place the Jewish people worshipped, so the Jews had no place to offer their sacrifices or practice ceremonial laws. The only thing that remained to them was the written law (the first five books of the Old Testament).

This is when the concept of the synagogue originated. Synagogues are not mentioned in the Old Testament because they didn't exist until the New Testament. The Greek word for synagogue simply means "a gathering together." In the absence of the temple, the Jewish people turned to these gatherings to read the written law.

In the Old Testament, we see prophets and priests, but during the 400-year gap, two primary groups of people emerged – the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a group that didn't believe in anything supernatural (they denied miracles, the Resurrection, angels, etc.) and only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament. Therefore, the Sadducees had a problem with the early church in Acts because the church believed in the supernatural (the Resurrection and Pentecost). The Pharisees were the legalistic group that loved religious traditions. Therefore, they had a problem with Jesus because He was breaking down the traditions of the past.

How has the world changed from the end of the New Testament until now? What are the religious differences we see every day (especially in our area of North Texas)?



Friday

[Matthew 1](#)

After 400 years of silence, God comes in a new way by sending His Son to the earth. This doesn't occur in a normal or natural way either. It occurs in a supernatural way. The first evidence of God's speaking again after Malachi 4:6 is the angel appearing to Mary and Joseph in Matthew 1. In this encounter, God tells the young couple how His grand plan of redemption involves them. God also speaks through the star in the sky to the wise men and through the angel as he speaks to the shepherds in the field. God's final word to humanity is Jesus!

This week we can easily see that even though the gap between the Old Testament and New is called the Silent Years, God is still at work. Bible teacher J. N. Darby said, "God's ways are behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes that He is behind. He's backstage setting things up for His Son." In the story of the Old Testament, New Testament, and throughout history, God has been at work. In all the future prophecy, God will be at work. He is the divine author of the story, whether He is speaking or not. The question for us is this: Are we looking for and participating in His story?

How are you going to look for and participate in God's story today?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 48 | NOV. 29–DEC. 3



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Genesis 3:17-19](#)

Sin is continually crouching at our door (Gen. 4:7), waiting for just the right time to whisper lies. The evil one does not want us to succeed at obeying God. Satan wants us to doubt and fear and take matters into our own hands by getting us to doubt the wisdom and goodness of God. The serpent distorts truth and weasels his way into our lives looking for an opportunity to spin his web of deception.

Both Adam and Eve got tangled in this web. They listened to the evil one's whispers instead of the echoes of God's earlier command (2:16-17). With this disobedience came grave consequences. Though Christ would eventually come to make right what Adam wronged, the ramifications of the fall are still evident.

As we await God's final restoration of all things, let us be on guard against the serpent's attempts to undermine our trust in the goodness of God.

In what area of your life are you struggling to trust God? How can you better defend against Satan's attacks against your view of God's goodness?



Tuesday

[Luke 3:23-38](#)

I doubt you have these verses framed and hung on your wall. Genealogies are typically not what you would call a crowd favorite. They are repetitive, many of the names are hard to pronounce, and (quite honestly) reading them can seem pointless. What does a list of old men have to do with all we've studied so far?

Yet, genealogies are part of God's perfect Word to us. They usually serve to drive home a point and are typically geared toward the original audience. For example, in the Book of Matthew (which was written primarily to a Jewish audience to demonstrate that Jesus is indeed the Christ), the author uses ancestry to prove Jesus as a descendant of King David from whom the Messiah was promised to come (Matt. 1:1-17).

The Book of Luke, however, was written for a broader, universal audience. Luke links Jesus back to King David, but continues the line all the way back to Adam, thus portraying Jesus as the Messiah for all of mankind, not just the Jews. Jesus is not only the Son of David but also the Son of Adam, indeed the Last Adam, who stands related to all humankind.

Who in your life needs to hear about the truth of who Jesus is?



Wednesday

[Romans 5:12-15](#)

Have you ever noticed finger prints on the television screen, computer, or windows throughout the house? If you have smaller siblings, chances are you have first-hand experience of the way little kids like to touch everything in the house with their sticky little fingers. And of course, the problem is exaggerated when little kids make a mess of what was otherwise a clean setting. Maybe mom just wiped down the table or cleaned all the smudges off the window only to have junior eat a chocolate bar and forget to clean his hands before touching the walls and windows.

Our sin is somewhat similar. The gravity of our sin stems back to who God is. A smudge against that which is already dirty appears not to be that big of a deal. But the same smudge of sin is infinitely offensive to our infinitely holy God.

Do you see your sin as a small blemish? Do you tend to compare your sin to the standards of those around you or to the standard of our perfect God?



Thursday

[Romans 5:16-17](#)

You may have thought this week as we've studied, "Man, Adam really messed it up for us all." And you would be right to think this. Adam really did mess everything up and the consequences of his offense have been rightly severe—not only for him but for you and me as well. However, before we go wagging our fingers at Adam, we need to realize that though we inherited the sin and guilt that originated from Adam, we each have made plenty of our own mistakes. We've each individually sinned. We've each individually offended a holy God. We each individually deserve the wrath of God.

If we're honest, we can see that if given the chance, we would have ultimately messed up perfection as well. Thankfully, Christ has conquered the sin of Adam and replaced condemnation with justification. And now, grace reigns.

How can you express praise and thankfulness to God right now for His rescuing you from condemnation and declaring you to be righteous in Christ?



Friday

[Romans 5:18-21](#)

Sin can be defined as “missing the mark.” It is less than perfection. We also see another word in these verses, “trespass,” which has more of a crossing-the-line connotation. We use the same idea with the word trespassing. If we cross over into someone else’s property uninvited, that is trespassing.

The notion of trespassing indicates there is a line to be crossed. However, the problem is that many of us feel as if we can live comfortably as close to the line as possible without stepping over. Instead of running far away from the good and right boundaries God has placed on our lives, we try to get away with as much as we can without crossing the line. Yet the reality of our hearts is that more likely than not, if we’ve already taken so many steps toward the property of sin, once we are there at the line, it will be incredibly hard to stop that forward progression.

Do you intentionally flee from sin or do you tend to creep up as close as you can to it? Why?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 49 | DECEMBER 6-10



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

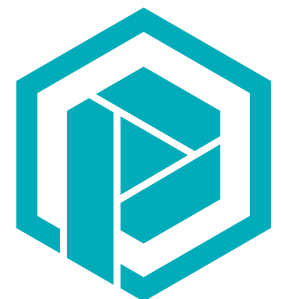
Monday

[Luke 1:5-24](#)

God the Holy Spirit indwells every person who believes in Christ from the moment he or she believes. The Spirit now continually dwells within us as our Helper and Guide, Comforter and Keeper. Though we can never lose Him, we can stuff Him down. Our sin and disobedience hinders the work and power of God within us. However, when we pray, read God's Word, sing in worship, and follow His leading in obedience, we invite the Spirit to fill every part of us. It is through this same filling that we can be as bold and brave as John and live dedicated to proclaiming Jesus.

We should confess to God any way we might be grieving or stifling of the Spirit we might be doing (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). Consider reaching out to a trusted friend and ask him to pray for you in this area of your life.

In what ways are you allowing the Holy Spirit to fill and influence every part of your life? In what ways are you holding Him back from certain areas of your life?



Tuesday

[Luke 1:57-66](#)

God commanded Zechariah and Elizabeth to go against tradition and culture when He told them to name their miracle baby John. It's easy to imagine since they were newlyweds that they both had dreamt of their own little Zech Jr. The expectation from everyone at that naming celebration was that the boy would be named after his father.

Yet Zechariah and Elizabeth chose obedience over tradition. They decided to honor God's ways over cultural expectation. Remember, at this point Zechariah was still dumb and deaf at the Lord's hand. Instead of walking down the road of bitterness, the silent father chose the path of obedience.

Do you think you are characterized more as one who walks in the way of the world or the way of obedience? Spend some time in prayer, asking the Spirit to help you make choices of obedience today.



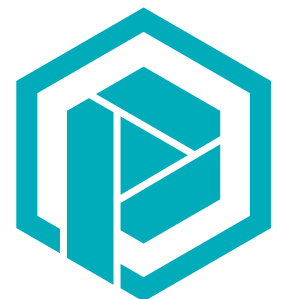
Wednesday

[Luke 1:67-75](#)

Zechariah's prophecy was the first public form of prophecy to God's people in more than four hundred years. The same man who declared his doubt in God just months earlier was now being used by God to be His mouthpiece.

It's so easy to look back on our failures and assume that we've been disqualified from service to God. Interestingly, the very instrument Zechariah used to sin against God, his mouth, was the very tool God later used to bring glory to Himself. You might have seen God do the same in your own life or in the lives of others. There is no mistake so big that the power of God's forgiveness—obtained through Christ's sacrifice—cannot overcome.

What past failures are holding you back from serving God? How can you trust in the work of Christ to cover your guilt and redeem your past?



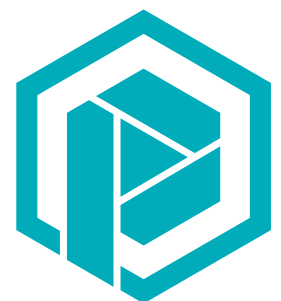
Thursday

[Luke 1:76-79](#)

God fulfilled this prophecy through John. John the Baptizer played a powerful and significant role in the plans of God through his obedience. John understood the role he had to play, and he played it to the full. And at the height of his personal ministry, where the temptation must have been incredibly strong to bask in the praise of his followers, he declared, “He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

John did just that, right up to his death when he was beheaded for speaking truth (Matt. 14:1-12). May we be a people who seek to increase the name of Christ and follow Him in obedience to the furthest extent that He calls us to go, even if that means physical harm or bodily death.

What might it look like to “decrease” this week so that the presence and glory of Christ might increase in your life?



Friday

[Luke 1:80](#)

The waiting seasons of life are often the hardest to walk through. There are so many unknowns and uncertainties. When you are waiting on something significant and you have no idea when (or if) it will come to pass, the weight of waiting can be emotionally crippling.

John lived in the wilderness before God called him into the public ministry. He knew God's will from a very early age, yet he had to wait before he could walk forward in that calling. We don't know how John handled that wait, but it would have been excruciating for some people. But as God continues to give us opportunities to wait on His perfect provision and timing, we should strive to learn to wait well. God's purpose is always good, His grace is always sufficient, and His plan is always on time whether things seem that way or not.

How do you tend to handle seasons of waiting? With doubt? With confidence? Pray and ask God to strengthen your view of Him and His perfect plan for your life.



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 50 | DECEMBER 13-17



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

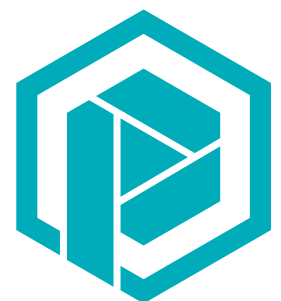
Monday

[Luke 1:26-33](#)

In verse 30 Gabriel tells Mary that she has found favor, specifically with God. She—an ordinary girl—had been handpicked by God to bring about His will. We can see this pattern again and again in the history of God’s covenant people. God chooses an ordinary person through whom to do His extraordinary work. Noah, Sarai and Abram, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Joshua, Rahab, Ruth... the list goes on. Before they were the so-called heroes of faith we know them to be, they were “simple Joes” and “plain Janes.” But God saw fit to use them just as they were, just where they were.

God is still appointing everyday people to carry out His perfect will. We might not always understand it, because we humans tend to make a mess of things, but God can and will use anyone who will say “Yes” to His call.

Spend some time looking back on your life, looking for the evidence of God’s gracious hand on your life. What ministry do you think He has handpicked you for?

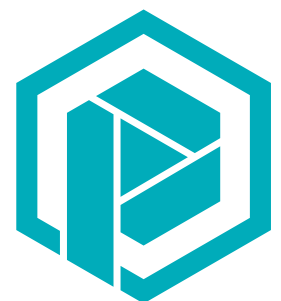


Tuesday

[Luke 1:34-38](#)

We know very little about Mary from the passage, beyond that she is a virgin engaged to be married. Cultural studies tell us that she would have probably been in her early teens. Imagine this young woman receiving the news that she would become pregnant by the very Spirit of God. I'm not sure the typical response of a teenage girl, even during this time in history, would have been as gracious as hers. Yet she received this news, as shocking and nonsensical as it was, with submission and surrender.

How would you describe your posture toward the Word of God in comparison to Mary's response to God's call on her life? Pray to the Lord today, asking Him for the grace to respond like Mary did to whatever call He extends today.



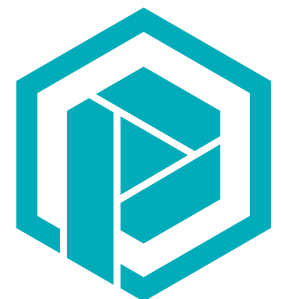
Wednesday

[Luke 1:39-45](#)

At the end of today's passage, Elizabeth declares Mary as "blessed." This word is the same used in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. "Blessed" as it is used here by Elizabeth, as well as by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, is a declaration over the person spoken of: "Blessed are the poor in spirit ... Blessed are those who mourn ... Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness ..." The common denominator of all whom Jesus called blessed is that their faith was in what was to come (Matt. 5:3-4,10). They had reason to rejoice because the kingdom of heaven, eternal comfort, and great rewards awaited them in their future destiny with God.

Likewise, Mary was declared blessed for her faith, her belief in a gracious God who had come to save His people in such an impossible way. The "blessed one" is the one who believes that the Lord will fulfill what He has spoken. He is faithful. He is able. He is with us every step of the way.

Are you trusting in God as your faithful provider, regardless of what your current reality may be?



Thursday

[Luke 1:46-56](#)

One of the cool things about Mary's song is right at the beginning. Her song started with a direct praise of God. She praised His greatness and expressed delight in the fact that He is her savior. Of course, there are so many interesting details throughout her song worth mentioning. However, it is interesting to note that her uncertainty and lack of understanding regarding God's plan didn't get in her way of expressing direct praise to God. No, Mary had enough information and enough personal experience with God to know that He is great, good, and a savior to those who seek Him. She didn't need to know His plan entirely to express praise; she only needed to know the goodness of His character and be willing to trust in what He was doing.

Like Mary, we too don't know all of what God may be doing in the circumstances of our lives. However, like Mary, we can still praise Him because we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, deserving of all of our worship and praise.

What has God showed you in the past year that helps you to trust in His goodness and character?



Friday

[Luke 2:1-7](#)

As our society drifts faster and faster away from any semblance of biblical morality, we can't help but worry. However, in today's passage, we see names of rulers and references to a time long ago, a time where God was orchestrating His perfect will through leaders who had no thought for the kingdom of God in places where wickedness reigned. Ours is not the first culture to crumble, and it won't be the last. God is the supreme ruler and authority, and He can bring His will to pass, even in a wicked and depraved culture.

What aspects of our culture make you worry the most and in what ways can you overcome worry by trusting God's sovereignty and wisdom?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 51 | DECEMBER 20-24



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Luke 2:8-14](#)

Let us not allow the familiarity of the Christmas story involving the shepherds to numb our hearts to the absolute wonder of God's grace. It should still strike our hearts that God chose to announce this glorious message to poor shepherds—to peasants, the outcasts of society.

In the narrative, there are several points of which we need to take note. First, in the presence of the angels, the shepherds moved from the dark coldness of night into the brilliant light of God's glory (2:8-9). In the proclamation of the good news, the Shepherds traded in their "great fear" for "great joy" (2:9-10). The great joy is a response to the good news of Jesus Christ, good news "for all the people" (2:10,14).

God's salvation moves us from the darkness of sin into the glorious light of his righteousness! His salvation moves us from being outcast peasants in fear to experiencing the riches of joy in fellowship with God!

In what ways has believing the gospel moved you from fear to joy?



Tuesday

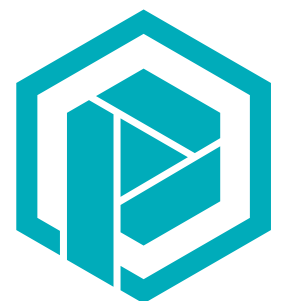
[Luke 2:15-20](#)

The narrative of Jesus' birth is a striking account of twists and turns. At the beginning of chapter 2, the story begins with Caesar Augustus, a world ruler announcing a decree from his high and lofty throne. However, there is another announcement in chapter 2. And this time, it came from messengers of God. The angels declared with great joy that Christ, the King, had come!

It is interesting how God works. On one level, it was a man's schemes (Augustus) who brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem; but it was God—working through Augustus, Joseph, and Mary—who orchestrated the whole event of Christ's birth in order to bring about His will.

Jesus has come, and He has come to deliver His people from the burdensome rulers of this world, rulers greater than Caesar—sin and death. God works out His will in order to allow for the good news to be made known to those humble enough to search and find Jesus.

How does the birth of Jesus the Messiah shape and influence the way we see world leaders and events today?



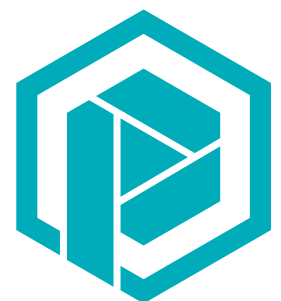
Wednesday

[Luke 2:21-24](#)

One may find it odd that Luke includes a mention of Jesus' circumcision in the narrative of His childhood, even if in passing. However, modern readers must understand that during the Old Testament period it was customary for males among God's people to be circumcised on the eighth day according to the law as a covenant sign (Gen. 17:12).

What does a covenant sign signify? In Genesis 17, God promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations. Circumcision was a sign to remember God's promise to Abraham, and the covenant that God made with Israel.

How does Luke's recording of details like Jesus' circumcision instill confidence in you about the reliability and historicity of Luke's gospel?



Thursday

[Luke 2:25-32](#)

Up until this point Simeon was restless, yearning for the comfort and salvation of his people. Simeon had waited his whole life to see the Messiah. And then, at last, the Christ-child was handed to him. In this one breathtaking moment, all of his longings were fulfilled; he held the life of the world in his arms.

As you read this, Simeon is now at rest. Simeon was like a watcher who has now left his assigned post. His duties have been fulfilled. As the passage tells us, Simeon's life came to an end with him at peace because he had seen the fulfillment of God's long-awaited promise.

Isn't it amazing that Luke includes this little narrative in his Gospel account, like a personal note? Consider the testimony of a faithful man who searched his whole life for the Savior whom He was eventually allowed to hold in his arms.

In what ways should our longing for salvation be similar to Simeon's?



Friday

[Luke 2:33-38](#)

Simeon made a prophetic announcement to Mary in verse 34. It was a prophetic word. As we learn later, Jesus would divide Israel.

Jesus lifted the humble and brought down the self-righteous. The contrast between Simeon (a devout man) and the religious leaders later on in the Gospel accounts is astounding. Simeon accepted Jesus in his arms with joy, whereas many in Israel would reject Him in their hearts (Isa. 8:14-15).

Jesus causes division because Jesus compels us to make personal decisions about Him. In Israel, those who rejected Him saw to it that He was crucified, then dismissed accounts of His resurrection. Those who accepted Him ultimately understood why He was crucified and were later thankful for His resurrection. One day, He will return to separate the righteous and unrighteous, once again causing many to rise and fall.

How will we face division with the culture on some level with respect to who Jesus is and what we believe about Him?



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FALL 2021

DEVO

WEEK 52 | DECEMBER 27-31



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

[Matthew 2:1-12](#)

The account of the wise men is often pictured with everyone in similar clothes, sometimes even with similar skin tone. Lest we forget, these were pagan astrologers from the Far East. So, the journey of these non-Israelites to Jerusalem to worship the King of the Jews was a bit out of place.

That is, unless you remember the vision proclaimed by Isaiah years before, namely all nations and people will seek God and learn to walk according to His ways (Isa. 2:1-4). Matthew's account is a reminder that the God of the universe desires all people to worship Him. And He will draw all peoples to Himself in Christ (Isa. 49:6; John 12:32).

God still seeks to bring all humanity to Jesus. This is the good news of the gospel. God takes the initiative in bringing those far away to Him. Once people find Jesus, like the wise men did, by God's grace they will also worship Him as the treasure of their life.

What are some ways we can be involved in bringing those far away closer to God?



Tuesday

[Matthew 2:13-23](#)

It is interesting that Jesus' family flees to Egypt to save His life from the destruction of Herod. It was Jesus' ancestors who fled from Egypt after God spared them from the destruction He brought about because of Pharaoh, another selfish and violent ruler.

Once Herod died, Jesus returned to Israel. The prophets often recounted how God had faithfully brought Israel out of Egypt in the exodus. Here, Matthew makes this connection, comparing the rescue and deliverance of Israel (God's "son"), to Jesus', who is the true Israelite who will rescue and deliver all of God's people (v. 15).

How amazing it is that the sovereign God of the universe orchestrated events years apart to allow His people to see connections and recognize His power in bringing dual fulfillment to His promises. This is the same God who works His will in your life day to day. He knows where you will go and what you will do.

How does God's control over historical events as depicted in the Bible encourage you in your personal relationship with Him?



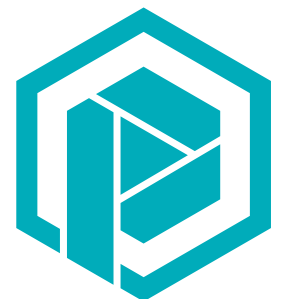
Wednesday

[Luke 2:39-47](#)

Jesus' family made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover each year. Not an easy journey, the travelers would cover around twenty miles a day. This was a journey that exemplified the faithfulness of Jesus' parents. The journey itself was formative to them as they remembered the Passover from the Old Testament, which commemorated God's deliverance, or exodus, of His people out of slavery in Egypt. As Exodus 12-13 remind us, the night before the exodus of God's people, the death angel (or "destroyer") visited firstborns in the last plague of judgment over Egypt. However, when he came upon the household of an Israelite family, he observed the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the door frame and "passed over" those homes.

For Israelites, the journey to celebrate Passover was done in thankfulness and remembrance for God's grace and mercy to their people. Little did Joseph and Mary know, that as they traveled to Jerusalem this time, their child would one day return to Jerusalem as our Passover lamb, to take away the sins of the world.

What feelings emerge within you as you read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' childhood knowing He later became our Passover lamb?



Thursday

[Luke 2:48-50](#)

We all need reminders of who God is and what His purposes are. The mother of Jesus wasn't any different. When Mary finds Jesus in the temple after searching days for Him, she stated, "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

Note that Mary speaks to Jesus as a child and references Joseph, His earthly father. However, Jesus responds with His first words in this Gospel account, words that identify the God of the temple as his Father: "Why were you searching for me? ... "Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?"

This not only confirms His unique relationship with God the Father, it also reminds Mary of the same. Jesus must be about His heavenly Father's business—after all, that is His priority and mission. It had been twelve years since the angelic messenger had proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, and this incident served as a needed reminder to His earthly parents.

How have you seen your pursuit of God's mission lead to tension with others, family or friends?



Friday

[Luke 2:51-52](#)

Once again, we are told of Jesus' obedience to the law in 2:51, namely, that He was obedient to His parents. God's law mandates that children do so, but it is worthy of note considering who Jesus actually is.

Being born under the law, Jesus fulfilled the law even toward honoring ones father and mother (Ex. 20:12). In this sense, Jesus demonstrated His perfect allegiance to God the Father in expressing His obedience to Joseph and Mary.

Jesus' obedience and allegiance to the heavenly Father in this passage is a pattern of what's to come. We often wonder why the Gospel writers did not include more about Jesus childhood, don't we? Yet here, we are given plenty to ponder if we pay close attention.

This chapter in Luke began when Jesus was a baby (Luke 2:16), moved through His boyhood (v. 40), made special note of when He was twelve years old (v. 42), and finally He is referred to by His name, Jesus (v. 52). This is the Jesus who would say to the Father, "Not my will, but yours, be done," in the shadow of the cross (22:42).

How does our experience as middle and high school students teach us about our responsibility to submit to personal authority over us, especially God's?

