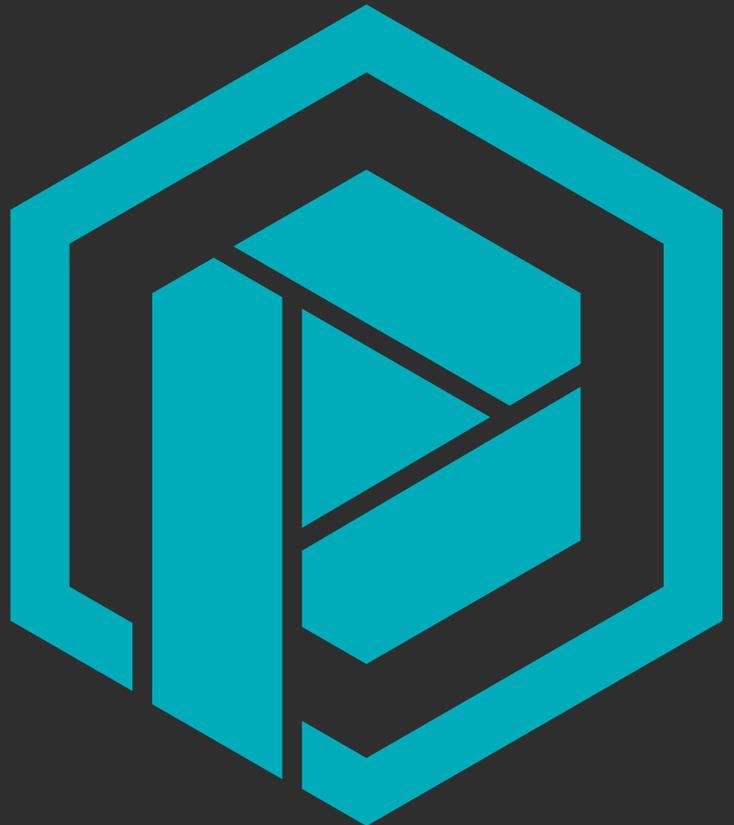


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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 1 | JANUARY 3-7



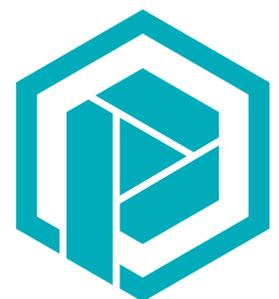
P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

Matthew 3:1–6

When Isaiah prophesied that there would be a “voice crying out, “Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!” he was using instructions that people in his day were familiar with. When a king comes to town, you clear the path. This is how you prepare for the arrival of the king. And yet, Jesus did not come to conquer in the way earthly kings conquer. And when John the Baptist made his declaration, his command was to “Repent!” In this new Kingdom, with a new kind of King, what kind of preparation is required? It is not a physical clearing of a path to make way for Him to ride through the town. It is a preparation of the heart, of repenting from sin that hinders our closeness with God. In this way, repentance is like making straight paths for the Lord in our hearts as we throw aside any sin that might entangle us.

What would it look like for you to prepare your heart for the Lord today?

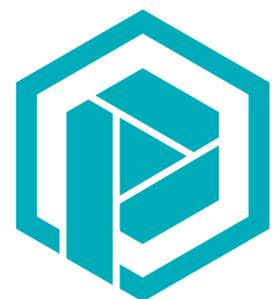


Tuesday

Matthew 3:7-12

Sometimes, when we read a verse like verse 10 that says that trees without good fruit will be cut down, we can kind of freak out and find ourselves falling into a trap of performance where we think that we have to work really hard to produce good fruit. (In these verses, Jesus is specifically talking to the religious leaders. But He says something similar to all His disciples in John 15.) In response, we try really hard to be loving, and joyful and patient and kind. But truthfully, that kind of legalism and performance doesn't produce fruit. This is where we must remember that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are fruit of the spirit, not disciplines of the flesh. We do not discipline our way into being more patient. We do not discipline our way into being more loving. Spiritual fruit comes from abiding in Christ, from staying close to Him. To produce good fruit, our focus must be on Christ, not the fruit. The Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, it is our job to abide with Him.

How do you need to change your focus so that abiding in Christ is your primary goal (instead of many of the other good things that often take His place)?



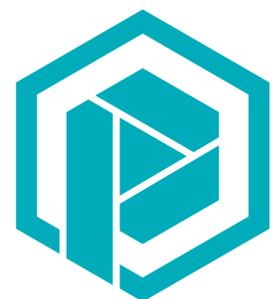
Wednesday

Matthew 3:13–17

God could have chosen from any number of descriptors or names to call Jesus, but He chose “my beloved Son.” And then if you fast forward later on when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He begins with “Abba,” which is basically a way to say “my beloved father.” And then throughout the rest of the New Testament you see over and over again how God adopted us as His children, how we are no longer slaves but sons, and how we receive all the blessings and inheritance of dearly loved children.

God is not quiet about His love for us and His design for us to be a family. And yet, how easy is it for us to forget that we are His children, loved for who we are and not what we do? We so easily believe that if we don’t have enough quiet times then God won’t love us as much. Or we forget that we are a family and so we don’t prioritize our relationships with other believers.

What part of your identity as God’s child and a member of God’s family is hardest for you to believe and live out of?

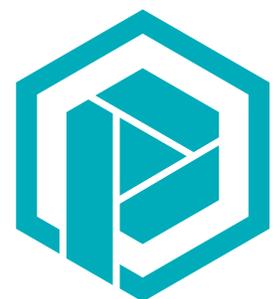


Thursday

Romans 6:1–11

Understanding that baptism is tied to our identity, and therefore weighty, is critical to understanding these verses. Paul is asking the question, “If you are in Christ and have been adopted into His family and are being made like Him, then don’t you realize that means you died to sin just like He did?” Repentance is not just a one-time thing we do when we come to Christ. It is a characteristic that believers embody at all times in their walk with Christ. Why? Because when we identified with Christ, we died to sin. Being in Christ means that we don’t live in sin. We don’t walk in darkness. We live in righteousness. We live in the light. And when we sin, we repent, confess, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

In what areas of your life might you need to repent in order to live out of your identity, as one who has died to sin?

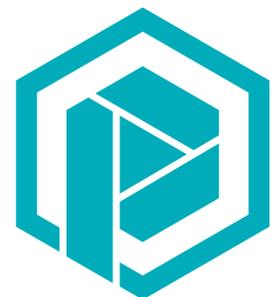


Friday

Luke 3:1–22

Running away from sin because it's "bad" will never be enough motivation to keep anyone out of darkness. We need a clear vision of our identity, clarity on the gifts we receive in Christ, and a full experience of a loving relationship with God. We need to know the hope of what He has called us to and see the wealth of the glorious inheritance He has promised us. We need to experience the immeasurable greatness of His power and His strength. These things are what best motivate us and empower us to live out of our true identity. Being in Christ is not about receiving a list of dos and don'ts. And too often we have limited it to that. But my prayer is that God would open the eyes of your heart to see and receive everything Paul prays in these verses so that you would know who you are in Christ and have freedom to live out of your true identity as a child of God.

In what ways is our identity in God's family different than the one you experience with your earthly family? In what ways is it similar?

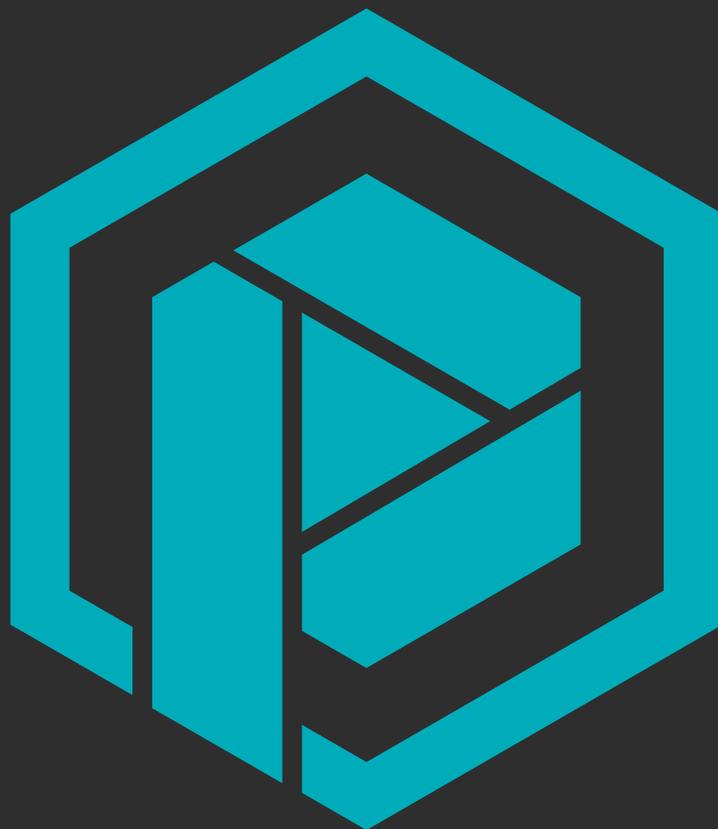


SPRING 2022

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WEEK 2 | JANUARY 10-14

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

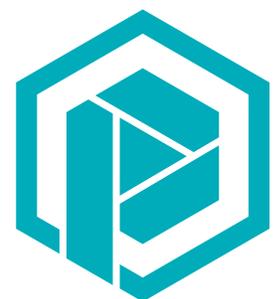


Monday

John 14:14; James 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Can you call someone a good friend and never talk to him/her? Just as you regularly talk to a friend to deepen your friendship, Christians should be regularly talking with God to deepen their relationship with Him. When building a relationship with God, it's easy to forget that we are commanded to pray. We often pray only when we need something or when we are in crisis, but the truth is that God asks us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). God commands us to make our first reaction in life prayer - not trying to fix or process things on our own. When we pray, not just asking for things, it glorifies God. When we give our focus, desires and time to God through prayer, we live out the purpose He gave us - to glorify Him.

What are some ways you can prioritize prayer every day?



Tuesday

ACTS Model

Far too often, prayer is seen as a pro TED talk or inspirational poetry, so if you aren't especially gifted in that, prayer can feel uncomfortable. Thankfully, God isn't interested in how we sound because prayer isn't about us. We can pray using the ACTS model: **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving and **S**upplication. It begins by focusing on God, not ourselves, and expressing our reverence of Him. Afterward, take time to confess any disobedience or sin in our lives. Then take a moment of thanksgiving for the salvation He gave us, praising Him for freedom from sin. Lastly, supplication is giving our requests to God. This is when we ask Him for our needs, at the end.

This model of prayer gives attention to God rather than yourself. If prayer is completely focused on yourself, then it will only be a time to rant; but by staying God-focused, we are transformed to look more like Jesus.

Is your prayer self-focused or God-focused? How can you keep it God-focused?

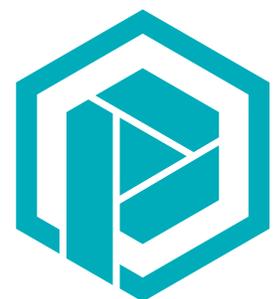


Wednesday

Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 22:42

Have you ever felt as though God doesn't answer your prayers? Have you ever asked why?

Sometimes we approach God as we do Santa: bringing a wish list and expecting to get everything. When we do this, we begin believing that God is a distant being who only shows up when convenient and assumes that we are entitled to grace. Bringing requests to God isn't bad, but if prayer is just updating a Christmas list, then He will feel distant and be unresponsive. And worse, when we forget that God is relational, not transactional, we begin to believe we deserve all the good things God gives. When we think of God as a distant giver, then we lower the value of our relationship to just receiving things. If your prayer life is about getting what you want, you're missing out on what is so much better – knowing and being transformed by God.

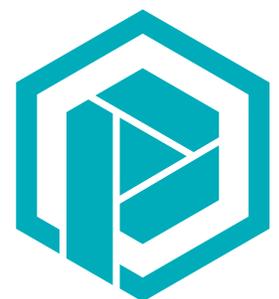


Thursday

Psalm 141:2; 1 Kings 8:54; Nehemiah 8:6

Can you think of a time you had to have a specific posture for a presentation or a game? Maybe you've had to stand straight and look composed for a class presentation or have had to stand squatting in a game. How did this posture change your attitude? Sometimes our posture can help our hearts and attitudes adjust to fit the activity we're in. Prayer can be the same. The Bible gives a few different ways to position ourselves to encourage our hearts to be in the same position. Standing in prayer is a great way of showing honor to God, stretching out your arms shows your desire is for God and nothing else, and kneeling or bowing shows humility and reverence for a God who is immensely bigger than us. These are all great reflections of your attitude in prayer and can help your heart get in the right place before Him.

How can you practice a posture of prayer today? What posture reflects your heart's attitude in prayer?

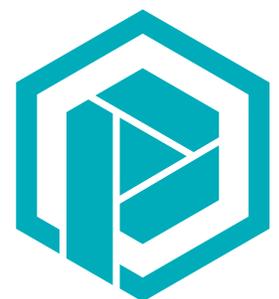


Friday

Romans 8:26; James 1:6–8

What's an adjective to describe your prayers?

Romans 8:26 gives a good adjective for every Christian's prayers - clueless. This verse explains how we don't even know what we're supposed to say when praying. But ... GOOD NEWS! God doesn't let us stay clueless. For Christians, the Holy Spirit is praying on your behalf. What does this mean? It doesn't mean we stop praying. It means that we pray confident that God will give His best, even if His best isn't what we asked for. We don't pray to convince God of things He should give us, but to give our heart to Him and trust that He'll do what is best. When we pray to convince God to give us something, we begin doubting His goodness if He doesn't. When we pray to give God our desires and trust Him, we do this to proclaim that His ways are much better than ours.

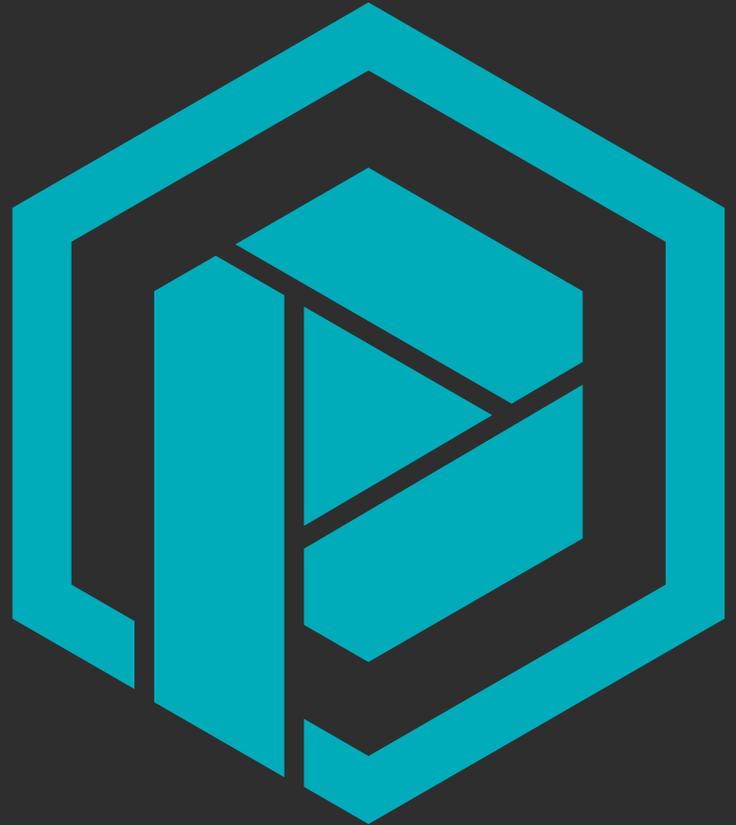


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SPRING 2022

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WEEK 3 | JANUARY 17-21



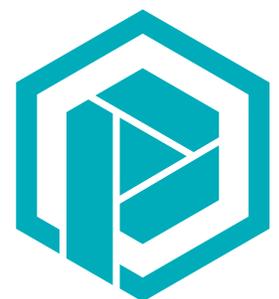
P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

Luke 4:1-4

In the first temptation, Jesus is tempted to choose physical desires over spiritual priorities. Notice that when Jesus was at the peak of physical hunger at the end of a forty-day fast, that is the moment the devil came to Him to tempt Him with bread. Have you noticed this happen in your life? At the peak of your hunger for intimacy, attention, joy, or peace a temptation comes along that offers a short-cut solution to meet your desires. Physical hunger isn't bad. Neither is our hunger for intimacy, attention, joy, or peace. And food isn't bad either. Often, the things that satisfy our hunger aren't bad things. But they can be good things used in the wrong time, and the wrong way, for the wrong purpose. They can be shortcuts that keep us from having to trust God and do things in His way.

When are you most vulnerable to neglect spiritual priorities?

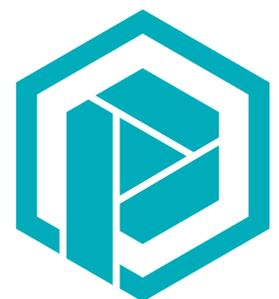


Tuesday

Luke 4:5-8

In this second temptation, Jesus is tempted to pursue the right thing in the wrong way. Satan offered Him all the power and glory of the resurrection without the pain of the cross. It was the ultimate short cut. All He had to do was give Satan His worship. And isn't that true for the shortcuts we are often faced with? We can take shortcuts to power, better grades, popularity, and prestige, all we have to do is turn from our allegiance to the Lord for a brief moment, and we can have it. Just a little cheating. Just a little manipulation. Just a little passivity. And these moments seem little and maybe even insignificant, until we really begin to consider that we have to turn our worship away from God and toward those other things in order to make those choices.

What things are you tempted to pursue with a shortcut?

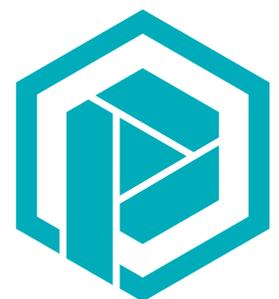


Wednesday

[Luke 4:9-13](#)

Do you ever feel like God owes you? Saying that God doesn't owe us anything is much easier to say than to believe. The moment tragedy or suffering strikes, something wells up within us questioning how God could allow this to happen to us. We love Him, we serve Him, we've given everything to follow Him. And now THIS?! Of course, this mindset comes as a result of thinking we are owed comfort, success, and safety by God, and because of that, we have a tendency to measure God's faithfulness by our own physical comfort and success. If I have good relationships and am doing well in school, that means God is faithful. If my family is healthy, then God is faithful. But God's faithfulness cannot be measured by our circumstances. He will take care of us and do all He promised, but that doesn't mean it's going to look like we expect.

In what ways are you tempted to think God's goodness and grace are measured in the comforts and earthly gifts He provides?

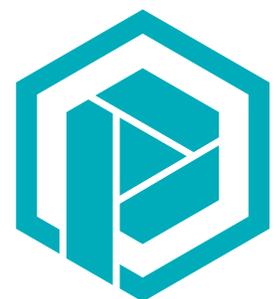


Thursday

Matthew 4:1–11

Where Matthew and Luke detail all three temptations, Mark just gives us two verses and a quick, succinct overview of the whole forty days. But there are some key similarities that Mark is still sure to point out. He notes that this happened immediately after Jesus' baptism, and he writes that the "Spirit drove him into the wilderness" (v. 1, CSB) Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke wanted us to miss seeing God's hand in Jesus' wilderness experience. And while we don't always have the privilege of knowing what trials in our life happen because God leads us directly into them and which trials happen as a result of our sin or just the brokenness of the world —we can be assured that God is always present. When we are tempted, He is with us. When we feel isolated and alone, He is with us. And He will not waste a trial or temptation or test. He will use every struggle and pain to make us more like Jesus, to draw us into a deeper relationship with Him, and to remind us of His love for us.

How does it make you feel to know that God might lead you into a trial?

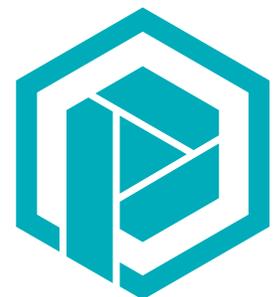


Friday

Mark 1:12–13

Temptations can feel heavy and like we have no way of escape. But that's just a part of the trap. It's never true. Any time you are faced with temptation, there is a way out. Every single time. God promised. And He has never made a promise He did not keep. He will always give us a way out, we just have to look for it and ask Him to show us where the escape route is. The other part of this verse says God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle. It's as if God has a shield around us and He knows what our limits are when it comes to being tempted. That means no matter the temptation you are facing today, even if it feels impossible to resist, even if it seems like there is no way out—you are able to stand firm. There is a way out. In the same way Jesus withstood temptation, He will empower you to remain faithful to Him.

Reflect on a time when you clearly saw God give you a way of escape in the midst of temptation. Or, identify a current temptation you are struggling with and spend time seeking the Lord and asking him to show you what the way of escape is for you today.

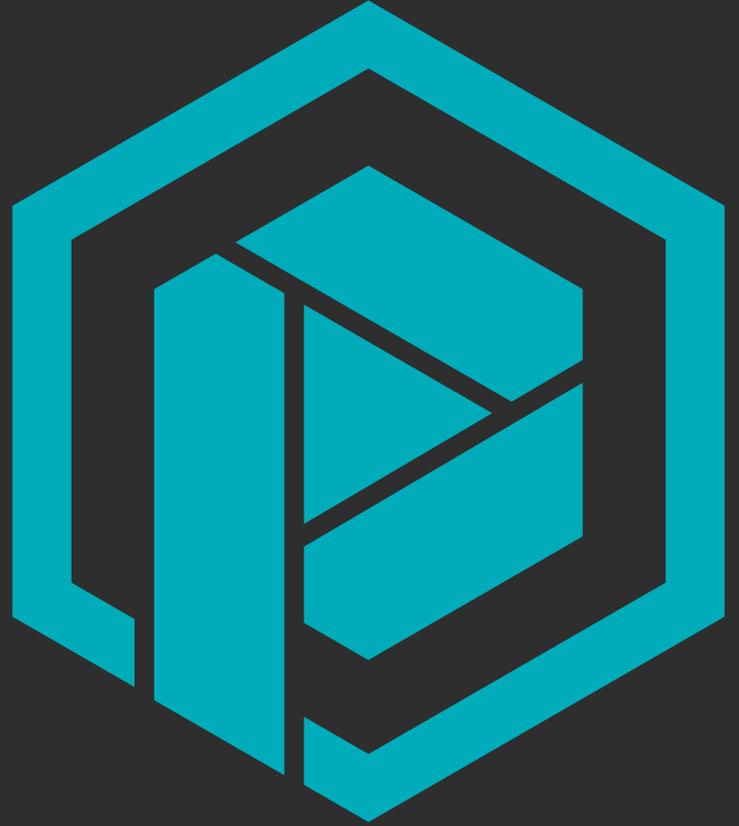


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SPRING 2022

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WEEK 4 | JANUARY 24-28



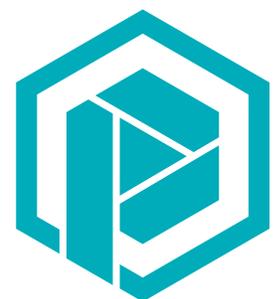
P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

Monday

John 1:19–28

God revealed His righteousness through His Son, Jesus Christ, which means we get to receive the incredible gift of eternal life apart from the works that we do, apart from our own righteousness. We get life through faith in Christ. Because Jesus was the Lamb of God and took away the sins of the world, we are now justified freely because of the grace of God (Rom. 3:21–24). I know there can be times in our Christian walk when we feel like these simple components of the gospel are just the “basics” and we need more than that to grow. But I’d like to challenge you to recognize that you never graduate or move on to better things than the gospel. The gospel is the bigger and better thing. And the truths of what Christ did for us on the cross—removing both the penalty and the power of sin as well as giving us His righteousness—are truths that have powerful implications for every area of our lives. So look to Him and point to Him—always.

In what ways do you feel you’ve taken the gospel for granted? What does it look like to change that?

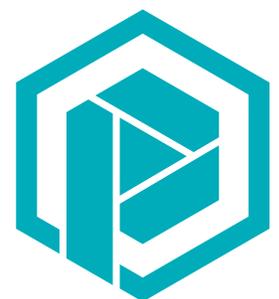


Tuesday

John 1:29–34

Do you remember the story of the ten plagues of Egypt? The final plague was the death of every firstborn son. The only way to protect against this plague striking your home was for a lamb to be sacrificed and its blood used as a marker over the door of your home, just as God had instructed (Ex. 12:1–13). The blood of the lamb was an indicator that a home would be passed over and spared. After their exodus out of Egypt, the Israelites celebrated the Passover each year as a way to remember and celebrate God’s protection and provision. Yet the sacrifice of a lamb, and all Old Testament sacrifices, meant that God only “passed over” sins previously committed. The sacrifices pointed forward to the blood of the perfect Lamb of God who would one day come to take away the sins of the world for all who believe.

What does it mean and why does it matter that God was able to both demonstrate His own righteousness while also declaring those righteous who have faith in Christ?



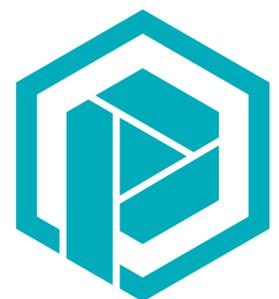
Wednesday

John 1:35–42

John the Baptist said that being with the groom made his joy complete—even though that meant John would decrease in popularity, prominence, and authority. Can we say the same thing? Does being with Jesus bring us so much joy that we would consider it an honor to decrease? That we would consider decreasing being part of the completeness of our joy? If we're being honest, I think this is often not true of us. But why? What stands in the way of this for us? Only God can show you what it is for your heart. Maybe it's not knowing Jesus enough.

When we have shallow ideas of who Jesus is, our joy stays shallow, too. But the more we know the riches and depths of His infinite love and kindness, the more depth we add to our joy. Maybe we think too highly of earthly things because we don't realize how temporal and fleeting they are in light of eternity. Or maybe it's a little bit of both. The answer to this problem can only be found in Jesus and revealed to us through the kindness of His Holy Spirit.

In what ways do you struggle most to find complete joy in being with Jesus—even when that means decreasing in some way? How can you cultivate a deeper love for Jesus today?

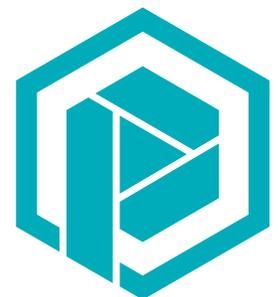


Thursday

[John 3:22–30](#)

This passage makes a clear statement to the exclusivity of the gospel. Jesus is the only way to life and rejecting Him leads to death. In our relativistic culture, we like to make categories for every person to have something unique for themselves. And while God has made us all different and our diversity is a beautiful reflection of Himself—this is one area that isn't ambiguous. We either have life or we don't. Think about how ridiculous it would sound if a relative of yours had major surgery and the doctors came out to give you an update. You've been worried, so you ask, "Did she make it out alive?" And the doctor says, "Well. Sort of. She's sort of dead." That would be absurd. You can't be "sort of" dead. You are either dead or alive. And the same is true for our spiritual lives. We are either dead in sin or we are alive in Christ. And the only way to life is through the Son.

What implications does the exclusivity of Christ (that Jesus is the only way) have on the way you understand the gospel? What implications does it have on how you live your faith?

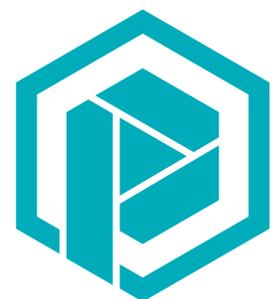


Friday

John 3:31–36

The way we walk with Christ is the same way we came to know Him—through the gospel. Jesus saved us from the penalty of sin so there is now no condemnation for the believer. Jesus saved us from the power of sin and gives us the Spirit to enable us to walk as He did. Take some time to reflect on when you first came to know the Lord. And if you haven't come to know Him yet, take some time to reflect on these verses. For many of us, the joy and peace we experienced when we first came to know Christ is not characteristic of the way we live our lives. If we're honest, we probably can't always say that we are like John the Baptist, a friend who delights to rejoice in the groom. But I want to encourage you to read this passage again and again and allow your heart to rejoice in Christ as you read the truths of this text. Pray that God would give you a new joy in the gospel that would compel you to point others toward Him with new passion and excitement.

What part of these verses most excites you? How could you share that with someone this week?



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SPRING 2022

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WEEK 5 | JAN. 31 – FEB. 4



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

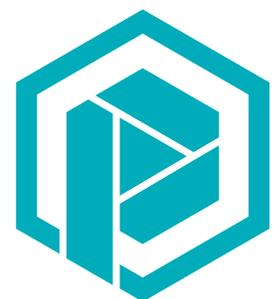
Monday

[Luke 5:1-11](#)

Isn't it ironic that after the biggest catch of fish in his career, Peter leaves it all behind to follow Jesus? Peter recognized that what Jesus was doing wasn't about the fish at all. Jesus was revealing Himself to Peter, James, and John. And so in response, they left all of it behind to be with Jesus.

Sometimes in our lives Jesus gives us gifts that are meant to draw us closer to Him, but instead we get so distracted by the gift that we end up neglecting Him more. The point is never the gift. The point is always the Giver of those gifts. Peter, James, and John recognized that the gift they were given wasn't actually the fish themselves. The real gift was getting to see Jesus more clearly and getting the opportunity to be with Him.

What gifts has God given you today? How can you use those gifts to draw you into deeper relationship with God?

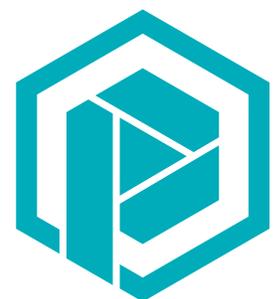


Tuesday

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

In this passage we see how the Jews struggled because they wanted their works to be enough and they wanted to see signs and miracles in order to believe. They were tied up in the external. Meanwhile the Gentiles' struggle was a desire for logic and reason to be their North Star. I don't think it's uncommon for us to struggle with both of these issues today. Some of us may lean more one way than the other, while some may equally wrestle with both. It may manifest itself in legalistic tendencies where we get trapped into thinking that God's love for us is determined on the number of quiet times we had this week. Or, it could play out in hesitation to obey what God says when it doesn't make sense from an earthly standpoint. In the midst of wherever you might struggle, the call to trust Christ is the same. He is "wiser than human wisdom...and stronger than human strength." Trusting Him will not let you down. But we must first be willing to take the leap of faith and trust Him with our hearts and in our actions that follow.

In what ways have you experienced God helping as you struggled through either legalism (thinking that works earn God's love or salvation) or through trusting human rationale more than God's wisdom?

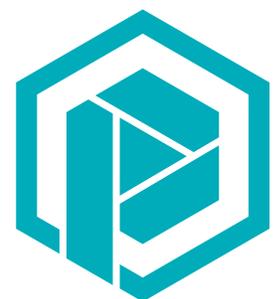


Wednesday

Luke 5:27–32

Notice that Levi didn't invite a bunch of strangers to his dinner banquet to meet Jesus. These were friends, neighbors, and colleagues. He used his regular relationships in order to introduce people to Christ. Depending on where you live, your life might have lots of natural intersections with those who don't know Christ. But maybe you struggle to find ways to introduce your friends to Jesus. Maybe you're afraid of rejection, or losing friendships, or just the awkwardness of the situation. Or, you might live in the Bible belt, completely surrounded in a Christian bubble and have no idea where to start building relationships with those who don't know Jesus. And if that's you, then I want to encourage you to think of ways to reach out to people through activities you are already involved in in order to better build friendships with those who don't know Jesus.

Which area do you struggle with? (Identifying ways to introduce your friends to Jesus or building relationships with those who don't know Jesus?)
How can you take a step toward growth in that area today?

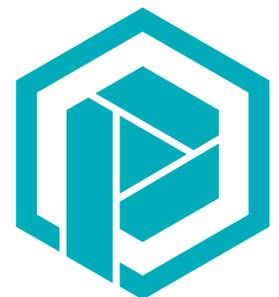


Thursday

[Luke 6:12-16](#)

Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot would become a traitor even when He chose him to be a disciple. And yet, He still chose him, became friends with him, loved him, and lived with him for years. I'm sure there are many reasons Jesus did this. One is the fact that God doesn't love us based on our performance. He knows we will sin. He knows we will betray Him. (Let's not forget, Peter betrayed him, too!) And yet, He loves us because it's who He is. In the same way, when we are in Christ, we love those around us because of who they are, not because of what they do for us.

Who is hardest for you to love? What would it look like to love them in the way God has loved you, not out of an expectation for something in return?



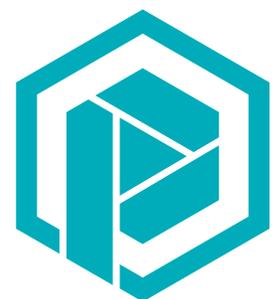
Friday

Ephesians 6:18–20

When we read through Paul’s missionary journeys, it can seem like he is so confident and bold, like he always knows what to say and when to say it. But that’s just not the case. We see it in these verses where Paul is making a vulnerable prayer request. He was scared. He asked for prayer that the message would be given to him and he asked for boldness to speak as he should. He not only expressed fear about knowing what to say, but fear about actually saying it!

These verses can be such a great encouragement to us. We aren’t alone! We aren’t alone in our fears of sharing the gospel, in our struggle to know what to say, or in our need for courage. Sharing the gospel can be scary—and it has been scary for Christians ever since Jesus walked the earth. And what a relief it is to know that we don’t have to get rid of our fear in order to be faithful. I don’t have to muster up some false sense of bravery or courage. We can ask God for help. We can ask him to give us courage and boldness. It doesn’t have to come from us.

What fears do you have when it comes to sharing the gospel? Spend some time sharing those fears with the Lord and then ask Him for courage to trust Him and walk through the open doors he puts in front of you.

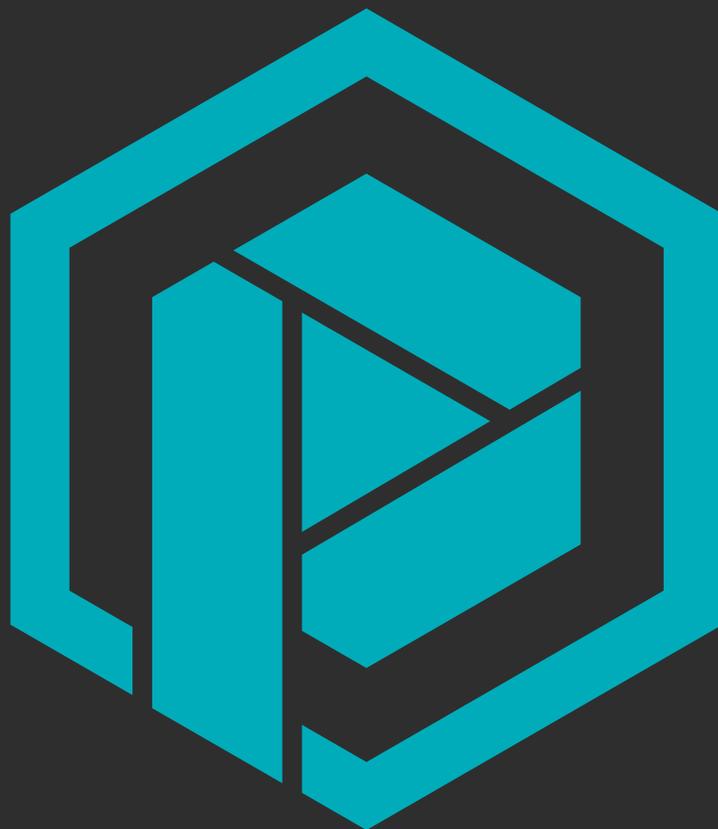


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 6 | FEBRUARY 7-11

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



Monday

Luke 9:1–10

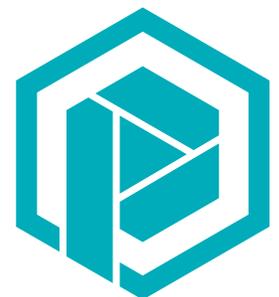
Zacchaeus (pronounced ZACK-ee-uhs) was a tax collector. He was hated by most people because he earned his living taking money from people. Whatever he took from the people that was over and above what the government required, he pocketed for himself. Obviously, this led to many people's despising Zacchaeus and all the other tax collectors as well.

In this encounter with Jesus, we see several different things. First, we see how a government official became like a child. In the culture, it was uncommon for a man to run, much less climb a tree. Zacchaeus had a certain curiosity for Jesus. He wanted to know who Jesus was, and he wanted to be on the front lines to witness Him.

Second, we see Zacchaeus being found by Jesus. At the beginning, Zacchaeus thinks he is going to find Jesus (v. 3), but in the end, Jesus was seeking Zacchaeus (v. 10). God seeks us out in our sin and doesn't expect perfection from us. Whether you realize it or not, God is seeking you today. You may not even want to admit it, but He is.

The story of Zacchaeus is a good reminder for us all that Jesus has the power to change our eternity. Many times, He uses the people we least expect to change the world.

How does God want to use you in your schools or homes after Freedom WKND?



Tuesday

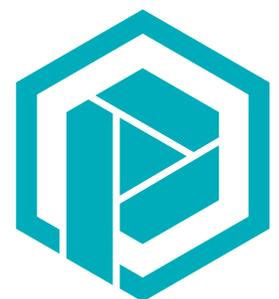
Matthew 4:18–22

The disciples were a small group of men who walked with Jesus while He was here on the earth. But how did Jesus find these 12 men? The first two men Jesus encountered were Peter and Andrew. They were brothers, and they were both fishermen. This job was tireless and tedious.

Jesus encountered the two of them for the first time and made this statement, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Now, think about this scenario in your own life. You are at work or at practice or at school, and some random man walks up to you and says those exact words. You would think He was crazy and walk away from Him as fast as possible.

However, Andrew and Peter didn’t hesitate. Scripture tells us that they immediately left and followed Him. They didn’t think twice. They didn’t hesitate. They immediately went with Jesus. This weekend, you have encountered Jesus in a new way. Some of you have heard the call of God on your life for salvation, for baptism, or for a call to full time ministry.

The question for you is this, will you immediately follow Jesus now that you are home? Now that life is back to normal, will you still turn and follow Jesus?



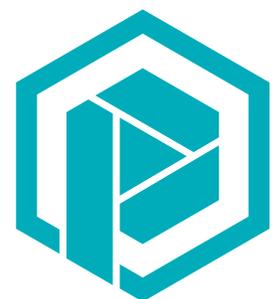
Wednesday

Matthew 4:18–22

Continuing from yesterday, another note about Andrew and Peter's response is that they left everything to follow Jesus. They didn't fold up their nets; they didn't dock their boat; they didn't clean the fish scales off their hands. No, they left all of that behind and followed Him. They left their past and walked into the future. Satan wants nothing more than for us to dwell in our past and our past mistakes. When we do this, we forget who God has made us to be and we forget who God has called us to be.

What do you need to leave behind today? What is Satan reminding you of to pull you away from your walk with Jesus?

Think of a couple of ways that you can remind yourself that you aren't defined by your past, but you are defined by your Creator.



Thursday

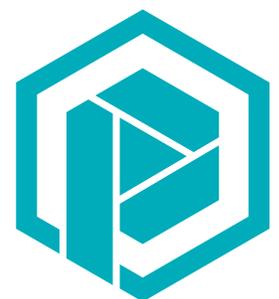
Mark 5:1–20

Today, we read a story about a man healed from possession. Jesus was stepping off the boat and he was immediately met by a man. This man was afflicted and wanted relief. Jesus stepped up and cast out the demon into a herd of pigs, showing everyone that His power is unmatched. Whether it is person, idol or demon, Jesus shows His supremacy. He is the very Son of God who has the omnipotence of His Father. Omnipotence means He is all-powerful. Nothing has more power. That's why the demons immediately flee.

This encounter shows us that God can do all things. Everything listens to the words of God. Because of this, the man was sent into the town to share what happened. As he was sharing, the people marveled at the power of God. The man couldn't keep the news to himself. He had to share it with all those around Him.

How have you shared what God did in your life this past weekend at Freedom with all those around you?

If you haven't, why are you keeping it all to yourself?



Friday

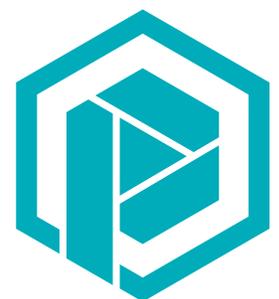
Matthew 2:1–12

As we finish out our week looking at the encounters that Jesus had with numerous people, we look to a story about Jesus as a child. The wise men came to witness the new king that has been born. When they showed up, their response was to bow down and worship Him. They quickly saw that this child was the very Son of God. They encountered the holiness of this child, which led them to bow in submission and worship a holy God. They realized their place before a new King.

Many times, we struggle with our place when it comes to God. We want to take control. We want to plan out our lives. We want things done at our speed. We want everything even when it's not what's best for us. We quickly elevate ourselves above God instead of bowing in submission.

What is your place before a holy God? How do you see this lived out day-to-day in your life?

After your encounter this weekend, how can you practically worship God each and every day?

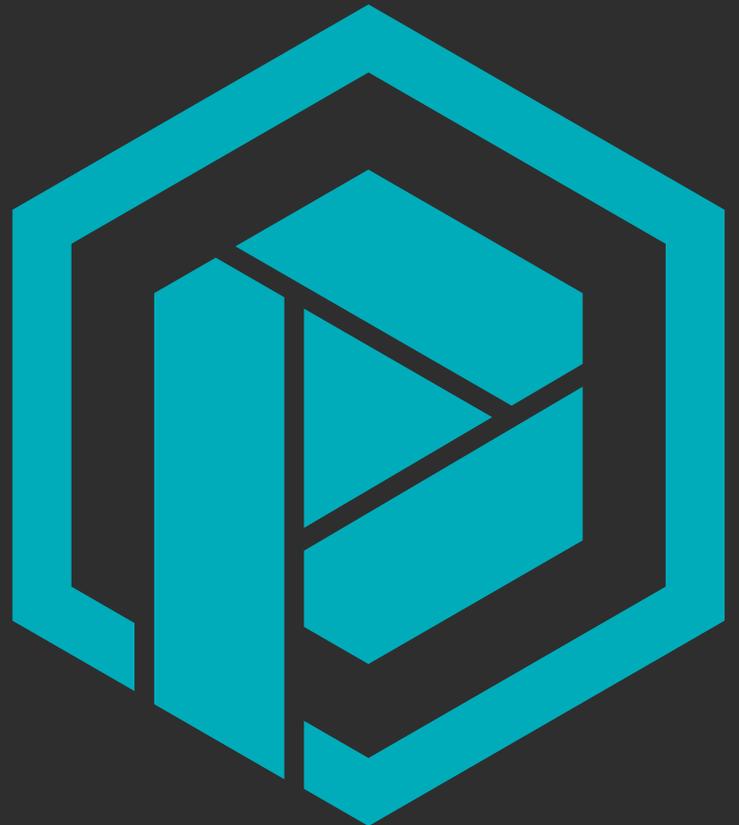


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 7 | FEBRUARY 14-18

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



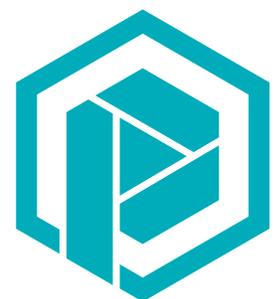
Monday

Revelation 1

Revelation is a book of prophecy about the end times. In chapter 1, John (the author) gives the purpose of the writing of this book, specifically in verse 19. John writes down what God tells him concerning the end times. Why and how is God able to do this? Because God already knows how the end is going to play itself out – He wrote the ending! While “the end” can seem scary to some, as followers of Jesus, we can know the end is solidified in our holy and good God. The end is not a mystery or a surprise to God, but God’s plan coming to fruition!

How does it make you feel knowing that God already knows and has planned what the end will be?

How does the truth that God has already gone before you give you comfort in uncertain, uncomfortable times?



Tuesday

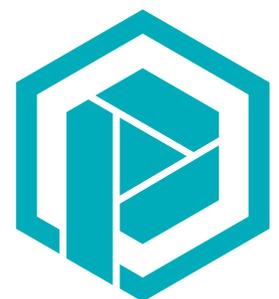
Revelation 2

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with seven letters addressed to seven different churches existing in John's time. While the letters are addressed to those specific churches, as followers of Jesus, we can learn from these truths. Here is a summary statement of each letter from chapter 2.

- Ephesus: Christians, repent and return to your first love, Jesus.
- Smyrna: Christians, do not be afraid!
- Pergamum: Christians, stand firm and hold fast to Scripture.
- Thyatira: Christians, do not be deceived.

The churches addressed are not perfect because they are full of imperfect people, yet God was still trying to get their attention to better the relationship He had with them! The same is true of us! We are imperfect people, but God wants to get our attention and call out that sin so we can have a better relationship with Him!

Which letter sticks out to you the most and why?



Wednesday

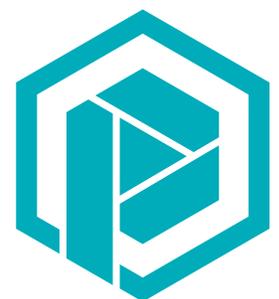
Revelation 3

Chapter 3 picks up where chapter 2 left off in addressing the seven churches. Here is a summary statement of each letter from chapter 3.

- Sardis: Christians, repent and remember the Good News of Jesus and build your life on that!
- Philadelphia: Christians, keep obeying God's Word and being bold in proclaiming Jesus' name.
- Laodicea: Christians, stop being lukewarm for Jesus and go all in!

The letter to Philadelphia is interesting because in this letter, God does not have anything against this church. He admonishes their obedience to the Word of God and that they don't deny Jesus' name – they live a life worthy of Jesus' name. What a powerful testimony forever; may that be said of us!

How can we be like the church of Philadelphia today?



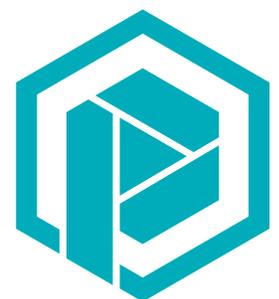
Thursday

Revelation 4

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.” This is the song that the four living creatures say nonstop to Jesus, the one who is seated on the throne. What is amazing is that when this happens, the elders then fall down and worship Jesus as well! What an amazing sight for John to behold. This affirms the truth that we must worship God! Jesus is being worshipped right now, may we join in with the four living creatures and the elders!

How can you worship God today?

Pause what you are doing right now and worship God with your favorite worship song.

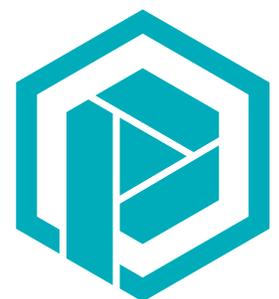


Friday

Revelation 5

What an amazing worship service we looked at yesterday in chapter 4 of Revelation. The reason for so much worship and praise ascribed to Jesus is explained in chapter 5: Jesus is *worthy*! Why is Jesus worthy? Because he was “slaughtered” and “purchased people for God” by His blood on the Cross. Jesus is worthy of all “blessing and honor and glory and power” because of His life, death, burial and Resurrection. We worship Jesus because He has saved us, and it is the only thing we can do in return for what He has done for us. The worship service of revelation 4 happens because of Revelation 5’s declaration: *Jesus is worthy!*

When you think about Jesus’ being worthy of all blessing and honor and glory, what comes to your mind?

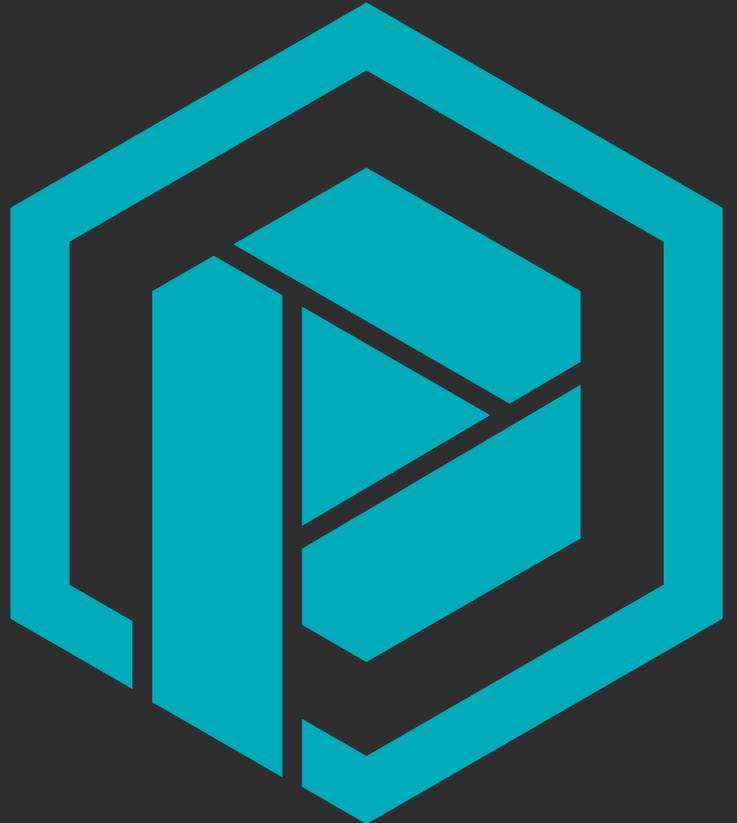


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 8 | FEBRUARY 21-25

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



Monday

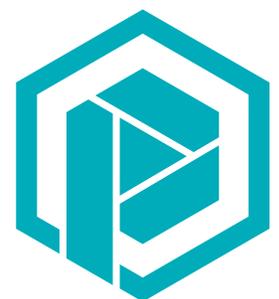
Revelation 6

God is continually making things new. He is getting rid of the old and replacing it with new or improved versions of what was previously there. This happens in the life of believers when they surrender to Christ and make Him the Lord and Savior of their life. In this passage of Scripture, we see Jesus taking away the things of this earth with the reminder that He is in control and He will provide.

What has the Lord made new in your life?

There is a somber reminder in this passage that requires more thought on our part. The theme throughout this passage seems dark and heavy, and culminates with a reminder that there is going to be a Day of Wrath in the future. Based on this passage and Philippians 2:12-13, we must take seriously our salvation.

Why is it that we, as Christians, can look at this Day of Wrath and Judgment with hope?



Tuesday

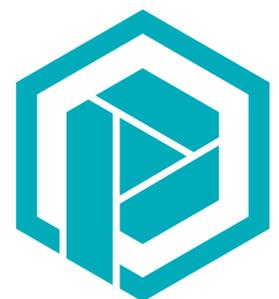
Revelation 7

Salvation comes through Christ alone, and this is no more evident than when we take a glimpse into what heaven will look like. Revelation 7 shows us that there will be a crowd too large to count crying out that salvation belongs to God alone! What is even more telling is that at that exact same moment, the only way they could respond was in worship.

What is your response to the salvation that God has offered you?

There is a beautiful truth that is nestled into the end of this chapter, and it's a sweet reminder for everyone. The reminder is that our sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb. Not by the things we do or don't do, but only because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross.

Spend some time reflecting on what it means that our sins were washed by the blood of Christ.

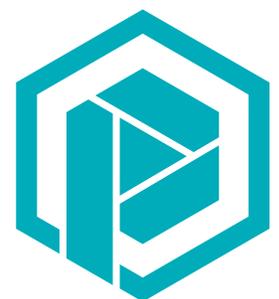


Wednesday

Revelation 8–9

In the midst of chaos, God has a plan. Even when we don't fully understand what is going on or why bad things are happening all around us, we choose to live by faith. Faith is living as though God's Word is true, regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. So rather than walking in fear of pain or things to come, Christ reminds us that we can focus on the Cross. While we focus on the Cross, we are reminded that in Christ there is life, and apart from Him there is no life.

How can you rest in the promise of God when there are so many things we don't understand?

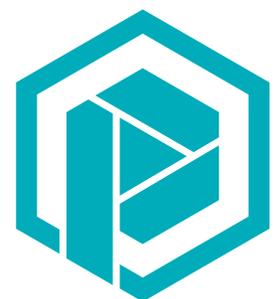


Thursday

Revelation 10–11

One of the most challenging, yet rewarding, things that we can do is offer thanks to God for everything that He has done and all that He is. This is a challenge because our lives are full of pain, and there are many times when we don't think things are fair, yet we are promised in Romans 8:28 that if we are called by Him, everything will work for our good and His glory. It is rewarding because if we are giving thanks for all of those things, then we have a proper view of what is happening in our life. However, it doesn't stop there. In Revelation 11:19, we are reminded of the beauty of God's creation.

Spend time today reflecting on who God is and what God has done.

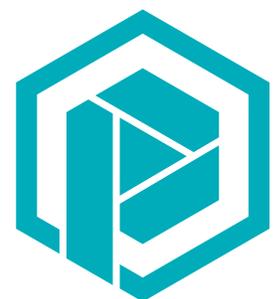


Friday

Revelation 12–13

Revelation 12:11 reminds us that we have conquered Satan and his schemes by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. Far too often, we discount and are not willing to share what God has done in our lives. There is a very important reminder in this passage that Satan has no power over us, regardless of how many beasts or dragons are coming against us. We find victory in Jesus alone! Not just a victory, but a decisive victory. It isn't even a battle because we know how it ends, and we know that Jesus is victorious so when we are found in Him, we, too, are victors.

Spend time writing your testimony – the story of how you came to know Jesus and how your life has changed as a result.

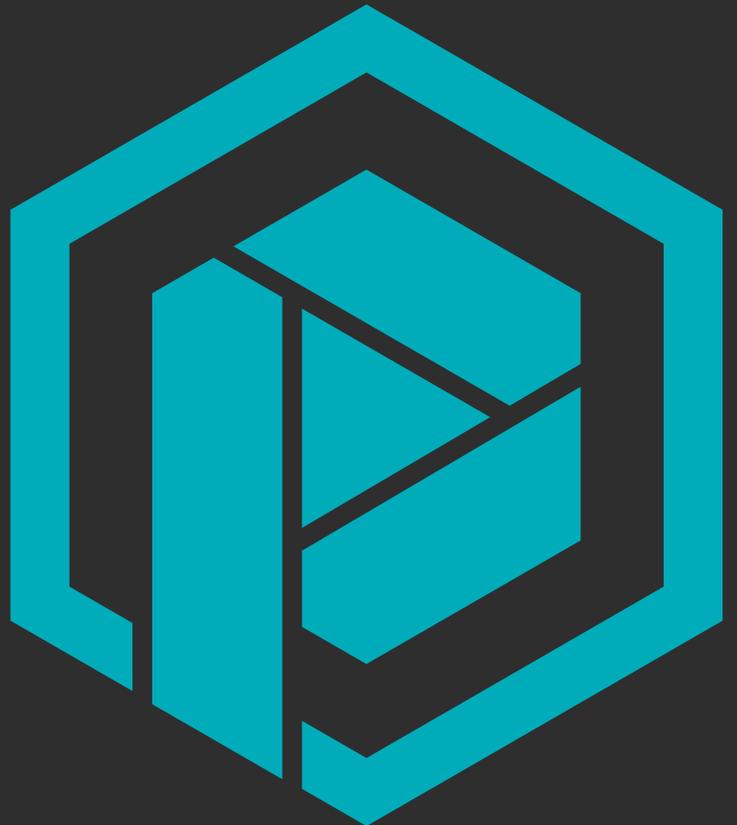


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 9 | FEB. 28–MARCH 4

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



Monday

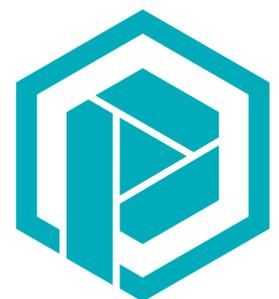
Revelation 14

When reading Revelation, it is important to remember that, despite all the wild and crazy things that are happening, “the plain thing is the main thing, and the main thing is the plain thing.”

Today we see the introduction of the Lamb’s army and two harvests. In verse 4, we see that truly redeemed people follow the Lamb (see John 10:27). How do you follow the Lamb? Look at verse 7, “Fear God ... give Him glory ... worship Him.” We see the fall of Babylon in verse 8, but will get more detail on this significant moment later in the week. The first harvest (vv. 14-16) is the harvest of the righteous, those who have surrendered their lives to Jesus. The second harvest (vv. 17-20) is a harvest of the unrighteous, those whose faithfulness is to the Beast and who will be in torment forever (14:11).

Whom are you following: Jesus or your own desire?

What does it mean to fear God and give Him glory?



Tuesday

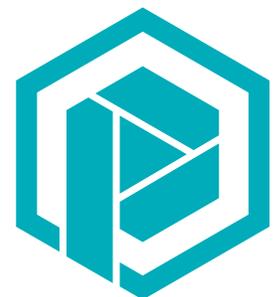
Revelation 15–16

When reading Revelation, it is important to remember that, despite all the wild and crazy things that are happening, “the plain thing is the main thing, and the main thing is the plain thing.”

Today we are introduced to the third and final set of seven judgments, the seven bowls of God’s wrath. This is an important point in the cosmic battle that has been happening between Christ and Satan. We have completion of God’s triumph in the destruction of His enemies. To help you understand each of the seven bowls, search Google and find a chart to help you get a better understanding of each of the bowls. The first part of this chapter, 16:1-7, depicts the first three bowls and how believers respond – praise and celebration for God’s character, not for people being judged. The second part of this chapter, 16:8-21, depicts the last four bowls and how the earth-dwellers (those whose allegiance is to the Beast) respond.

Why is it important to learn about God’s wrath and justice?

What is the distinction between wrath and justice?



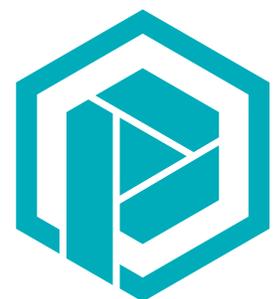
Wednesday

Revelation 17–18

Remember that, despite all the wild and crazy things that are happening, “the plain thing is the main thing, and the main thing is the plain thing.”

Today we read about the Beast and the Prostitute consummated in the fall of Babylon. Let’s begin with a definition of Babylon: the religious and economic state/system throughout the ages of time that participate in/lead people astray via idolatry while oppressing the people of God (i.e., the kingdoms of the world who reject the Lamb and are used by Satan). The seduction of the Prostitute is with power and luxury, which lead to sexual immorality and pursuit of one’s own desires. Ultimately the Beast and the Prostitute turn on each other, showing that God can use evil to carry out His purposes. The fall of Babylon in chapter 18 paves the way for the new creation and God’s dwelling on the new earth.

Key Takeaway: We’re in this battle, and Babylon tries to lure us in – so while many battles in life are against a hated enemy, the battle here is against something that is attractive (17:4, 6b).

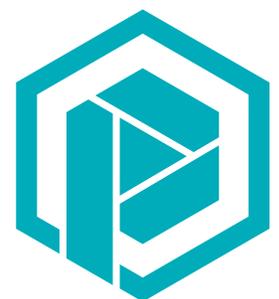


Thursday

Revelation 19–20

Today we pick up on the praise and rejoicing in heaven for the end of Babylon. The next window is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The significance of this is that the Church (gathered group of believers) is finally united with Christ. This is an illustration used often in the New Testament, thus it is significant. The large portion of our reading today was on the final battle. Jesus' riding in on a white horse symbolizes that He has already won this battle. Jesus is depicted as a warrior here: eyes of fire (v. 12) and a sword coming from his mouth (v. 15). What is most encouraging in this passage, though, is the fact that the Beast, False Prophet and Satan are all thrown into the Lake of Fire. Pain, suffering, brokenness, disease and heartache are no more. Praise God!

Jesus will return as King to deal with evil and vindicate His followers.



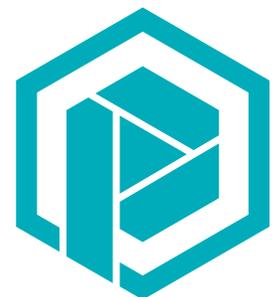
Friday

Revelation 21–22

Today we close out our time in Revelation. God is making “all things new,” and this is what the entire course of history and Scripture have built up to. This moment right here. Why is the creation of a new heaven and a new earth needed? Because we live in a broken, sin-fractured world, and God is finally restoring the Eden experience seen all the way back in Genesis 2. God is finally dwelling with His people again in intimacy. We also see that God is both the Alpha and the Omega (21:6), the beginning and the end. He stands above time and space and is ruler of it all. In chapter 22, we see the theme of obedience repeated as John gives us a summary. As believers, we must trust and obey God’s commands because Jesus is coming soon! For we do not know the day nor the hour, but we must be ready (Matthew 25:13).

How does knowing that Jesus is coming soon impact evangelism?

Why is it important that a new heaven and a new earth are created after the events of Revelation?

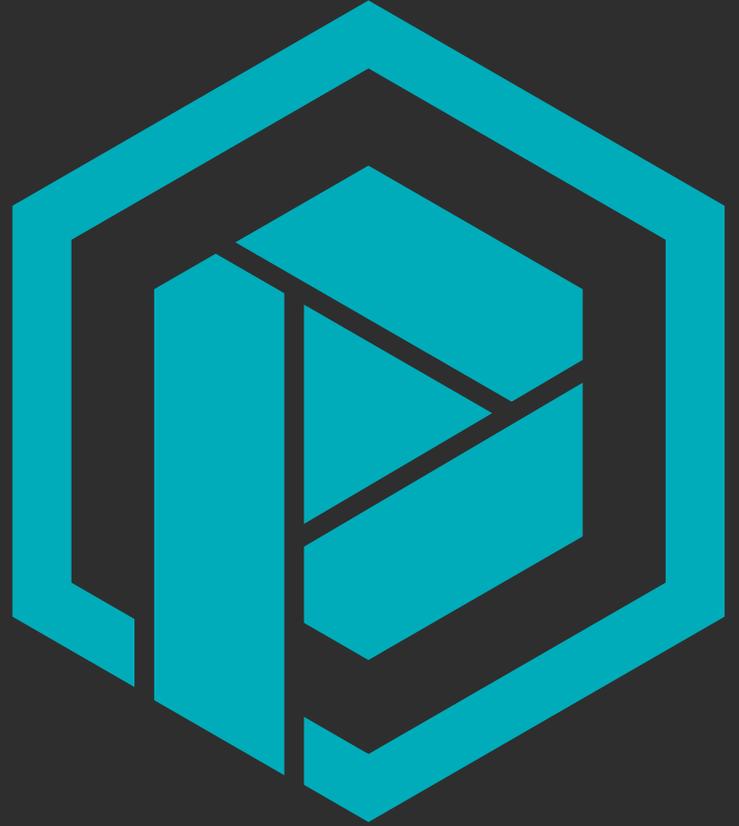


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SPRING 2022

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WEEK 10 | MARCH 7-11



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

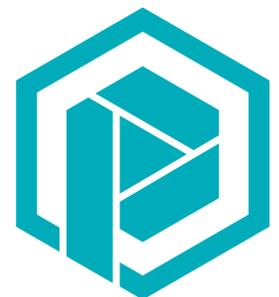
Monday

Mark 1:21–28

Consider how we respond to authority figures. Sure, sometimes we hold them in the highest esteem, but you know there are plenty of times when people resent and reject authority figures. For example, what child didn't buck a parent's authority at some point in his or her life? We all have a built-in tendency to struggle with authority because authority comes from outside of us and commands us to obey the will of another. This we don't like.

But the Jews in Capernaum marveled at the authority inherent in Jesus' teaching and miracles. He was so unlike anything they had ever encountered. He appealed to Himself as the reason to be heard, believed, and obeyed. With a mere statement, He commanded a demon and it obeyed Him. So the question comes to us: "When you read God's Word and observe the authority of Jesus throughout its pages, do you reject Him or do you marvel, believe, and obey Him?"

How have you marveled at the Scriptures' testimony regarding Jesus, the Son of God?



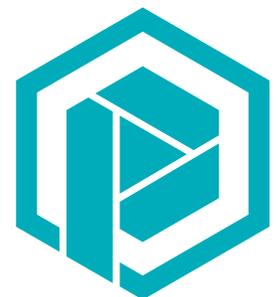
Tuesday

Mark 1:29–34

The miracle stories in the Bible are fascinating as they reveal the power of God to override the natural order of things for His glory. Most often these miracles also work for the benefit and blessing of God's people. On this night in Capernaum, the Lord Jesus healed numerous people—all those who were sick and demon-possessed in the town. He began with Peter's mother-in-law; Jesus healed her of a fever and raised her up from her bed.

Presumably, word had spread of Jesus' casting out the demon from the man in the synagogue and His healing of Peter's mother-in-law. When God does the miraculous in our lives, it draws attention. If we aren't careful, we may pull that attention toward ourselves and away from God, seeking our own glory instead of His. To this temptation, we should learn from Peter's mother-in-law. Miraculous healing, whether physical or spiritual—such as salvation from sin—is not cause for sitting back to relish in the attention but to serve our Savior and direct attention to Him.

How are you serving your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because of His saving work in your life?



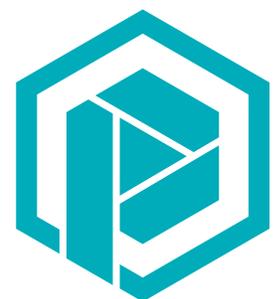
Wednesday

Mark 1:35–38

Miracles, healings, exorcisms. Jesus was a busy man in His ministry to the town of Capernaum. He displayed power beyond human ability and human comprehension, so naturally, people wanted to see more. The people searched for and sought after Jesus; everyone wanted to find Him so He could do more to bless them and impress them.

While the people were seeking Jesus, Jesus was not seeking after the attention; Rather He sought to do the will of His Father who sent Him into the world to save it. So, though He had been healing people well into the night, He got up early to be alone with His Father and pray. The miracles were important, but the message was paramount. He could have stayed to perform more miracles, but He left to preach the message of the gospel in other villages. Miracles could heal the body, but the message heals both body and soul for eternity.

What are some ways you need to prioritize the message of God's Word in your life?



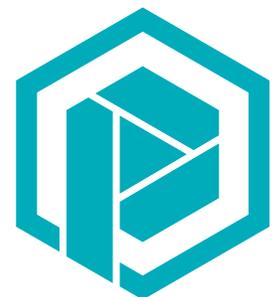
Thursday

Mark 1:39–45

So much can be communicated by human touch: love, friendship, sadness, anger, and much more. God created us with the capacity and need for human touch. In fact, science shows that human touch has great health benefits for the newborn and throughout life.

So it should come as no surprise to us that Jesus would reach out in compassion and touch a leper as He healed him of his skin disease. But this would have surprised the Jewish audience looking on. Not only was the leper unclean from a skin disease, he was unclean in a religious sense, and both were contagious. To touch someone or something unclean was to become unclean yourself. But Jesus touched the leper so that His cleanness would wash over the leper. Disease, sin, guilt, and shame—these stand no chance before the compassionate touch of our Savior.

How have you experienced compassion, even the compassion of Christ, through another person?



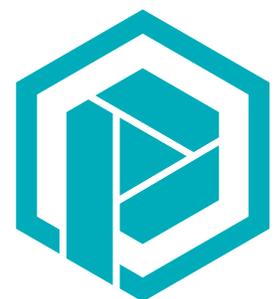
Friday

Mark 2:1–12

You could focus on the paralytic, helpless yet cared for by others. You could focus on the friends, who exhibited faith and brought their friend to Jesus to be healed. You could focus on the scribes with their questions and assumptions. And all of these people are important for this story, but to focus on them to the exclusion of Jesus' words and works would be missing the point.

This isn't a story ultimately about the grace of friends; it is a story about the great grace of God communicated through the Son of Man, God in the flesh. Previously in Capernaum, Jesus had taught with authority and healed numerous people, and the people loved Him for it. But now the scribes objected to His proclamation—only God can forgive sins! Of course, that was the point. Jesus came into the world to forgive sins, to save sinners, and His healing of the paralytic proved His ability to forgive sins. All glory to God!

How will your forgiveness in Christ lead you to glorify God in your words and actions?

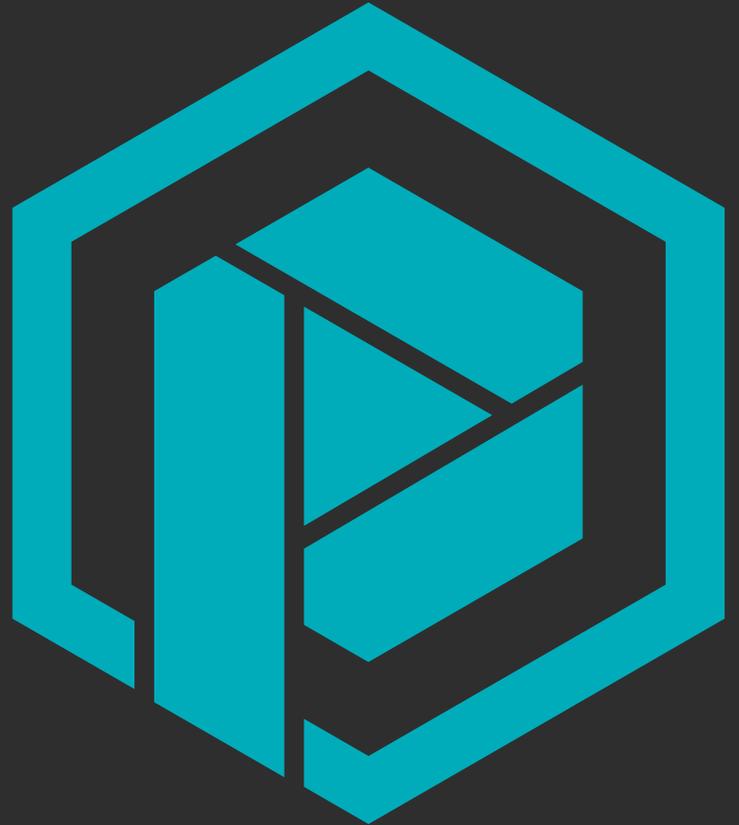


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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 11 | MARCH 14-18



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

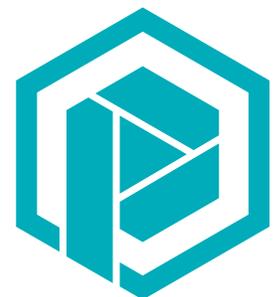
Monday

Isaiah 61:1-7

Unlike political leaders, the Messiah alone can speak into existence the dynamics of the new creation (vv. 1-3). Nonetheless, the Messiah Himself graciously opts to employ His people as instruments to bring about blessing and redemption to the world (vv. 4-7). We serve as a team of ambassadors for the Lord's anointed, seeing that His campaign promises come to fruition in the transformed lives of flesh-and-blood people.

God's people were always meant to live as a royal priesthood and holy nation who communicates knowledge of His grace to the world around them (Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9). As followers of Jesus, we are indwelt with the same Spirit who anointed Him and are charged to proclaim the same good news that He made into reality through His life, death, and resurrection. We represent the One who can uniquely deliver on His promise for a better tomorrow.

How does reading Isaiah's description of the Messiah and His mission deepen your hope for the future that Jesus purchased for His people?



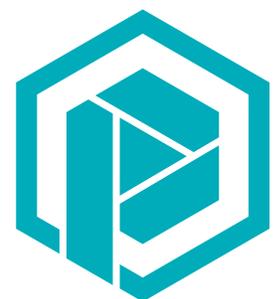
Tuesday

Isaiah 61:8–11

Every human has an innate sense of justice, that our actions matter and that good should be rewarded and evil punished. However, this innate sense and perceived entitlement to justice does not in itself guarantee we will experience justice. In other words, the mere desire for justice does not necessarily mean that we will see it carried out. Yet, we, as God's people, can have confidence that in the end we will see justice for all. Why? Because of the unchanging character of God and His unwavering promises.

After promising to bring about restoration and redemption through His anointed servant in verses 1–7, Isaiah 61 then puts forward the assured grounding of these promises: “For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and injustice; I will faithfully reward my people and make a permanent covenant with them” (v. 8, CSB). God made creation and made it good, and in the end, it will be good again. He will settle for nothing less.

How can someone's innate desire for justice play a role in our evangelism and in defending our beliefs to others?



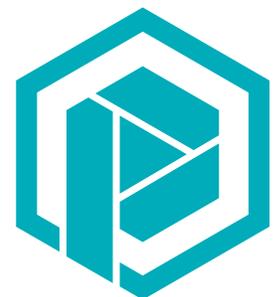
Wednesday

Luke 4:16–22

It's called “the mic drop,” when a speaker makes a declarative statement so compelling that it requires a prolonged pause or stage exit for full effect. Dropping the mic, whether physically or figuratively, adds a dramatic stamp to the bold or shocking words. In the synagogue of His hometown, Jesus begins a worship gathering with nothing short of a mic drop (or perhaps more accurately, a “scroll roll”).

Imagine how presumptuous, pretentious, and potentially blasphemous Jesus' claim in verse 21 must have sounded to the folks with whom He grew up. Yet, as Luke records, initially this claim alone was not enough to raise their temper to the maximum, a reaction we will see in verses 28–30. Regardless of people's attitudes, Jesus nonetheless proceeded to “drop the mic” in applying Isaiah's messianic prophecy to Himself: “Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled” (v. 21).

How can we avoid committing superficial “mic drops” when it comes to speaking to people about the gospel and its serious implications for their lives?



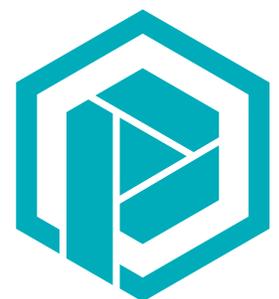
Thursday

[Luke 4:23–27](#)

After Jesus' apparent "mic drop", the people's confused and perhaps antagonistic response led Him wisely to point out the basis for their resistance. Jesus was not taken aback at all. Indeed, He proceeded to force the issue by citing an example from redemptive history when Israel previously rejected its own prophets, Elijah and Elisha.

Because of Israel's failure to recognize God's messenger at a given time, He has extended His grace elsewhere, such as in the cases of the widow at Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian. Those of Israelite descent cannot, in other words, presume on God's grace; they are not entitled to it by birth and culture. They must receive God's message with attentive ears and repentant hearts. Likewise, we who are involved in the church today should not presume anything either. We must be careful to heed God's Word whenever it is being proclaimed.

What are some illegitimate reasons that sometimes make you hesitant to respond in faith and obedience to God's Word?



Friday

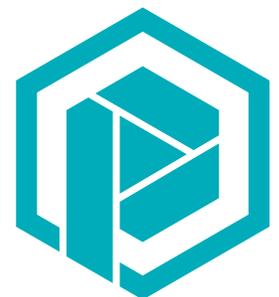
Luke 4:28–31

It takes a village to raise a child. And apparently it takes the same village to carry out a would-be public execution of this same child once He is grown.

Despite knowing what their unbelief would lead them to do (Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 11:17), Jesus did not hold back in His pronouncements about His messianic identity or about the crowd's capacity to behave as their rebellious ancestors had. Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father's plan for Him, recognizing that He would not die until the appointed time (Luke 22:53; John 7:30). Here, we see God's preservation of Jesus' earthly life helping Him to evade the mob seeking to throw Him from a cliff: "He passed right through the crowd and went on his way" (v. 30, CSB).

We then see Jesus' steadfast trust in the Father evidenced further in verse 31, which mentions almost casually how He continued onward in His ministry. Likewise, we too can trust in God to complete His plans knowing that no harm will come to us unless He permits it (Luke 12:4–7).

How does this passage speak to your biggest fear when it comes to telling others about Jesus?

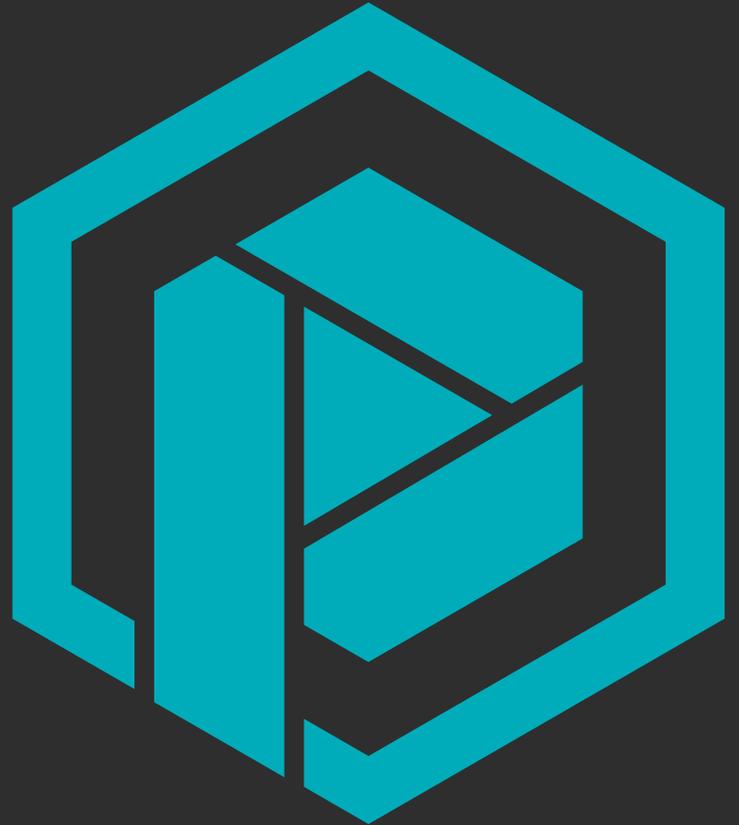


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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 12 | MARCH 21-25



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

Monday

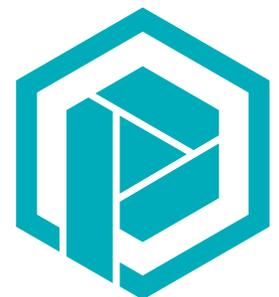
Isaiah 61:1–7

Nicodemus was close, closer than most others, but he was not close enough. Notice what this ruler of the Jews recognized about Jesus: 1) Jesus was a rabbi; 2) Jesus came from God; 3) Jesus performed signs; 4) God was with Jesus.

Not a bad list. Nicodemus respected Jesus as a rabbi, although Jesus never was formally trained as one. And he recognized that Jesus was special—that He came from God, performed miracles, and that God was with Him. But notice that Nicodemus stopped short in his understanding of Jesus, which is what Jesus pulled out of him in the conversation that followed. Nicodemus failed to recognize that Jesus was special not because He was from God and that God was with Him, but because He is God. Nicodemus failed to reach the point of recognizing his need to turn to Jesus, the Son of God, for salvation.

When it comes to trusting in Jesus, close is not enough. Even today, many people view Jesus as a good teacher—an example of living morally pleasing lives. But that was not Jesus' mission. Rather, Jesus came so that people might come to know that He is the Son of God and have salvation through Him.

In what ways do you need to develop a deeper understanding of who Jesus is?



Tuesday

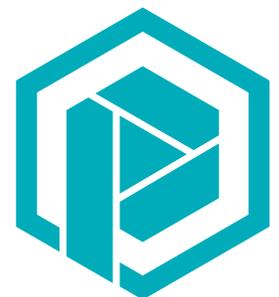
John 3:3–8

Nicodemus was not the only one who was confused by Jesus' response in these verses. Understanding what exactly being born again means and what Jesus meant by water has challenged theologians for centuries. Even the word translated as "again" in verse 3 is not clear. The Greek word used there could also mean "from above."

This is more than a linguistic nuance; understanding both senses of that word gives the passage its context and reminds us of its basic truth, one that is quite understandable.

Salvation involves a new birth—new life. When a person trusts in Christ, he or she is born anew spiritually. And that is why "from above" is so helpful in addition to "again." Being born "from above" reminds us that Jesus was speaking of a spiritual truth—that this birth is not the work of the flesh, but rather the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us. And just as the Spirit works to bring about this new birth, He also guides us to understand truth—all of the truth in Scripture, even the more challenging parts.

What are some doctrines or passages that you struggle to understand? Which have you grown to understand better because of the Spirit's guidance?



Wednesday

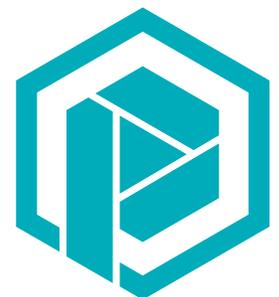
John 3:9–15

The new birth that Jesus explained to Nicodemus does not occur automatically—it comes by faith. To illustrate this, Jesus pointed the Jewish teacher to the Old Testament Book of Numbers, specifically the time when the Israelites were plagued by venomous snakes.

When the Israelites grumbled against God, He disciplined them by sending venomous snakes into their midst. But along with that judgment came mercy and grace—God instructed Moses to fashion a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. Whoever was bitten could look at that serpent and be healed.

In the same way, Jesus would be lifted up. But don't miss that the physical raising is not the strongest connection between Jesus and the serpent on the pole. Faith is. Imagine you were an Israelite in the wilderness who was just bitten by a snake. Does it make sense that looking at a bronze serpent would heal you? Would you choose to take your eyes off the ground—where other snakes still were—to look at that bronze serpent? Do you see how it took faith?

How is faith needed in your relationship with Jesus after salvation? What areas of your life do you need to trust Jesus with?



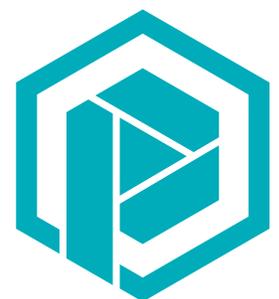
Thursday

John 3:16–18

It is trendy today to see people as basically good—or at least neutral. This is why so many people balk at the biblical teaching of judgment and hell. The belief is that God is unfair to condemn people to hell because people are basically good. They deserve His grace and forgiveness. Notice the irony of believing you deserve that which is by definition a gift—something that cannot be deserved.

John 3:16 is, perhaps, the best known Bible verse. Even unbelievers are likely to know it. But notice what follows. In the next two verses, Jesus explains that He did not come into the world to condemn it. Why? Because it is already condemned. And with that, the myth of people being basically good and deserving forgiveness falls apart. If anything is not fair, it is not that people are condemned, but rather that some people are saved.

How do you tend to see salvation: as something that is deserved or as a free gift of God?



Friday

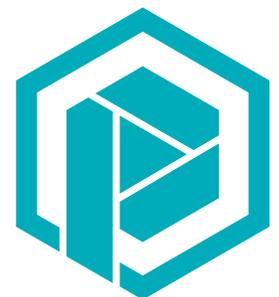
John 3:19–21

As believers, it is often difficult to understand the world—and it should be. It is difficult to understand why people do what they do—why sin is so pervasive and why hostility against God is so blatant. But none of this should surprise us. Jesus told us.

People love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil. Don't miss this: people, apart from Jesus, don't dabble in darkness. They don't tolerate darkness. They don't sort of like darkness. They love darkness. They love sin. They love to hate God. And so did we before Christ.

Be grateful when you struggle to understand the world—it is a mark of God at work in you. It is a sign that your new mind is at work—that you have been born again. But at the same time, do not allow this to lead you to become arrogant. Remember, the only reason you are now walking in the light is because of the kindness of God—His gift to you in Christ made known to you by the Holy Spirit. Rather, let this dissonance between you and the world fuel your desire to share the gospel with those around you, so that they too might come to the light.

In what ways have you seen your living and thinking change because of the gospel?



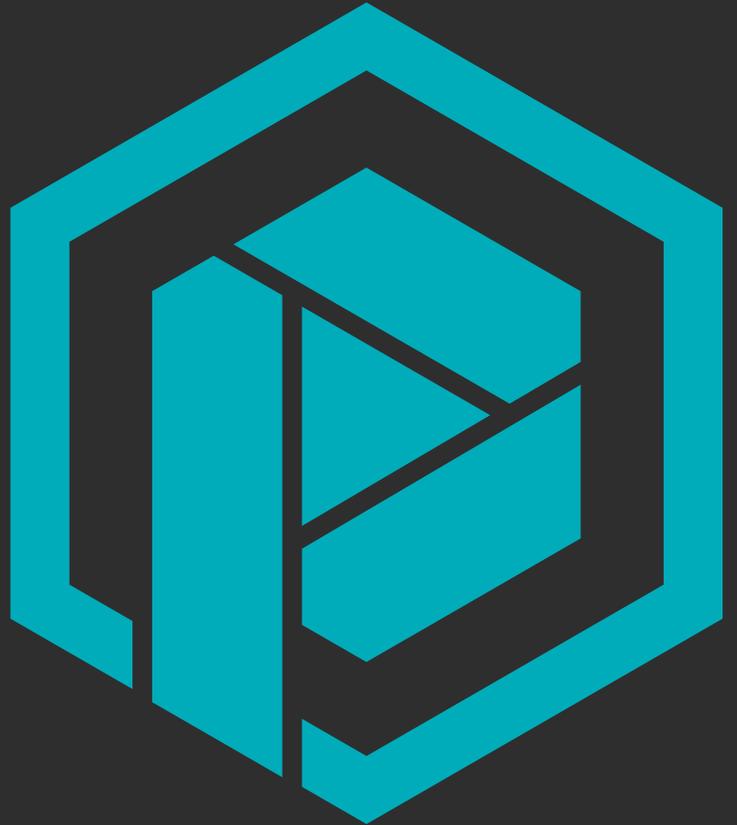
SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 13 | MAR. 28–APRIL 1

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

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Monday

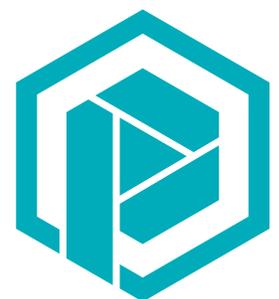
John 4:1–6

Had to are two small words with plenty of power behind them. Jesus “had to” travel through Samaria (v. 4). He was required to. He was obligated to. But why?

It is likely that Jesus had to travel through Samaria because of the woman He encountered. Either He knew that this woman needed to have a conversation with Him or the Holy Spirit led Him to Jacob’s well for the divine encounter that takes place in this chapter.

We too have been sent on a similar mission, to reach all people from every tribe and nation with the gospel. As such, our goal is not merely to abstain from avoiding others as the Jews did with the Samaritans, but, like Christ, intentionally to connect with them. Like Jesus, we are to go out of our way—geographically, culturally, and socially to take the gospel to anyone and everyone God prepares for us to reach.

Who might God be sending you to as His agent to share the gospel? How will you obey Him and go this week?



Tuesday

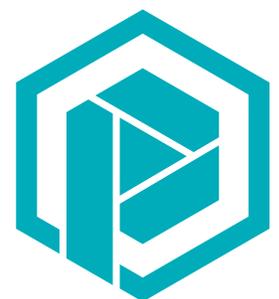
John 4:7–14

If you have ever been thirsty—really thirsty to the point of being parched—you understand what it is like to need a drink of water. Imagine, though, that you couldn't get a drink of water by grabbing a bottle of cold water out of the refrigerator or even from a sink. Imagine you had to walk to a community well, lower a bucket, and hoist that bucket back up. Then you had to fill the pitchers you had brought and haul them back home. This is what you had to do every day and the water you carried wasn't cold and wasn't the cleanest.

The Samaritan woman did not have to imagine this because this was real life for her and the other Samaritans and Jews of Jesus' day. Imagine then the woman's surprise and great interest when Jesus told her that He had living water—cool, fresh, clean water—that would leave a person to never thirst again.

Of course we understand what the woman missed—that Jesus wasn't talking about water, but life in Him. It's a beautiful picture though, isn't it? All people are parched spiritually—always struggling to find what satisfies the deepest cravings of their soul. Jesus alone is what quenches our spiritual thirst, and He alone is what satisfies it for good.

In what ways does your soul thirst? How might you try to satisfy it apart from Jesus at times? Why?



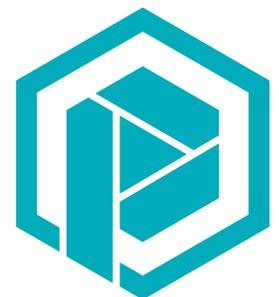
Wednesday

John 4:15–18

Up to verse 16, Jesus and the Samaritan woman were having a nice conversation about water. But then Jesus threw the woman a curve ball. When she asks for the water Jesus spoke of, He responds by telling her to get her husband. Where did that come from? It seems to be out of nowhere—their conversation, let alone her preceding request for water, had nothing to do with her husband.

In this we see the heart of Christ for the woman. That might be odd to say considering this statement by Jesus led to Him addressing the woman living with a man in sin. But don't miss the impact it had on the woman. Because of this statement of Jesus, the woman was able to see, at least in part, the omniscience of Christ. She was able to see that He was not just a kind Jewish teacher. Jesus' knowledge of her sin was precisely what drove her toward what she needed to know—that she was talking with the Messiah (v. 25–26).

In what ways does the church tend to address wrongly the sins of others? What can you learn about addressing others' sins from this account?



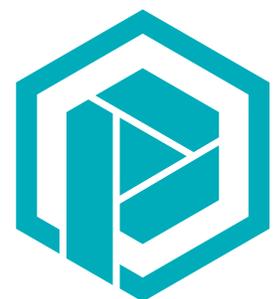
Thursday

[John 4:19–24](#)

It has been said that everyone is wired to worship—the issue is that we often worship the wrong things. We see this desire in the woman’s question to Jesus after she comes to understand that He was not a regular teacher—that He was at least a prophet. Of all the questions she might have had, and surely understanding the uniqueness of the opportunity to ask this Jewish rabbi a question, notice that her question centered on worship.

Many of us understand worship better than the Samaritan woman did that day, however, we too often struggle to worship the way Jesus prescribed: in Spirit and truth. While location may not be relevant today, music style, time of day, and many other factors might impact our practice of worship. Our prayer should be that we might push past all of the meaningless items that could hinder worship and be the worshipers the Father wants.

What can sometimes hinder your worship of God? What can you do to move past these hindrances and instead worship in Spirit and truth no matter what?



Friday

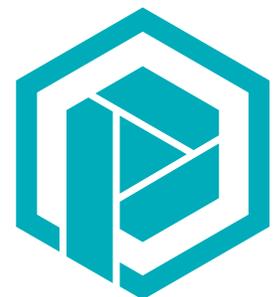
John 4:25–42

Jesus had to travel through Samaria because of this encounter. This is the way God works: that no person is unworthy of His attention (this is the point of the three parables in Luke 15). But while Jesus would have traveled through Samaria just for this woman, He did not. This woman was a first domino with others to follow.

After her encounter with Jesus, the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told all the people about Jesus. The people then left the town and went to meet Jesus. The result is that many of the Samaritans believed in Jesus (v. 39–42).

We see here that our faith is not our own. That is not to say that we do not trust in Jesus for salvation on our own, but rather that living out our faith is never intended to be done alone. We aren't here just for us, we are here for others as well. Even if we are like the Samaritan woman—new in our faith—we are called to share what we have experienced with others. It's never too early to start. It's never too late to begin.

How comfortable are you with sharing the gospel with others? What can you do to be more comfortable, and perhaps more obedient to share your faith with others?

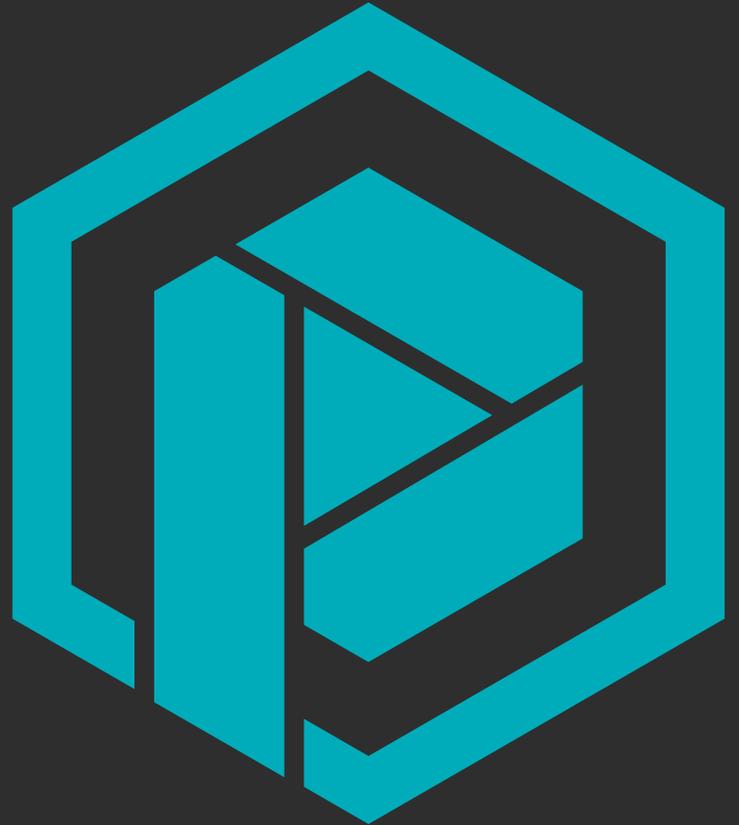


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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 14 | APRIL 4-8



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

Monday

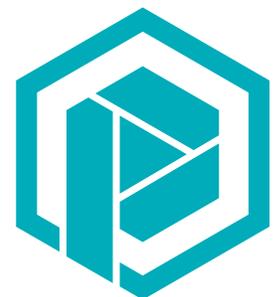
Luke 17:11–13

Every Christian has received, as Luke 1:78 says, the tender mercy of God. Paul says God is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4). He isn't stingy. He doesn't ration His mercy to save enough for a rainy day. No, God is pouring out His mercy on us even right now. It never ends. You can use up all you need today; there will be more in the morning (Lam. 3:23).

But what exactly is God's mercy? Another word for it—one we're more familiar with—is compassion. God's mercy is God's compassion, and His compassion is His mercy. God's mercy is His compassionate care for us—springing from, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:4, “his great love that he had for us.”

God's mercy is His never-ending love for us, the undeserving. Looking upon us in our sin, God chose to forgive us in His Son. His mercy brought us near. We need a love like that—a love that's near. Distant love, no matter how sincere, cannot change us. All life-changing love must be close. The love of God is that kind of love—an all-encompassing, all-sufficient, all-surpassing love. And it's ours because of His mercy. That's what the lepers cried out to Jesus to receive. And He came near to give it to them.

How does God's merciful nearness change the way you live today?



Tuesday

Luke 17:14–16

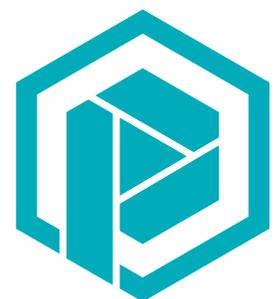
“And as they went they were cleansed.” Imagine the joy. Imagine looking down at ruined skin and seeing it healed. Imagine looking at the men beside you to find faces not disfigured but whole. Cleansed!

Every Christian has experienced the same kind of cleansing at the level of the heart. By Christ’s blood, our sin is washed away. As we walk in the light with Jesus, we find moment-by-moment cleansing by His grace (1 John 1:7). The Christian life could be summed up in one word: “Cleansed!”

The lepers cleansing came at an interesting time: “as they went.” Going was obeying. A leper would go to a priest so that the priest could determine if the disease was healed or not. These men knew before Jesus came they were as sick as ever. But when He told them to go, they went, trusting that in the going—sometime between now and then—they would be healed. And they were.

Trusting Jesus comes before the healing. It’s while we’re going that we realize all that Jesus has done under the skin.

How does trusting Jesus for healing change your outlook today?



Wednesday

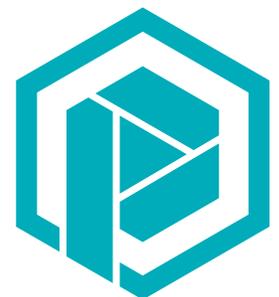
Luke 17:17–19

What is saving faith? It is comprised of three things, at least. First, we must believe the right things about the true God. The leper believed that Jesus was worthy of worship. So he not only cried out for mercy at the beginning but returned in worship at the end of his healing. He believed Jesus was more than a magician. He knew that God was present in Jesus to grant salvation. Second, saving faith is an assurance that what we believe is true. The leper not only acknowledged who Jesus was, he also truly believed in Him. He fell facedown not before an idea of Jesus but before the person of Jesus. His knowledge didn't stay at the surface level. It affected His worship.

Third, the leper acknowledged the personal implications of faith in Jesus. He returned in worship to Jesus not only because he knew the right things and accepted the truth of those ideas, but because he trusted Jesus and relied upon Him. His newfound wellness led him to fall down at Jesus' feet. His mind, will, body, and affections all pointed toward Jesus.

Saving faith is just that—looking to the whole Christ for your whole need, and knowing He alone can save.

How does salvation by faith set Christianity apart from all other religions and worldviews?



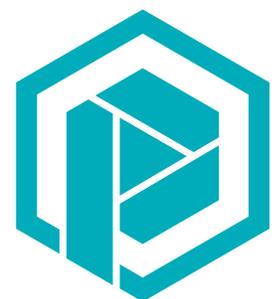
Thursday

Luke 7:20–21

God's kingdom is different than the Pharisees expected. They were looking for a military and political revolution. Jesus was a meek and humble king. They wanted a strong arm of justice, burying his enemies beneath his feet. Jesus won through weakness, dying upon the cross. The kingdom did not come in observable ways. It came like a treasure in a field so many passed over. It came quietly but triumphantly. It wasn't visible all at once. No one could spot it coming on the horizon. But it came truly and powerfully.

God wins over the long haul. History bends toward His glory. In the end, of all the kingdoms of the earth, only God's will remain strong and sure, filled with those too weak for the kingdoms of this world but just perfect for God's. Those like the leper will be there, standing in a glorified body never to contract disease or experience death again. He who was cast out in this world was brought into God's. No one notices that because weakness doesn't win in this world. But in God's kingdom, it's the only way inside. His is the only kingdom where the last are first. No wonder no one notices.

How does knowing God accepts the weak into His kingdom free you to live before Him now?



Friday

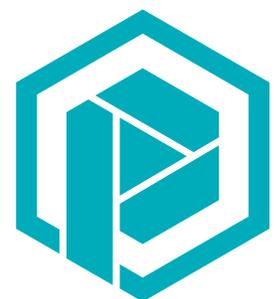
Luke 7:22–37

Who would have thought the way God would win would be through rejection and suffering? How could the all-holy God above subject Himself to the horrors of crucifixion? Nonetheless, God planned to conquer this world through the cross. When God came down in Jesus Christ, the mission was set, the path was determined, the Son of Man came to die at the hands of His own people.

It should not surprise us that to save our life we must lose it. God's kingdom is an upside-down one where losing is winning, dying is living, and suffering leads to salvation.

It may look today like God's kingdom is losing, as if no one even knows it's here. But do not fear. The Son of Man is coming again. We don't know when it will be, but we know as sure as Jesus came once that He will also come again. And when He comes, His kingdom will reign forever and ever, and that rejection and suffering that was His once will be His enemy's forever.

How does knowing that Jesus was rejected and suffered help you understand the way God's kingdom is at work in this world?



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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 15 | APRIL 11-15



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

Monday

Mark 5:1–20

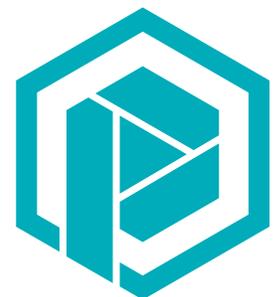
The graveyard is typically a place to avoid, especially if a crazy person lives there, breaking every chain by which he is bound and smashing the shackles. But it is for such people that Jesus came. He came not for the well but the sick. He came for those bound and shackled, to break the ultimate chains and shackles of the flesh, the world, and the devil.

So when Jesus approached the “Legion” of demons inhabiting this poor man, He waged war against all that stands against us. We see that even the demons are under His authority. They had to ask permission to go into the pigs. Jesus has the power to undo our deepest oppression and set free those bound by the darkest of powers.

When such a force comes into the world and sets the captives free, word gets around. Those who witnessed that day’s events couldn’t keep it to themselves. They had to go and tell. When others came, they found the crazy man in his right mind. That’s what the grace of Jesus does. He restores our right mind. He places peace into our tortured souls. He casts out the evil that binds us. He removes the impure by the power of his word.

When Jesus sets us free, we take His gospel to the world. We go and tell what the Lord has done and how He has had mercy.

Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus’ power to break chains and make us whole?



Tuesday

Mark 5:21–24

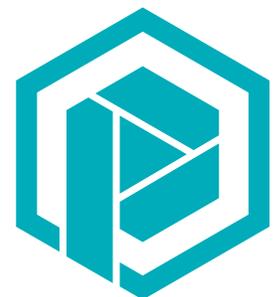
Life isn't easy. Things happen. Look at Jairus. Verse 22 says he was one of the synagogue leaders. He was a community leader. Everyone knew him. He was well off. He probably didn't need a lot from others. Then his daughter got sick. And as time went on, she grew worse and worse until she was at the point of death. At that time, Jesus had arrived in town.

Jairus decided to run to Jesus for help. He fell at His feet and said his daughter was dying. His plea was urgent. His little girl was at death's door. Hospice wasn't just called in; they were preparing for the final moments. He needed Jesus' help immediately.

That's the beginning of biblical faith—simply looking at Jesus as the one who can help and coming to Him. But often it takes overwhelming circumstances before we're ready to come. We must become desperate enough to come to Jesus. It means letting go of pride. It's saying to yourself, "I can't do this. I need supernatural help."

Jesus went with Jairus, and He'll go with you too when you need Him.

How do overwhelming circumstances draw us to Jesus? How does this story reassure us that Jesus will help us during such times?



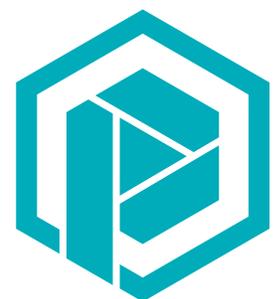
Wednesday

Mark 5:25–29

For twelve years, she suffered a constant flow of blood. It made her ceremonially unclean, preventing her from worshiping in the temple. She was a social outcast. Even if she was once well to do, she's now destitute. She was flat broke from doctor bills and no better for it. She had tried all that medicine had to offer and suffered not only from the disease but also from the cures. She was at the end of her rope. And as she sat in the street, she saw the crowd coming her way, and the one whom she's heard about is among them.

Her circumstances were beyond her control. She was desperate for help beyond what this world could offer. Her circumstances summoned faith from within. She ran toward Jesus, whom she believed could heal her when no one else could. She reached out her hand, but her touch didn't make Him unclean (as the Law of Moses said it would). Instead, Jesus' power made her clean. When we come by faith to Jesus with our defiling disease—no matter how unclean we may be—His grace will wash us clean. He will make us well again.

What is keeping you from trusting the healing power of Jesus today?



Thursday

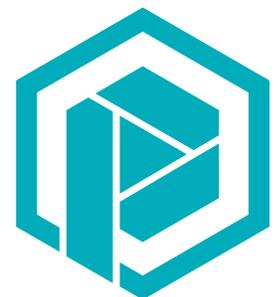
Mark 5:30–34

When we come to Jesus by faith and reach out for His healing, He will turn to us in His grace. He wants a conversation with us—not to shame us but to assure us. He wants to hear the whole truth like a father who wants to comfort his child after a long, difficult journey. He wants the whole truth because He wants to give whole healing. And when we tell it all, He gives us His peace. Why? Because we've come to Him in faith, in total trust. When we come to Jesus as our only hope, He accepts that as faith worthy of new life.

The truth this woman lives inside now is bigger than anything she could have ever imagined. This woman will, from this moment on, always be free. She will have a new relationship with Jesus—a relationship she could not have had if she had not come to Him in total honesty. From this moment on, because of her relationship with Jesus, she will now have access to His power forever. She will no longer need a hurried touch in a crowd. She will have moment-by-moment access to His power, to His grace, to His mercy, to His cleansing, to Him.

She didn't treat Jesus like the crowds did. She didn't touch Him as they did. She treated Him as her only hope. She touched Him by faith. And now she has Him by faith forever.

How does the gospel assure us that honesty with Jesus sets us free?



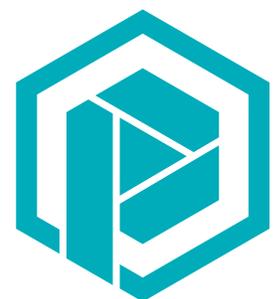
Friday

Mark 5:35–43

Jesus is not asking us to muster up a certain amount of faith for healing. That's putting the results Jesus gives above the Giver. That won't do. We're all going to die one day. Physical healing isn't enough. We need more. Jesus is asking for more than trust in Him as a healer in the here and now. Jesus is asking for trust in Him forever, for everything, for all our happiness and joy.

What Jesus was saying to Jairus is what He is saying to us today: it's not the amount of faith that saves but instead the object of faith. It's not a strong or weak faith in Jesus that saves. It's faith in Jesus that saves. Period. The only amount of faith we need is enough to bring us to Jesus.

How does relying on the strength of your faith to save you impair your vision of God's grace?

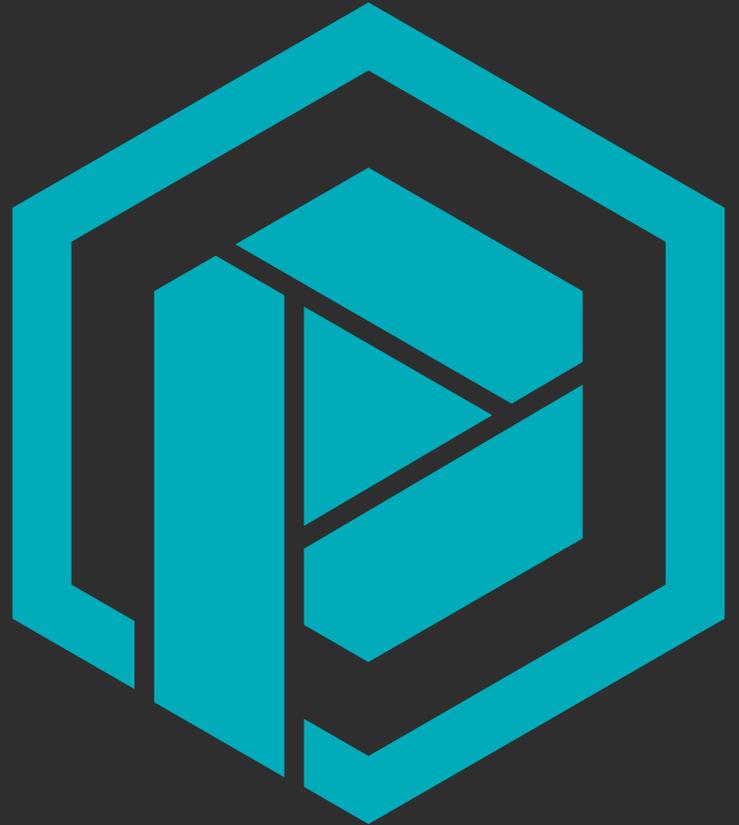


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 16 | APRIL 18-22

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

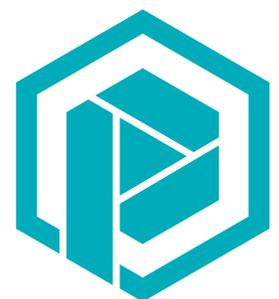
Monday

John 20:1-10

The writers of the Gospels did not brush over the blemishes of the early disciples. Instead, they described their real responses to the crucifixion and resurrection. In John 20, we see this with Mary Magdalene, as well as Peter and John, and later Thomas (vv. 24-25).

These forthright descriptions of the first disciples affirm the reliability of the Bible. Someone making up a story would have been more likely to portray themselves as heroes. Instead, we find genuine portraits of the flawed, everyday people whom Jesus called His disciples. This is simply another reason we can rest confidently that the Jesus we follow truly is risen. We can also be encouraged that God can use us, too, in spite of our doubts and flaws.

How does it encourage you to know that the disciples had struggles and doubts, too?



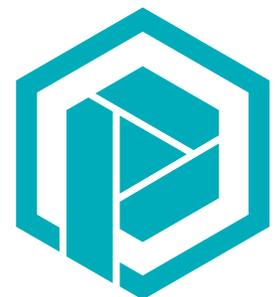
Tuesday

John 20:11–13

Neither angels nor an empty tomb were enough for Mary. She still assumed that Jesus' body had been stolen (John 20:2,13). She wanted to be near her Savior, but did not know where His body lay. She was committed to Jesus, and His death brought her to despair.

We are like Mary in a lot of ways, and this instance was no exception. Just as she was failing to live in light of Jesus' resurrection, so often we fail to live as if Jesus has truly risen. We don't walk in hope, but in defeat. Rather than look down in despair, we need to listen for the voice of our living Savior in Scripture.

What steps can you take this week to allow the reality of Jesus' resurrection to affect the way you live each day?



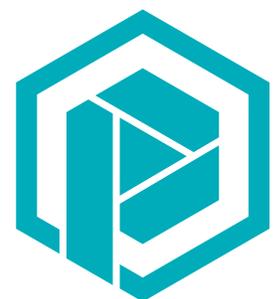
Wednesday

John 20:14–16

“My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). This is how Jesus described His followers’ capacity to hear His voice and obey it. In John 20:16, we see a concrete example of this. Mary, one of Jesus’ precious sheep, heard Jesus say her name, and she knew with certainty that the Good Shepherd was speaking to her.

While Jesus has not verbally called us by name like He did Mary here, we know that God has called us into relationship with Him. Despite the sorrow you may endure in this life, you can trust that the risen Lord will meet you in your moment of despair. His voice brings comfort and hope. Like Mary, once we’ve heard Jesus say our name, we should feel compelled to respond with joy and obedience.

How can your relationship with Jesus bring you joy even in difficult seasons?



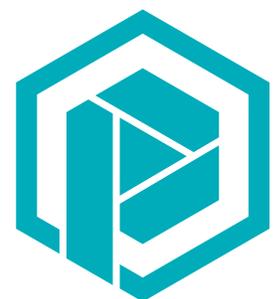
Thursday

John 20:17–18

“Should I stay or should I go?” Yes, those are the lyrics to the famous song by The Clash released in 1982, but it also might have been the question Mary was asking herself as the risen Jesus stood before her. Yet, Jesus, who so often did what seems counterintuitive to us, directed her not to stay, but instead to go.

Isn't it interesting that the woman who was so desperate and downtrodden about the whereabouts of Jesus' body was so willing to leave Him? This is the effect of encountering the risen Jesus. A true disciple wants to be with Jesus, but also wants to share Jesus with others—and that's exactly what Mary did. Recognizing the risen Jesus led her to be on mission for the risen Jesus.

How often does your desire to cling to Jesus lead to the desire to tell others about Him? Are you willing to go anywhere and do anything He tells you to do?



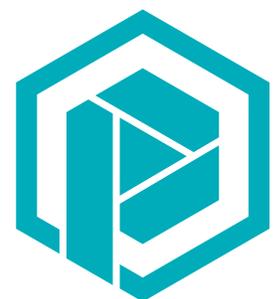
Friday

John 20:19–29

Have you ever noticed that most, if not all, of the resurrection appearances recorded in the Gospels take place on the first day of week? This should make our Sunday gatherings all the more meaningful. By joining our brothers and sisters in Christ for corporate worship on “the first day of the week” (John 20:19), we are participating in a tradition that reaches back to the earliest disciples to whom Jesus appeared on that first Easter morning.

Every time we make an effort to meet together with fellow Christians on Sunday mornings, we need to keep in perspective that it is more than just a religious routine. We are gathering to hear from the risen Jesus through word, and confess together, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus’ resurrection ignited a movement that continues to blaze to this day. As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us (John 20:21). We who believe are blessed, and one day our eyes will see Him again. Until that day, let’s live with faith.

Are you living the “sent” life that Jesus has called us to? How will you live for Jesus’ mission in this season of your life?

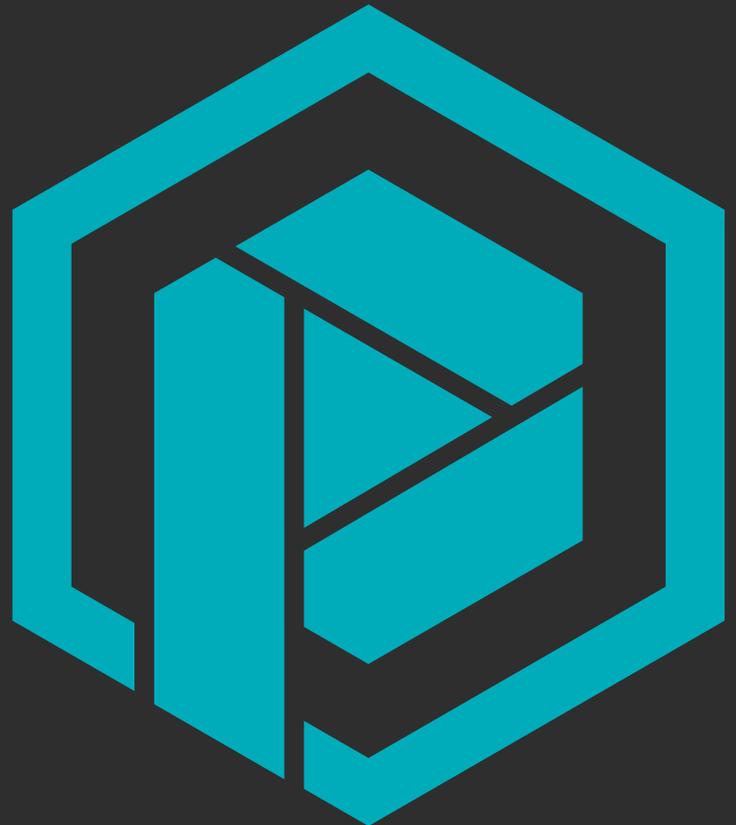


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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 17 | APRIL 25-29



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

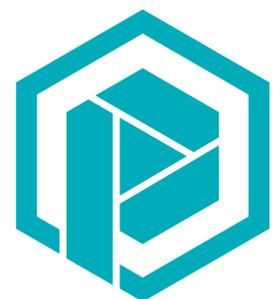
Monday

John 5:1–7

Jesus approached the disabled man and asked a curious question: Do you want to get well? The answer seems obvious—of course, he wanted to get well! Why else would he be laying there at the side of a pool that offered the hope of healing? Why wouldn't the man want to get well? He didn't respond with sarcasm but perhaps with a hint of newfound hope that finally someone—Jesus—had come along, noticed him, and would help him get in the water when it was time. Here he was, gazing longingly at the pool when the One who could make him whole stood right in front of him.

We can fixate on things that promise to bring wholeness to our lives. We may even try to get Jesus—or use Him—to help us achieve those things. Yet Jesus always stands in front of us and asks the same question: Do you want to get well? Well, do you, or do you want to remain where you are, longing for things that won't satisfy?

What are those things in your life that distract you from the Savior and Healer who calls to you even now?



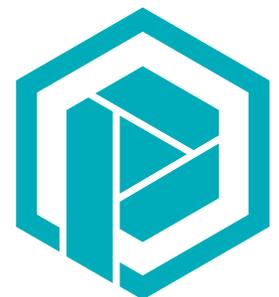
Tuesday

John 5:8–15

By and large, most Jews were sticklers for keeping the Sabbath. It was a key command from the Lord (on par with circumcision) for keeping the Jews separate from the pagan peoples who surrounded them. The Pharisees and teachers of the law through the generations had drawn out a lengthy list of what constituted as “work” so they wouldn’t break God’s law and work on the Sabbath. They were worried that God would become angry with them and punish them, just as He had their ancestors when the people of Israel and Judah were first exiled from the promised land. But their lengthy list mostly included human-invented regulations that exceeded the intent of God’s law in the first place, such as carrying a mat from one place to another.

So when the Jews saw the healed man walking with his mat, they would have been infuriated, and then even more so upon finding out that someone had told him to carry his mat! But they missed the miraculous forest for their human-centered trees. They missed that their promised Savior had come in the flesh in Jesus.

What are some laws or expectations that you are living up to in your own strength instead of obeying Jesus’ commands by faith?



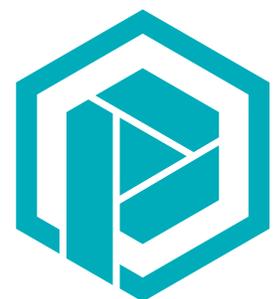
Wednesday

John 5:16–23

“What do you do with Jesus?” It is easy in the world today, maybe even expected to a degree, to believe in God, or a god. Some people are atheists, but most people hold some form of religious belief structure in which God or a higher power reigns prominently. So, when talking to most people about matters of faith, most will probably say they believe in God and that things are good between them.

But what if you asked these same people, “What do you do with Jesus?” You may get any of the following responses: “He was a great man”; “He was a good teacher”; “He was a martyr for His message of love and grace”; “He was a crazy man”; “He was the figment of some people’s imagination”; “He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.” According to Jesus Himself, what you do with Jesus is what you do with God. In other words, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through faith in Jesus (John 14:6).

How should Jesus’ words in this passage affect the way you speak with people about God, matters of faith, and Jesus, in particular, as you share the gospel?



Thursday

John 5:24–30

Did Jesus preach the gospel—salvation by grace—or a salvation by works? If we just take His words in verses 28–29, we easily could come to the conclusion that Jesus determines our future state in eternity based on our good or wicked deeds. But we must remember that these verses must be read in context, which includes the surrounding passage but also the entire Gospel of John.

In the immediate context, verse 24 connects eternal life with hearing the word of Jesus and believing in the God who sent Jesus. Salvation comes by faith, just as the gospel proclaims. In the larger context of John's Gospel, Jesus answers a question posed to Him about how people can do the works of God. His answer: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:29). In other words, the work of God that we must do is believe in Jesus. Works are important, but all of Scripture shows that good works flow out of the work of God in a heart of faith (John 3:21).

What role do good works have in your life: Are they efforts to earn God's approval or an overflow of your heart of faith? How will you know the difference?



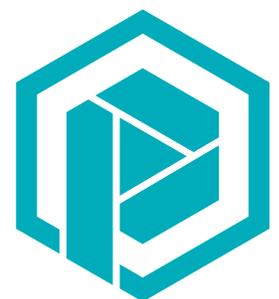
Friday

John 5:31–47

Jesus boldly confronted the people who wanted to kill Him because of His claims about being the Son of God. He minced no words about His identity, His unity with the Father, and His centrality in the work of salvation, eternal life, and resurrection. Yet He didn't berate His accusers. Instead, He let the Scriptures speak and confront them for their unbelief.

The Scriptures Jesus spoke of were not the New Testament but the Old Testament. He declared without hesitation that the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings testified about His person and His work (v. 39). Eternal life is not found in the Scriptures apart from their testimony to the Giver of eternal life—Jesus. Furthermore, Moses was the most influential figure of the Hebrew Scriptures; he was God's prophet to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians and the mediator of the law of God to the people. But for all his greatness, he too pointed to one greater than himself (v. 46; Deut. 18:15–19).

How does Jesus' words challenge your understanding and perspective regarding the Old Testament?

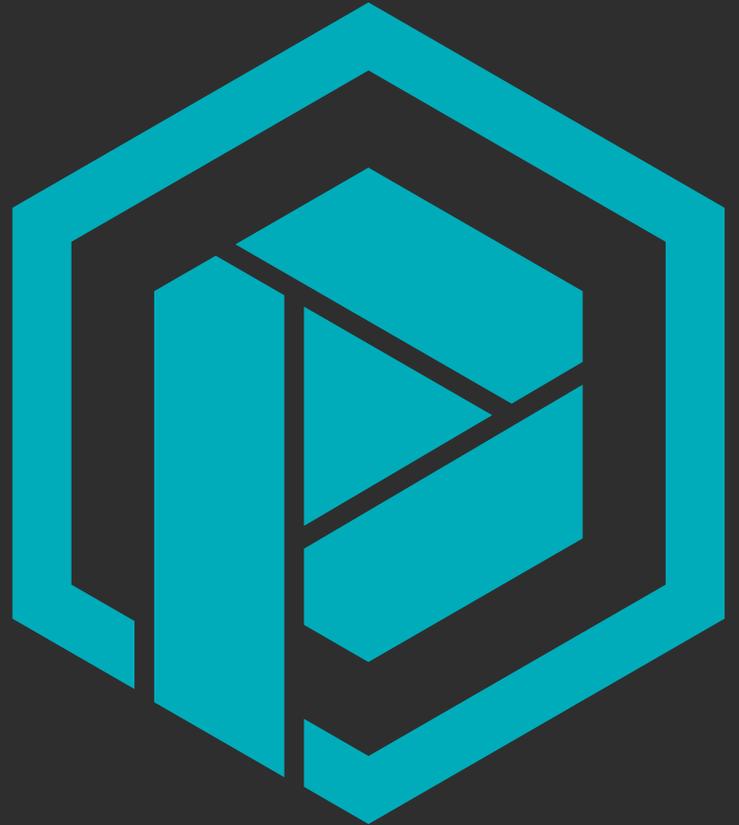


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SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 18 | MAY 2-6



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

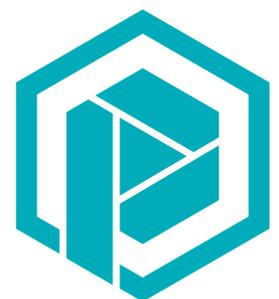
Monday

John 9:1–7

Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about the blind man wasn't what they expected. They asked Him for a cause, but Jesus responded in terms of purpose—this man had been blind all of his life so that the works of God would be displayed in him. God used the healing of this blind man to reveal that Jesus is the light of the world, to confront the Pharisees in their blindness, and to bring the man born blind to salvation.

Christians aren't promised freedom from suffering in the world, nor are we often given a reason for our suffering. But we do have the hope and assurance that for the believer, our suffering has purpose in the hands of a sovereign God. As Romans 8:28 reminds us, all things, good and terrible, are being worked together by a gracious Father for our good and His glory.

In what ways have you seen God at work in your suffering, past and present?



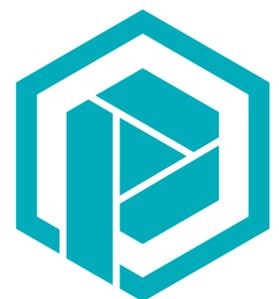
Tuesday

John 9:8–12

The neighbors of this man couldn't believe their own eyes. They wondered if this man with sight was really the same blind man they knew or if he were just someone who looked a lot like him. The encounter with Jesus had so drastically changed the man born blind that those around him couldn't help but notice. The witness of the Gospels is that those who had a supernatural encounter with Jesus left the interaction significantly changed.

Following Jesus by faith will produce indelible changes in our lives that others should notice. The way we live, the way we speak, and how we interact with others will all be affected as we follow Christ. And as others wonder at the changes in our lives, we're able to share about the One who changed our lives.

What is one way your life has been different since following Jesus?



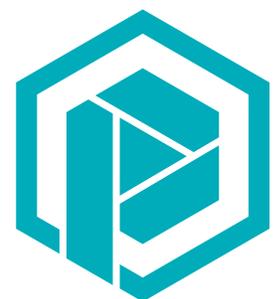
Wednesday

John 9:13–28

The Pharisees were trying to get to the bottom of this miracle in the man who had been blind. They interrogated him about what happened. They asked him who he thought Jesus was, but they didn't like his answer, so they interrogated his parents next. Afraid, his mother and father deflected to their son, so the Pharisees went again to ask the man what really happened. His response was simple: "I was blind, now I see." (v. 25). At that, they began to ridicule him.

This man wasn't well versed in theology, nor could he tell you much about Jesus. What he did know was what Jesus had done and how that had changed him. This is at the heart of what it means to witness to others about Jesus. Though they are helpful to have, we ultimately don't need all the answers. What we need is a testimony about how Jesus has changed our life.

How would you answer someone who asked you what Jesus has done for you?



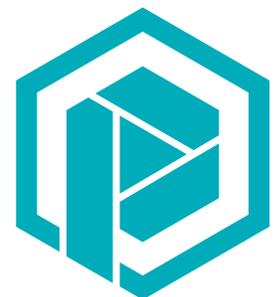
Thursday

John 9:29–34

Things seemed to be going in the right direction for the man who had been born blind because he wasn't blind anymore! After a lifetime of hearing people talk about sight but never experiencing it himself, he now could see what his parents looked like, the majestic rise of trees, and the synagogue he worshiped in. This was probably the best day of his life.

Then the religious leaders excommunicated him from the synagogue because he said Jesus had come from God. This man's young faith brought rejection from his neighbors, his leaders, and perhaps even his parents. Scripture doesn't promise that following Jesus means life gets easier. Often it means it gets harder. Jesus is the light of the world who brought love, grace, and healing, and yet, He was crucified, and His followers should expect the same hatred and persecution Jesus experienced from the world (John 15:18–21). You may be rejected in this life because of your faith, but God's promise is that there is joy and a future hope because Jesus was rejected for us.

What promises of God can you cling to when trials and suffering come?



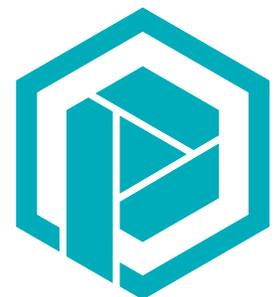
Friday

John 9:35–41

Upon hearing that the man He healed had been thrown out of the synagogue, Jesus went and found the man so that He could reveal Himself as the Messiah. Jesus was on a divine mission, walking toward the cross, and yet, He went back to this man who had been cut off religiously and socially. The same Jesus who healed the man without prompting now sought him out and gave him true spiritual sight to see Jesus for who He really is. Jesus doesn't just care about performing miracles; He cares that people see Him as true light.

Our true need isn't just physical needs being met. Our true need is a spiritual need—to see Jesus rightly and worship Him. We mustn't neglect physical needs, but as we work to alleviate suffering and meet the needs of those around us, we ought always to point people to Jesus.

In what ways can you meet the physical needs of the people you are sharing the gospel with?

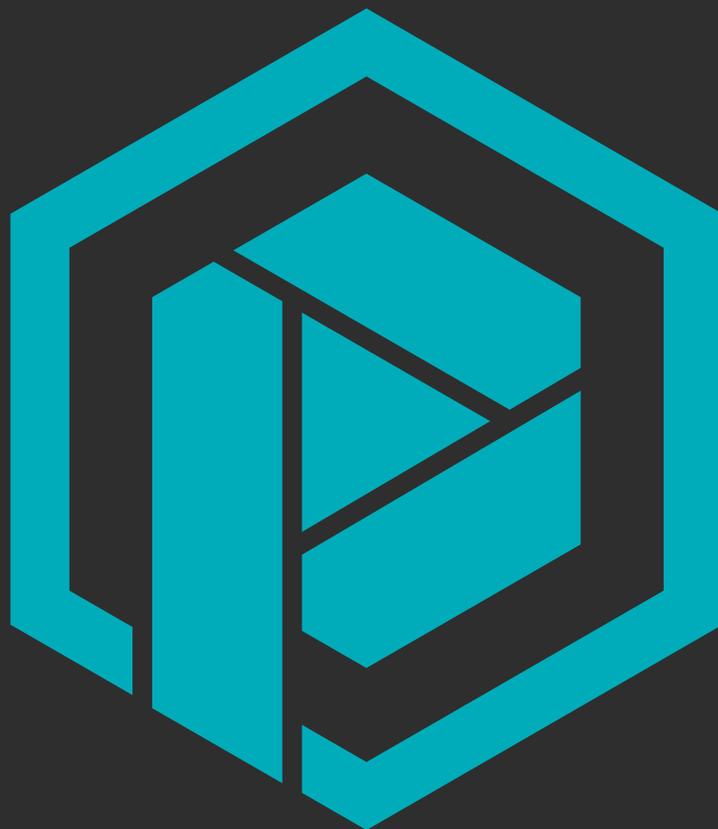


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 19 | MAY 9-13

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

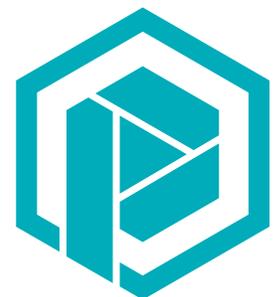


Monday

Genesis 1:31; Psalm 19:1

“Very good!” When you watch the sun rise, throw a ball in a field, or feel the wind against your skin, do you think to yourself that God’s creation is “very good”? God does! He created the sun, the skies, the grass in the fields, the wind – everything – and He calls it “very good”! God designed everything with a purpose, a purpose to proclaim His glory and to make His name known. The sunrise in the morning is a declaration that God creates new beginnings. The fields, mountains and lakes display His beauty and creativity. The wind against your skin is a reminder that God is powerful and present. As you go about your day, take notice of God’s creation and that it is indeed “very good”!

How have you already seen the goodness of God this morning?

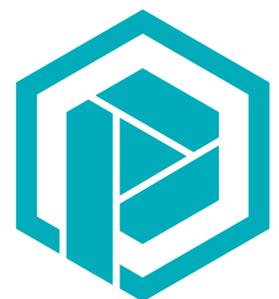


Tuesday

Genesis 1:27

God declared His creation “very good,” and that creation includes you. God designed you with intention and identity. You are created in His own image, the image of God! Your identity is found in God alone. How often do you find yourself questioning why you are the way you are and wanting to be different? Instead of trying to identify as someone else, find your identity in God! God says you are chosen, holy, made new, loved, victorious and transformed (just to name a few). God designed us to be in relationship with Him, to live at peace with others and ourselves, and to love others well.

Take a moment and write three things that God created in you and thank Him for them.

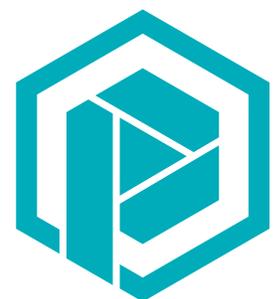


Wednesday

Romans 3:23, 6:23

Sin is anything we say, think, or do that goes against God. Sin is when we do things our own way instead of God's. We are all victims of sin and the consequences that follow our sin, which is ultimately death. But, in God's grace, we can experience the freedom of eternal life here on earth and in eternity forever. To experience this freedom, we must surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, making him Lord over our lives.

Do you want to live a life enslaved to sin or in the freedom of Christ? Why did you choose the one you chose?

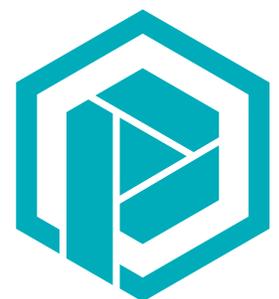


Thursday

Romans 1:25; Proverbs 14:12

What does the word *brokenness* mean?

Our world and everyone in it are currently in a state of brokenness because of our sin and the sin of others. Brokenness occurs when we believe “truths” other than the truth of God. When we try to escape brokenness with a GPA, an accolade, a first chair, a job, a dating relationship, a championship or title, popularity, drugs, pornography, social media or laziness, it only leads us to a position of even more brokenness. The only way to escape the brokenness of this world is to surrender your life to Jesus Christ. God continues to transform, recreate, renew, and restore the lives of those who trust and believe in Him. So even though the world remains broken until Christ returns, the believer experiences new life, fresh faith, and hope for each day.

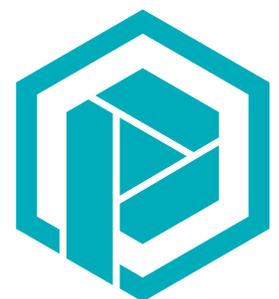


Friday

John 3:16; Colossians 2:14

People may have times in their life when they feel anxious, depressed, hopeless, worried, alone, fearful, abandoned, weak or worthless until they encounter the love of Jesus, surrender their life to Him, and experience peace, joy, comfort, hope, confidence, love, strength and purpose. Do you have a story such as that? Jesus is the Son of God who lived a perfect life on earth. He died on a Cross to erase your sin and brokenness. He came back to life and walked out of the grave three days later so you, too, can move from death to life. You become a child of God when you repent of your sin and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The Bible tells us there are two types of people, those in brokenness and those in Christ.

Where do you find yourself, and where do you want to be?

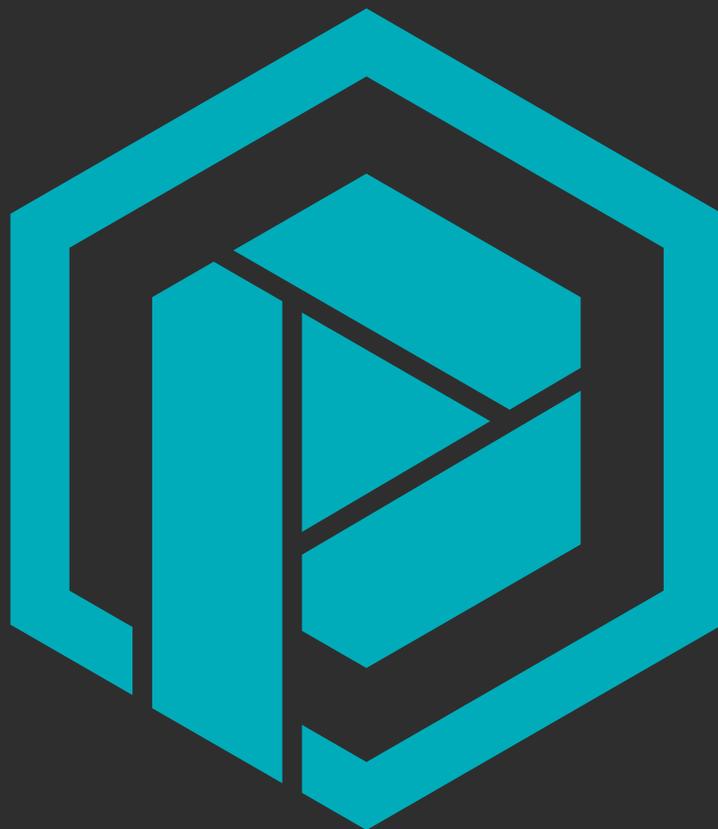


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 20 | MAY 16-20

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



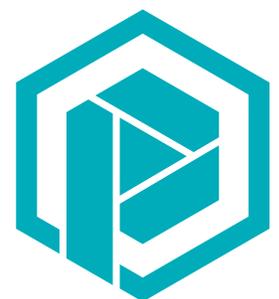
Monday

Mark 1:15

Sin distorts God's truth and because of our sin nature, we may publicly admit that we are prone to sin, but we really don't believe it. We just don't feel the weight of our sin *because of sin*. Jesus warned that there would be "believing unbelievers" until He returned. Those who profess Christ outwardly but are far from Him inwardly. True repentance is to change your heart and mind (inward) regarding both yourself and God. That change then affects how you live (outward) your life. The fact is that the Christian life should be a life of daily repentance. Evangelist Shane Pruitt explained that there are two levels of repentance. Initially we repent unto salvation when God allows our eyes to be opened to the Gospel and our need for Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. But then there is the act of daily repentance because even though we are saved, we are not without sin. That is what makes His grace so beautiful. Grace is not just pardon, but it is power to avoid what dishonors God. Our growing love for Christ should give us a deep hatred for what nailed Him to the Cross. Do you hate the sin you are struggling with? "You will never turn from a sin you don't hate" (Bible teacher Jen Wilkin).

What sin struggles are you tempted to excuse, or even love, in your own life?

Is there an absence of repentance in your life?



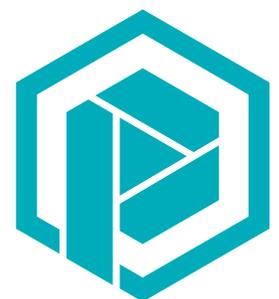
Tuesday

Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 10:9

The historical facts about Jesus are undeniable. But Jesus desires our heart. Repentance and belief go together. Without true repentance, there is no salvation. True repentance reveals to us our fallen condition that required the brutal death of Jesus to save us. It is not just saying a phrase or words, it's a genuine conviction that draws you to understand (believe) that you are broken and far from a holy God in need of a Savior to bridge that gap. True faith/belief will always follow and produce fruit that supports what you profess. What we really believe is how we live our life. When we truly believe in the power of the Gospel, the life we had loved before will be ruined for us and the light of Christ will drive our desire to honor Him with our whole life. Our identity will no longer be in “the sin we battle but in the Savior we embrace” (Christian author Rosaria Butterfield).

What is the difference between works and fruit? Why is that important?

Take a moment to pray for God to reveal the areas in your life in which you struggle to believe or trust in Him.



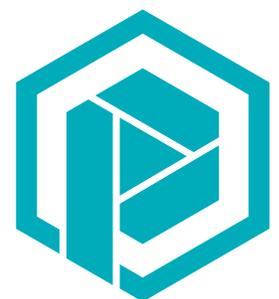
Wednesday

Philippians 2:13

Broken things and people are a result of sin. God's answer to a broken world is Jesus. He sent His Son to be broken so that we might be healed once and for all. Once we repent and believe, the Holy Spirit guides us to recover and seek His design. Only when we fully surrender to Him can we begin to recover and be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

This is impossible in our own strength. We go from wretch to redeemed instantly, but practically we grow in spiritual maturity over time. A willing spirit trusting in His strength is the only way this can happen. Healing, recovering of our desire to sin, only comes as we grow more in love with the Gospel and less in love with ourselves/world. Our imperfections will never override God's promises. Remember that we are being transformed. God's grace will widen the distance between our life before Christ and our new life, trusting in His finished work to live a life worthy of His calling.

If you have trusted in Christ, what sin struggles or desires have you seen God radically change in you or someone else?



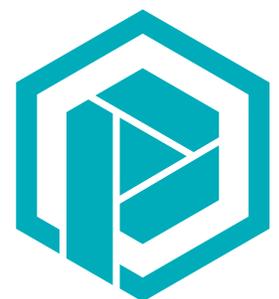
Thursday

Ephesians 2:10

By God's grace, mercy and love for us, we get a do-over. God changes our hearts and minds so that we begin to pursue His beautiful design as a response to His love for us. Remember, God saved you; we cannot save ourselves. Good works are not a way we gain God's favor, but an outpouring of worship for God's favor on us. As the verse states, we *should* walk in them. But this isn't natural to us; it is supernatural and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We went from enemy to workmanship (emphasis on the Creator, not the creation as with fine art). He created us with value and purpose. He redeemed us with the precious blood of Christ. Through sanctification (growing in holiness), He prepares us for service to pursue Him and be His hands and feet to the world.

What does it look like, in your life, to pursue God and His design?

How has God been pursuing you?



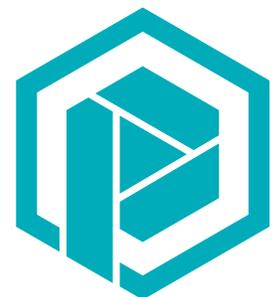
Friday

John 3:36; Acts 17:22–34

The devos this week have exposed our brokenness, the steps needed to repent, believe, recover and pursue Christ. So, what if you say no to the Gospel? According to John 3:36, then the wrath of God remains on you. We seldom discuss God's wrath, because in today's world the idea of wrath doesn't fit into the narrative we desire. It's too intolerant, harsh, offensive and judgmental. A small view of God will keep you from understanding how wretched your sin against Him is and the incredible act of mercy it took to save your soul. The brutal death of Jesus was God's love in action to spare you and me from what we rightfully deserve. That power, that amazing love, demands humble surrender.

Author and pastor JD Greear, in his book *Not God Enough*, described God's wrath from the safety of the Cross being like "watching a tornado pass in front of you from the safety of a cave. You may be safe, but you still tremble before the awesome power of the tornado, a power that could sweep you away if you stepped out of the cave for even a second." Make no mistake; you will either serve God as a wonderful example or a terrible warning to the world in which we live. True, authentic, saving faith begins with awestruck fear of God and His power to overcome sin and death.

When you imagine Jesus on the Cross, taking on the wrath of God the Father, is it personal or do you just hear the crowds screaming "crucify Him"?

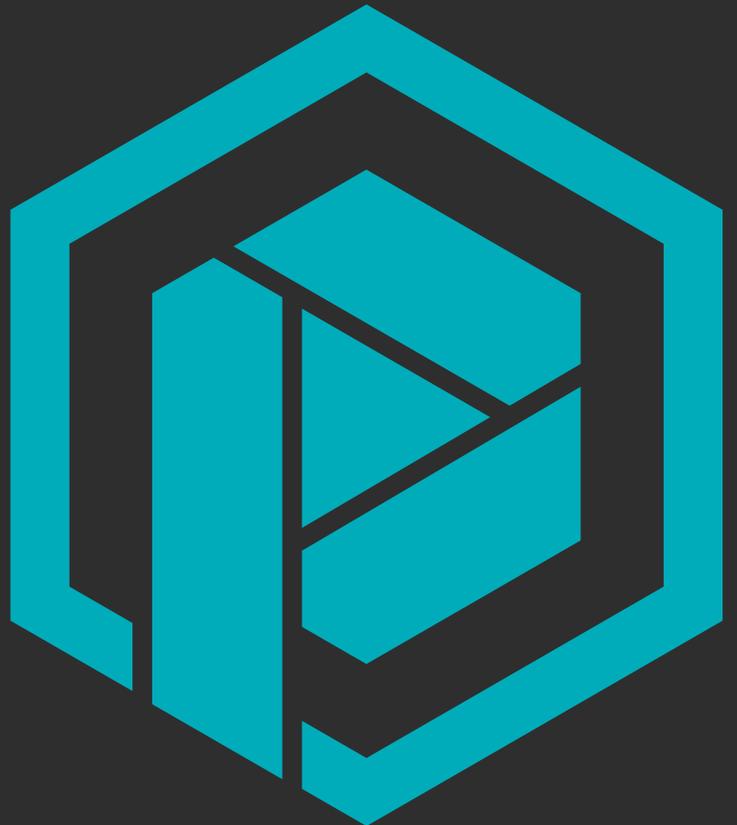


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 21 | MAY 23-27

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



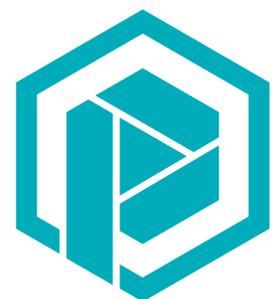
Monday

Ezekiel 36:26–27; 1 Peter 1:23, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:9

For us to truly understand what it means to be a Christian, we need to deeply understand salvation. God’s Word teaches us these doctrines (beliefs) to help us stand firm in our faith. We’re going to first look at the doctrine of regeneration. This is the supernatural work of God – you and I can’t save ourselves, and we can’t make ourselves “born again.” We realize that we were spiritually “dead” before we accepted Jesus. When we accept Him as our Savior, God transforms us and truly makes us new! We are now “alive in Christ”! This means that even when we physically die, we will spiritually be with the Lord forever because we have been regenerated (reformed; reborn) and in Christ, we are a new creation.

What about this truth is exciting to you? What is hard for you to wrap your mind around?

Why do you think it’s so important for us to know that God is the One who brings about our new life in Him?



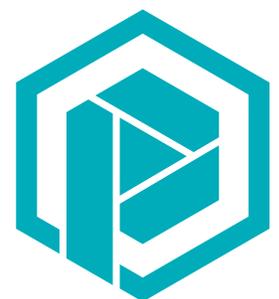
Tuesday

Romans 3:24; 5:1; Galatians 2:16

Yesterday we saw that we must be regenerated, or made new, to be a follower of Jesus. How does God make this possible? The doctrine of justification is God's righteous act of removing the condemnation, guilt and penalty of sin, by grace, while at the same time, declaring the unrighteous to be righteous, through faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice. Whoa! What does this mean? On the Cross, Jesus took the full weight of our sin and received what we deserved so we could be justified by His righteousness! The moment we accept Jesus as our Savior, we are accepting His gift of grace and mercy. We are declared righteous (or good), not because of anything we do, but because of what Jesus has done!

How does the doctrine of justification set Christianity apart from all other religions?

Spend time thanking God for His gift of salvation through Jesus that justifies you.



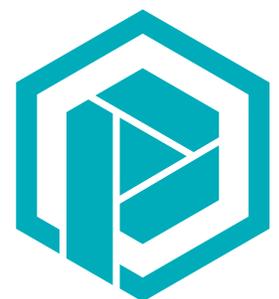
Wednesday

1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13: 20–21; Galatians 5: 16–18

The doctrines of regeneration and justification are only through God's power. We cannot save ourselves. The doctrine of sanctification, then, is our response to what God has done through Jesus in each of our lives. We are called to daily become more like Jesus. We seek holiness and righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit because we have already been declared holy through Christ Jesus! We are holy because He is holy. All we do then flows from this truth. We seek to honor the Lord in all we do and practically learn to live out our identity in Christ.

In what areas of your life are you currently being sanctified?

Thank God that you don't have to try to be good enough to make Him love you more. Out of the overflow of love for Him, ask Him to help you reflect Jesus in how you live your life today.

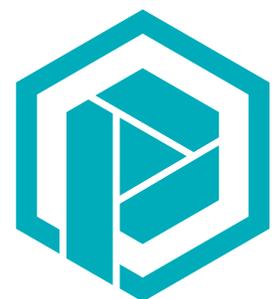


Thursday

1 John 2:4-6; John 6:40

The biblical truth is this – if you have truly been saved, having fully placed your trust in Jesus as your Savior and fully surrendered your life to Him, you are a new creation; you are declared righteous through Jesus; and you are now seeking to live your life to honor Him. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. If you are a new creation in Jesus Christ, you can rest confidently in the doctrine of perseverance. This means that as a follower of Jesus, you will have eternal life with God. Since there was nothing you could do to make you worthy, there is nothing you can do to separate you. This doctrine also teaches us that we will persevere to the end in our faith. Bethlehem College & Seminary Chancellor John Piper says it like this, “The organ of faith is designed to empower joyful obedience. And so, if we want the organ to grow strong – if we want to realize full assurance of hope – we must exercise it. If you exercise your faith, it will be strengthened. Your moral faculties will be well trained in distinguishing good and evil. You will make progress toward maturity.”

Why is it so important for us to persevere in our faith? How does this help you in sharing the Gospel with others?



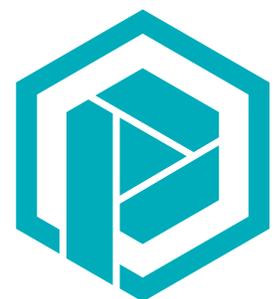
Friday

[Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 15:12–58](#)

If you are a true follower of Jesus, you have eternal hope! God's glory stands in stark contrast to our lives - while we are marred by sin, God is perfect. God's glory, then, is the state in which He dwells and the way in which He is perceived by others. What does the doctrine of glorification mean for us? The first part of our glorification is what happens when we died to sin in this life. Now there will be an eventual physical death in this body, so the second part of our glorification is the truth that we will be raised to new life and a new body with Christ in the new heaven and new earth. This is how we will spend all eternity. In the greatness of the glory of God. We will be in heaven, in the presence of God, for all eternity. This is greater than anything we can ever fully comprehend.

What about the doctrine of glorification gives you comfort and hope?

How can you long for and look to heaven more in your daily life?

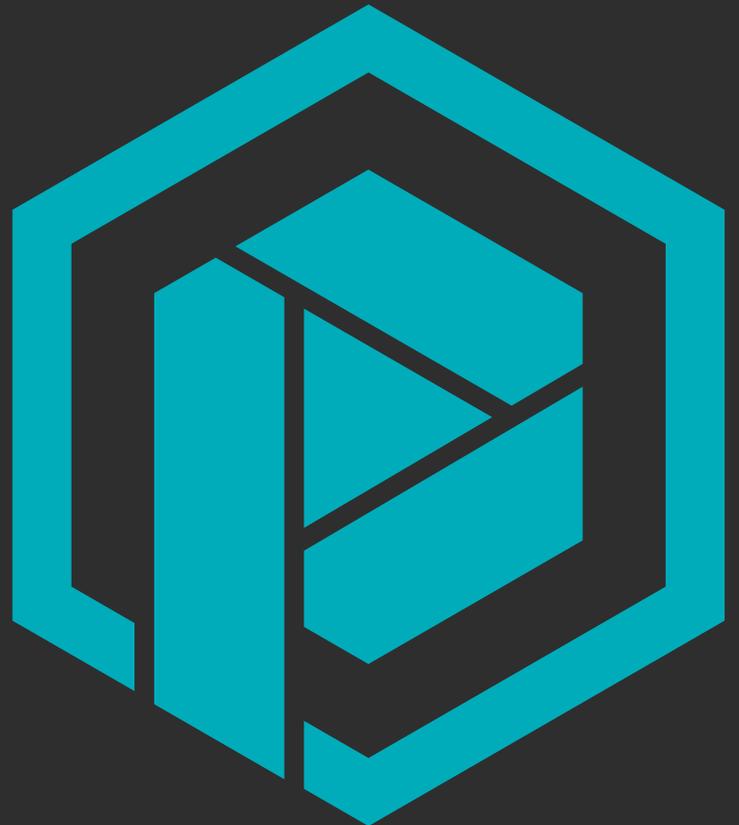


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 22 | MAY 30–JUNE 3

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



Monday

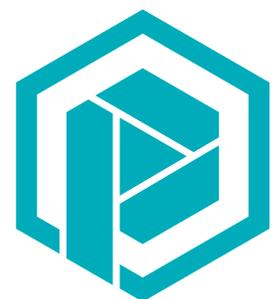
Luke 3:21; Matthew 28:19

Nearly every Sunday in church, we see someone go through the process of baptism. But why? What's the purpose?

In Luke 3, before Jesus began travelling throughout Israel and teaching the Word of God, He first visited John the Baptist to be baptized publicly. After this, all the surrounding people followed in His footsteps and were baptized as well.

Jesus was baptized, but what's that got to do with us? After Jesus rose from the dead, He met with the disciples one last time before ascending into heaven and commanded them to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus commands us not only to declare publicly our faith through baptism, but also to share our faith to all the nations so they can follow in baptism as well.



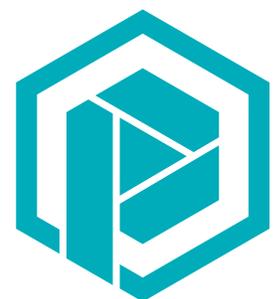
Tuesday

1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4

The Old Testament foretold a Messiah who would save humanity from (eternal or spiritual) death. Jesus came to fulfill these prophecies by His death on the Cross, burial, and Resurrection three days later. Jesus sacrificed His life to die for the sins of all mankind.

The symbolism of baptism is that we are “buried” with Christ as we are submerged under the water and “raised into new life” when we break the surface. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead by the grace of God, so are we to walk in the newness of life gifted to us through Jesus’ sacrifice.

Water is used as a symbol all over the world to represent cleansing and purity. In baptism, it symbolically washes us clean from sin and makes us new just as the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross washed away our sins.

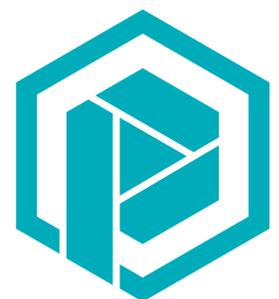


Wednesday

John 14:6; Acts 4:12

A very important thing to keep in mind is that baptism is not the same as salvation. In John 14:6, Jesus reminds us that He is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” and that the only way to get to the Father is through Him. In Acts 4:12, we are told that there is no other name that can bring us salvation except the name of Jesus.

Baptism is an outward expression of your faith in Christ and that you have chosen to follow Him, but first, you must truly believe that He is the one and only way to heaven. Believing that Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and that He rose from the dead three days later is the first step. If you believe that and are not ashamed to say so, the next step is baptism.

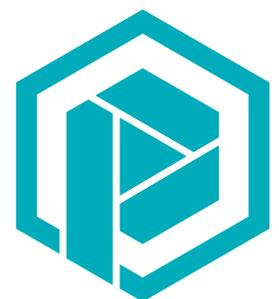


Thursday

Luke 22:19–26

Another important expression of our faith and gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ is by practicing communion. In Luke 22, Jesus spent an evening with His disciples before He was taken by the Romans to be tried. During the meal, He broke a piece of bread and said, “This is my body, which is given for you.” He then took the cup and said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” He commanded the disciples to “do this in remembrance” of Him.

This was called the Last Supper but today, we call it communion. We take a piece of bread, a cup, and think of the sacrifice Christ made on the Cross. We do this in remembrance of Him because we would not have the gift of salvation without His death.

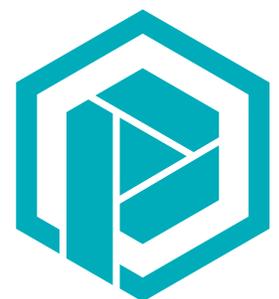


Friday

1 Corinthians 11:28; Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 26:28

Communion reminds us of Christ's sacrifice and what He physically went through as He was crucified on the Cross. In Isaiah 53, it is prophesied that the Messiah would be "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities." We break and eat the bread in remembrance of how His body was broken for us. In Matthew 26:28, Jesus states that His blood was "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." We drink from the cup as a reminder that His blood was spilled to cover all our sins.

Before the death of Christ, believers would have to sacrifice animals frequently to be forgiven of their sins. Through Jesus' death on the Cross, believers no longer must make sacrifices to God for our sins as He was the ultimate sacrifice for all of mankind. We take communion to remind us that we have been forever covered by the blood of Christ.

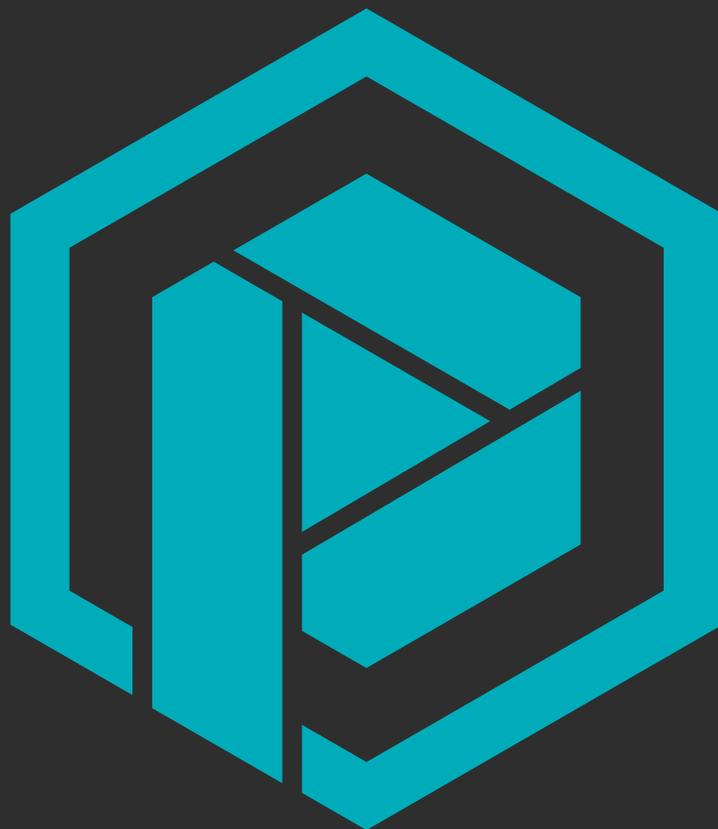


SPRING 2022

DEVO

WEEK 23 | JUNE 6-10

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

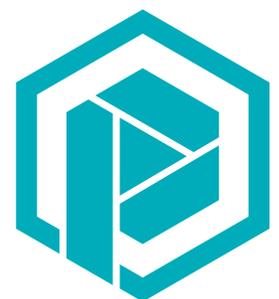


Monday

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 17–19; Luke 21:33; Romans 15:4

Scripture is God breathed. God's Scripture is holy. God's Word – the Scripture – is set apart from any other book you may read. The Scriptures teach us, and as Hebrews 4:12 says, "The word of God is quick and sharper than any double-edged sword." As believers, people who have surrendered their life to Christ look to the Scriptures to learn more about God, His character, to be encouraged. Why? So that we might have endurance and hope throughout our life here on this earth. Let's be encouraged by Scripture today, and for the rest of our days, to live life on the mission to which God has called us.

What's a Scripture you can encourage someone with today? How can you share the hope of Jesus?

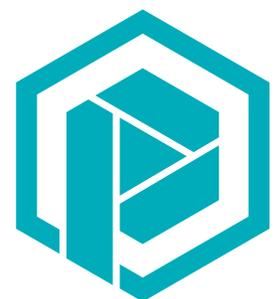


Tuesday

Jeremiah 10:10; 1 Timothy 1:7

God is eternal, omnipresent (all present), omniscient (all knowing) and the only God worthy of our devotion. It's pretty crazy to wrap our tiny minds around how *big* and awesome God is. God is deserving of all our worship. We see time and time again in the Old Testament where people set up idols in place of God almighty. And each time, it didn't end well for them because the God of the universe pursues us, loves us, and He is the eternal king forever. God is our Creator, our protector, and our king ... forever.

What are the things you are placing before God? In what ways are you placing them before God?

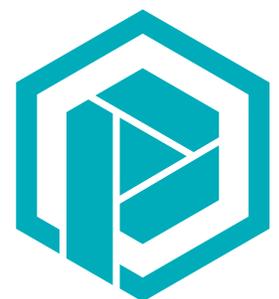


Wednesday

Genesis 1:1–2, 26

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit equal The Trinity. God is our Father; God is the Son (Jesus, sent to earth to live a perfect life, die on the Cross and then rise again three days later to pardon our sin), and the Holy Spirit, who indwells us upon salvation and convicts us and spurs us on to pursue God every day. 1 Corinthians 2:8 says, “None of the rulers of this age knew this wisdom, because if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

How have you seen the Trinity in your life (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit)?

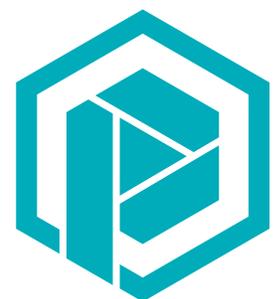


Thursday

Genesis 1:26–30; Ephesians 2:1–22

As we see in the Scriptures today, we are made in God’s image. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” *Wow!* That should *pump* us up!! We are God’s *handiwork!* God created us, and He loves us. Therefore, our lives are important and worthy of something much bigger than we can comprehend. God has a plan for each of us because we are created in His image. He has made us rulers over the fish in the sea, birds in the sky, and animals on the land.

Why did God create humans with a sacredness of life?



Friday

Genesis 2:15–25

God’s design was for us to live in a perfect relationship with Him. God created Adam and said, “It was not good for man to be alone.” Then God created Eve. God then knit them into a union called marriage. From the beginning, God has been very clear on what the family is to be. One man. One woman. Offspring. Our culture tries to tell us that we can make the family whatever we want it to be. Biblically though, there is no other way. There are no other versions. We must remain true to the Word of God and what it calls “family.”

How have you seen the world skew the biblical definition of “family”?

Unfortunately, this will be a present issue as you grow older. Our world continually redefines what the Bible has already clearly defined. We are being pressed on all sides to change our views on so many topics such as gender identity, creation, abortion, etc. However, we must not fall to the pressure but use that pressure to drive us to learn and study why we believe what we believe.

