

SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 25 | JUNE 19TH

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



Series: Jesus the Teacher

Monday - Matthew 5:1-12

So often those who encountered Jesus missed the fact that He was the Messiah because He did not come to earth the way that they had envisioned He would. Where they had expected Him to ride in on a blaze of glory, He was born to a teenage mother in the town of Bethlehem. While they expected Him to perform His signs and wonders to the sound of thunderous applause, He often told those whom He healed to keep their healing quiet. While they expected Him to throw off the yoke of their Greco-Roman society, He was crucified under its reign. In the Beatitudes, Jesus beautifully captures the heart that He displayed here on earth—one of humility, mercy, purity, and peace, one that was willing to mourn, submitting to persecution, and was poor in spirit. And He reminded His listeners that even though these qualities were not often honored among His listeners, through those qualities, they were marked as blessed.

By turning the Jews' expectations of the Messiah on their head, Jesus drew the focus away from the earthly trappings of earthly royalty and toward the marks of royalty that are honored in heaven. He exemplified the type of spirit He required, pointing away from an earthly reward to a heavenly one, promising eternal blessing for those who heed His words.

What are some of the ways you can practically exemplify the Beatitudes in your life?



Tuesday – Matthew 5:13-15

We often hear about how bad salt is for us. It is often linked to hypertension, causing great strain to your heart, brain, arteries, and kidneys. Many people are bent on eliminating as much salt from their diet as possible. But in our fear of excess, we know that completely eliminating all sodium from our diets would be equally detrimental; we need sodium for our muscles, nerves, and blood pressure to function properly.

We need light, too. Without it, our bodies grow weak from Vitamin-D deficiency, our vegetation ceases to grow, and our vision dissipates. Salt and light are a daily earthly necessity, and similarly, the salt and light that come as a result of the good news that Jesus' kingdom is incredibly necessary for a lost and dying world. God chose for His plan of salvation on this earth to include us, and through us, He is glorified before others because our works point them to Him.

How can you be a light in your everyday environment?



Wednesday – Matthew 5:17-48

We are used to seeing the Pharisees as the “bad guys” in the Gospel accounts, but in this passage, Jesus tells His listeners that unless their righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees they would never get into the kingdom of heaven (v. 20).

Given the fact that the Pharisees and scribes prided themselves in obeying every iota of the law, it might seem impossible for our righteousness to surpass theirs, but that is the standard that Jesus has given us. He tells us that murder and adultery begin in the heart (vv. 22,28). Further, He charges us to keep our word (v. 37), turn the other cheek (v. 39), and love our enemies (v. 44).

The Pharisees made a habit of building more laws around Scripture’s laws, but that is not what Jesus is doing here. Instead of adding to the law, He is piercing through to the heart of the law, exposing outward compliance for what it is: a failure to submit to the Lord in our hearts.

How can we tell the difference between outward compliance to the law and inward compliance?



Thursday - Matthew 6:1-34

After He told His listeners that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, Jesus continues to present the practical implications of that righteousness. He shows His listeners that the problem isn't in the righteous acts of the Pharisees, but in the deadened, affirmation-seeking hearts behind those actions. He doesn't ask His listeners to stop praying, giving, or fasting, but, instead models how to do these things in a way that honors God.

Jesus reminds us that our treasure is not here on earth, in the physical gifts we might receive, but instead in heaven. He stills our anxious thoughts, reminding us that our prayers, fasting, and giving are not the things that produce His will, but acts of obedience in the face of a God who cares for us. There are many times when Jesus speaks in parables that mask His meaning for those whose eyes the Spirit has not yet opened, but this passage offers some of His plainest instruction.

In what ways does this part of Jesus' sermon challenge you concretely to exceed the "righteousness of the Pharisees"?



Friday – Matthew 7:1-29

Even the most biblically illiterate person you know can probably tell you that the Bible says not to judge. You may have had the words tossed at you when you're trying to point out sinful behavior, and perhaps you've been driven into silence upon hearing this misapplication of the verse so many times. Matthew 7, however, is far from a lesson on tolerance.

In this same passage, Jesus preaches that some of the very people who believe they are above judgment are judgment-bound. In addition to including the saying “Do not judge, so that you won't be judged,” the passage also holds gems like “Depart from me, you lawbreakers!” (v. 23). Following the verse that is often taken out of context as a condemnation against any kind judging whatsoever, Jesus clarifies that our judgment needs to start with a deep personal look at our own sinfulness. Then He tells us that once we have seen ourselves clearly, we are to turn our eyes to our brothers to judge (with righteous judgment; see John 7:24) their actions—and He tells us exactly the fruit we are to be looking for in both our lives and theirs.

How can we judge ourselves and others with righteous judgment (rather than self-righteous judgment)?



SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 26 | JUNE 26TH

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



Series: Jesus the Teacher

Monday - Luke 9:57-62

Jesus is not a salesman trying to make a commission, nor is He a modern-day influencer trying to gather as many followers as possible. Actually, in this passage, Jesus seems to be almost trying to deter new followers, refusing to sugarcoat the high cost of following Him by painting the bleakest picture possible. He has no desire for fair-weather groupies who chase after earthly fame or worldly glory, so He speaks very clearly about the lack of glory and renown they will know when they are with Him.

Jesus' followers need to know that they will have to give up family ties, home, money, and security, and they won't be able to look back. It is only because of the surpassing goodness of Jesus that we are able to see past the veneer of all that the world offers us and instead look for the satisfaction of an identity firmly rooted in His person and work. There is no cost too high. He is worth it.

When sharing the gospel, how can this passage guide the way we communicate with others the cost of following Jesus?



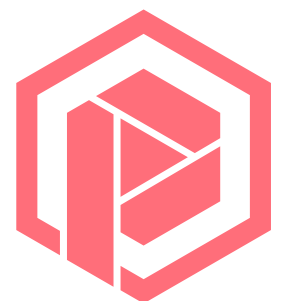
Tuesday - Luke 14:7-14

Jesus is often depicted as the Bridegroom. Fittingly, weddings—and the feasts that they often inspired in near-East tradition—play an important role in His ministry. His first miracle was to turn water into wine at a wedding, and the culmination of His story with the church will be the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In this passage, Jesus told the story of a wedding guest who knows not to exalt himself by sitting down in the place of honor without being asked. This would be the equivalent of marching up to the bride's table at an American wedding reception and sitting right next to her mother even if the seating chart declared otherwise. Instead, Jesus told His listeners to humble themselves so that they will be exalted. He then encouraged them to seek the humble, blessing them through acts of honor and kindness. Jesus turns our traditional understanding of honor and honor-seeking on its head, reminding us that He chose His bride not because of her beauty and flash but in order to magnify her lack thereof with His own immeasurable worth.

Jesus loves His bride not for what she can give to Him but because of what He can provide for her as an object of God's grace.

How does Jesus' teaching and ministry help us to rethink what it means to give honor and be honored?

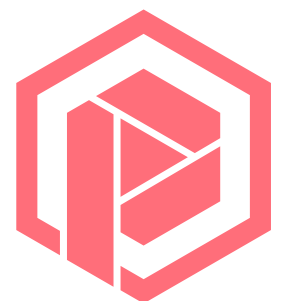


Wednesday - Luke 14:15-24

Here, Jesus told another story about a banquet. This time, a king has invited many to partake of an expansive feast, but, one by one, they give him an excuse and decline the invitation. Upset, the king sends his servant out to invite anyone who will come. Imagine this feast, fit for the wealthiest of society, being inhabited by the lowliest. Those who should have appreciated the splendor turned it down, leaving those who would truly marvel at the spread to partake of it.

Jesus came to earth offering salvation, a feast that surpasses any worldly sustenance we can imagine. While we'd like to believe that we would see the invitation for what it is, so often, we turn Him down in pursuit of the mundane. In this story, He reminded His disciples that His table will be filled and cautions them not to let worldly distractions cause them to miss out on being seated at a feast.

How can we ensure that we place Jesus' calling in proper priority in our lives?



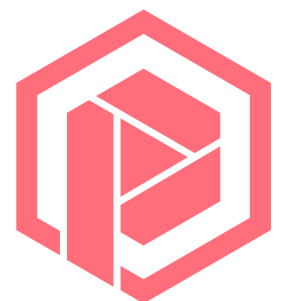
Thursday - Luke 14:25-27

Crucifixion was a brutal business. Men were tied to a wooden cross and left to essentially suffocate once they tired of holding themselves up for air. This was often after a demoralizing and painful beating and, in Jesus' case, He wasn't tied to the wooden cross, but nailed. Criminals in ancient Rome would have to carry their own crosses to the place of execution, buckling under the weight of their own torture devices.

Yet in this passage, Jesus did not shy away from the brutality of what following Him would cost His listeners. He told them that whoever fails to take up his own cross is not a true follower of His.

While we likely won't die on an actual cross, the call to follow Jesus is indeed a call to die. Far before they were martyred, Jesus' disciples were called to die to themselves. They were called to count everything—their family, their money, their status, their cultural capital—as loss in order to move Jesus into His deserved spot as Lord of their lives. This is not glamorous work, but gruesome, agonizing, daily dying to our own whims and desires in order to fulfill what Jesus has called us to do.

What are the practical ways that you take up your cross and die to self each day?

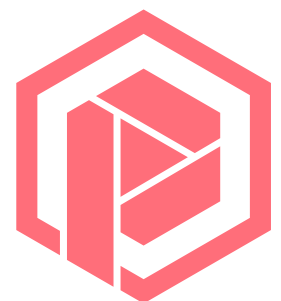


Friday - Luke 14:28-35

Following Jesus is not something we are encouraged to do without forethought. Our Savior does not hide the fine print from us, but instead invites us to read carefully before we sign on the dotted line. He isn't being secretive about hidden fees; He wants us to know exactly what following Him will cost us. His desire is not to discourage sincere followers from worshiping Him, but rather to encourage those sincere followers to know exactly what they're getting into before they start making bold proclamations of allegiance. Jesus wants us to be prepared for the sacrifice that He has called us to.

Following Jesus will cost us everything. And if everything is not what we are willing to give, then we are not ready to commit to the calling of being His disciples.

How can we understand exactly what it means to follow Jesus?



SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 27 | JULY 3RD

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



Series: Jesus the Teacher

Monday - Luke 11:1-4

The model of prayer that Jesus teaches here is a shorter version of the “Lord’s Prayer” that most believers know. In fact, if you grew up in the church, you could probably finish each phrase without even thinking about it: “Our Father, who art in _____, hallowed be thy _____.”

By giving us this prayer, Jesus isn’t giving us the formula that we must use every single time we pray. If that were so, the psalms would likely not be included in the Bible since the psalmist tends not to phrase things in this way. Rather Jesus is giving us a model for prayer and teaching us several important truths: we pray to a sovereign God whose soon-coming kingdom is advancing every day, and yet even in the midst of His lofty, heavenly kingdom, He is concerned with forgiving us of our sins and growing us in His likeness as we forgive others. These simple words are the bedrock of our theology and practice, and as we pray them to the only one worthy of them, we end by asking Him to help us not to be tempted to take our eyes off Him.

As you re-read this well-known prayer, how can you see the gospel embedded in its words?



Tuesday - Luke 11:5-8

Think of your very best friend in the world. Maybe you grew up together or go to school together. You would do anything for this person because your love for him or her is so great.

Now, imagine that this person banged on your door in the wee hours of the morning for some flour.

The man in Jesus' story even mentions the fact that his children are asleep—if you become a parent, you'll realize how important this particular point is in the story. No matter how much you love your friend, at this point you may not want to give him or her any bread.

In Jesus' story, though, it isn't because of one friend's love that he gives the other bread but because of the other friend's persistence. Jesus uses this story to contrast the love of the Father that is so great that there is no hour too late for Him to hear the cries of our hearts.

When was the last time you prayed persistently about something?



Wednesday - Luke 11:9-13

We all know the story of Aladdin and his magic lamp. The genie who popped out of that ancient light fixture owed whoever rubbed the lamp three wishes with very few exceptions. Anything Aladdin dreamed of—from fame, to riches, to power—was literally at his fingertips.

When we read the way that Jesus teaches about prayer in today's passage, we might be tempted to picture God a bit like this magical genie. All we have to do is ask, and we'll be given whatever we want, right? Whatever door we knock on, God will open, and whatever we seek, it will be given to us.

This would be a very dangerous proposition, but of course, it isn't what Jesus is teaching. Notice that Jesus refers to God as Father here. And, just like a father, God sometimes has to tell His children "no" when they make a request. Like pouting two-year-olds, we may not always like the answer that God gives us, but the point Jesus is driving home is that God will answer. Because of His love for us, we can trust whatever His answer might be.

How can prayer reveal God's will to us?



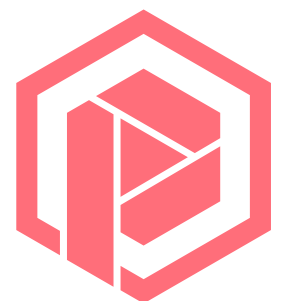
Thursday - Luke 18:1-8

The widow in Jesus' story does not give up easily.

Again Jesus is teaching His listeners a lesson in persistence. God is not a cruel judge whose arm has to be twisted in order to do right by us. He is an all-wise Father who delights in caring for His children, but our persistent prayer is a way for us to grow more and more in reliance on God. It constantly refocuses our hearts as we cry out to Him, keeping His name on our tongues and His promises on our minds. It increases our faith by consistently reminding us whom we serve and who we are to submit every desire of our hearts to.

As we pray and read God's Word, these heart desires become more and more in line with God's will for us. Through prayer, we are not convincing God to do the right thing. He is already going to do right by us. Instead we are reminding ourselves to endeavor to understand and appreciate the will of God.

How can prayer teach us to trust the Lord?



Friday – Matthew 6:5-8

Before launching into the how-to of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His listeners how not to pray.

Our prayers are meant for the glory of God alone, not the glory and honor of ourselves. Jesus is not telling us to avoid praying in public. We know this because Paul gave instruction about public prayer in his epistles (1 Tim. 2:8). Rather Jesus is telling us to guard our motives when we pray, whether we're in public or in private. Our goal is not to be seen for our eloquence or piety but to communicate with God in a way that blesses His name and blesses those who might hear us. We are not praying for the earthly reward of a pat on the back but to communicate with the Father who has already secured our eternal reward in Jesus.

How can we make sure we are praying for God's glory and not man's?



SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 28 | JULY 10TH

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



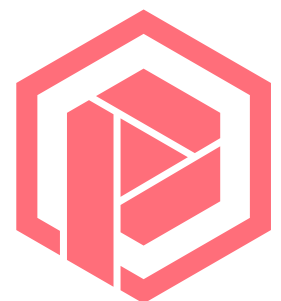
Series: Jesus the Teacher

Monday - Luke 12:13-21

In this passage, a young man, acting more like a little kid, asks a question regarding a dispute between siblings. In short, he wants Jesus to tell his brother to share his inheritance. No doubt, if you had asked this young man what kind of person his brother was, he would have described him as incredibly greedy. Of course the irony here is that Jesus can see right through this young man and knows that greed is what motivates his own request.

We are usually very good at seeing the greed in others, but less accurate when judging the greed in our own hearts. Here, Jesus asks us an important question: Are we giving everything to build for today or do we have our eyes on eternity?

How can we be sure we are storing up heavenly treasures instead of earthly ones?

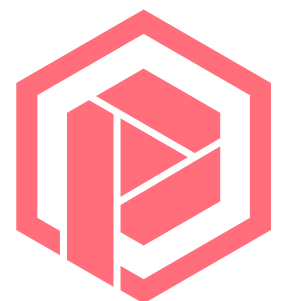


Tuesday - Luke 12:22-30

Money can buy us a lot of things, but contrary to popular belief, it cannot buy us freedom from worry. No matter how much material wealth we have, we are still susceptible to concern about our futures. We worry about acquiring money and keeping money, about spending it wisely and treating ourselves, and about how much treasure we have or how little.

Jesus' words here remind us that our concerns over what we will eat and what we will wear are misplaced. He is not encouraging us toward idleness, but, rather, reminding us that He is the one who blesses the very labors we are prone to fret over. The birds Jesus speaks of don't know the meaning of worry; they work in the way that God has made them to work, toiling without concern for their future, because they don't know anything but to trust the processes that God has set up for their good. The same goes for the lilies of the field.

What does our worry say about where our trust truly lies?



Wednesday - Luke 12:31-34

In this passage, Jesus reminds us that God is our Father, not an austere miser in the sky waiting to withhold good things from us. We can trust Him to do right by us and by our earthly treasure because He has stored up eternal treasures for us.

In fact, the greatest treasure is the person speaking to us in this passage. Jesus, the Son of God, is the most precious gift that God has ever given His children. There was no amount of toil we could have given to earn Him, no amount of money we could have paid to profit from Him. He has been given to us completely free of charge. He is the one who paid for us, by laying down His invaluable life on the cross.

It is because of this gift that we can view our own treasure as an added blessing, and not as the source of our value. We can give of it freely because the gift of the greatest worth has already been given to us in Jesus.

What is the treasure that can never be destroyed and why does it deserve our highest affection?



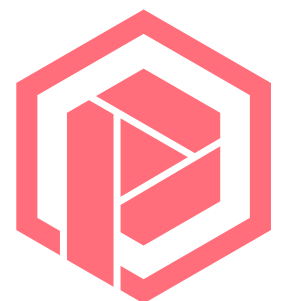
Thursday - Matthew 6:1-4

Jesus' words about earthly treasure don't just extend to the monetary. We can treasure so many other things on earth, particularly the praise of others. Even in giving of our monetary treasure, we can fill ourselves with pride.

Thus, Jesus warns us in Matthew that when we give to the poor, we should not be giving to our own overblown sense of self-importance at the same time. If need be, we should give completely in secret, skirting the praise of others in an effort to give completely for the glory of God, and not for the glory that we can garner from our fellow man.

God cares that we give, but more than that, He cares about the heart behind our giving.

How can we ensure that our hearts are right before God when we give?



Friday - Mark 12:41-44

Jesus teaches us here that our giving isn't measured in mere sums. A rich man can give to God in amounts that would make most of us faint just to think about, but his gift might not come from a generous heart. A poor widow can give just a penny, and her gift might come from a place of full reliance on God.

Through her offering, this widow showed that God was truly her treasure; she gave out of her lack in complete trust that He would supply her earthly needs. When we give, God is not concerned with an exact percentage of our wealth so much as He is concerned with the heart behind our giving. Are we giving out of abundance, keeping back a heart of submission to God, or are we giving out of our lack, realizing that we should entrust ourselves to God just as the widow did in this passage?

How can we be sure that our giving is rightly motivated?



SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 29 | JULY 17TH

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



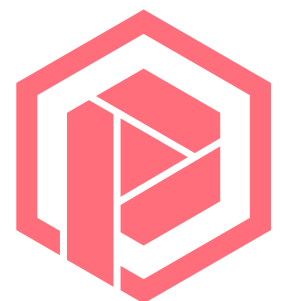
Series: Jesus the Teacher

Monday - John 10:1-6

Jesus painted a picture of two voices calling out to sheep: one is the good shepherd and the other is a sheep thief, and they are both calling the sheep to follow them. The sheep respond to and follow the voice of the shepherd but run away from the stranger's voice, and a good thing too since the thief wants to lead the sheep away to fleece them for personal gain.

Do you ever doubt if you really belong to the Good Shepherd—to Jesus? Sin, shame, and doubt can call out to you to convince you that maybe you don't really belong to Jesus. But Jesus assures us that all who are His sheep recognize His voice and follow His voice. They may not graze in a straight path behind the Shepherd, but they always return. Does the voice of Jesus through Scripture stir you to belief and repentance? If so, take heart because it means you belong to Him. If not, consider whose voice you are following and turn to the Good Shepherd who welcomes into His flock all who believe in Him.

What are some voices surrounding us today trying to distract us from following Jesus?



Tuesday – John 10:7-10

We often take doors for granted. What if there were no doors in the world? You wouldn't be able to enter or leave your home. You wouldn't be able to hop in a vehicle to go someplace, which you also wouldn't be able to enter. From another perspective, no doors would mean no sense of safety and security. A doorframe with no door invites anyone to enter, including thieves and murderers. We need doors.

Jesus said He alone is the gate, or door, to salvation and eternal life with God. Without this gate, there is no hope of being rescued from our sin and its consequence, no way of entering into God's holy presence. Furthermore, without this gate, there would be no protection from those whose only goal is to do us harm, notably spiritual harm. But we do have this gate, and those who believe in Jesus ought to be grateful.

What are some ways you will express your gratitude for Jesus as the gate to salvation?

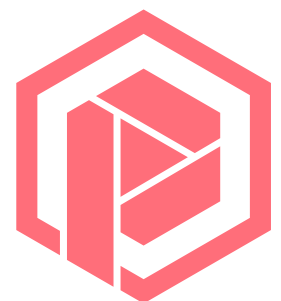


Wednesday – John 10:11-13

In this passage, Jesus expanded upon His metaphor of a shepherd at the beginning of the chapter, and He did so, in part, by way of contrast. Previously, Jesus described the bad actors in the scenario as “strangers” and as “thieves and robbers” who climbed the walls of the sheepfold instead of entering by the gate (vv. 1-5). Here He adds “hired hand” and “wolf.” The enemies of the sheep come from without and within, unknown and known. They may be among us, but they are not of us (1 John 2:18-19). They are characterized by selfishness, deception, and a desire to hurt and create division.

By contrast, the Good Shepherd lays His life down for His sheep. He won't abandon them but will defend them with His life. His sheep know Him intimately, and where enemies seek to harm and scatter, Jesus binds up and heals. He cares about His sheep; He cares about you.

How does the Good Shepherd's care for His sheep address the pain and struggles you are currently facing?

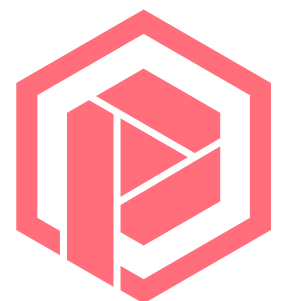


Thursday - John 10:14-18

The Bible says it is appointed for human beings to die once and then face judgment for their thoughts, words, and actions in life (Heb. 9:27). All of us are going to die. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); we've earned this. And once we have died, we are going to stay dead (until, of course, Jesus returns and brings the promised resurrection). No amount of effort from our dead selves will start our hearts beating, our lungs breathing, or our bodies moving.

But Jesus, as fully human as we are, is unique, for He is also fully divine. By the command of His Father, the Son of God came to earth as a human being for the purpose of laying down His life to save us from eternal death and the judgment of hell for our sin. And He also has the right and the power to take His life up again in His resurrection, because He died not for His own sin but for ours. He died and was raised so we too might be raised in the newness of eternal life.

What are some ways you will show your love and honor for the One who laid His life down and took it up again to save you?

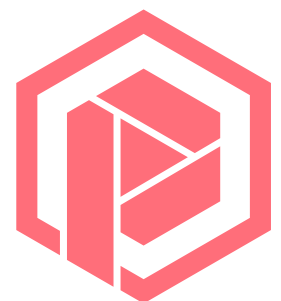


Friday – John 10:19-21

The people in this passage came to a crossroads as they debated over who Jesus is. They were split over whether Jesus was demon-possessed or divinely powerful. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis famously said that when you encounter Jesus, you have one of three conclusions to make: Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord. [See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: Touchstone, 1980), 55-56.] If He is a madman or a liar, then you don't take seriously anything He says. But if He actually is who He says He is, then you must take everything He says seriously. Lewis's point was that you cannot encounter Jesus and remain ambivalent toward Him; Jesus demands a response from you, and failing to respond is in itself a response to discount Jesus.

The blind man whom Jesus had healed made his choice: Jesus is Lord. To make this response means we must submit ourselves to Him and His authority. He is the Good Shepherd, after all.

What parts of your life require your repentance and submission to the Good Shepherd?



SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 30 | JULY 24TH

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



Series: God's Holiness

Monday - Psalm 99:9

Psalm 99:9 is all about God's holiness. Holiness can be intimidating, but that doesn't mean God is unreachable. When we think of something as holy, we often think of it as distant and unrelatable. However, we read in this psalm that while God is holy, He is still relational and wants us to share in His holiness. It says that He is "our God," and we can worship Him, which shows how much He wants to be with us. How cool is it that?! That God's holiness isn't selfish or unloving, but that He extends His holiness to us because He wants us to be with Him!

What do you think of when you hear the word *holy*?

What do you think of when you hear about the holiness of God?



Tuesday – Isaiah 6:3

God's holiness is a huge part of who He is! In the chapter surrounding this verse, the prophet Isaiah was able to see and talk with God personally, but before he could, he had his lips touched by a lump of burning coal – “ew and ouch!” After this, he was able to see all the angels singing this to each other about God. This was God's way of refining Isaiah before He came into a holy place; in other words, God was removing impurity from Isaiah before He stood before His perfection. As strange as this whole process sounds, this shows that God's holiness is a big deal, and we have to be refined by God before we can share in His holiness. Because He is holy, we need to be transformed by His holy refinement.

In what ways is God refining you?



Wednesday - Psalm 71:22

Have you ever felt unappreciated for something? What is something you wish people would appreciate about you but rarely notice? Now a little more convicting ... When was the last time you praised God for being holy? It is easy to praise God for His faithfulness, His love, or anything that makes us immediately feel good. God's holiness isn't usually the first thing people think of to praise Him for. His holiness doesn't make us warm and fuzzy inside, but it does mean that He is perfect. He is trustworthy, unchanging, wise and good because He is holy. He couldn't be these things perfectly if He wasn't set apart from our sinfulness. So we don't praise God for the way He makes us feel, but for who He is - and that is holy and perfect.

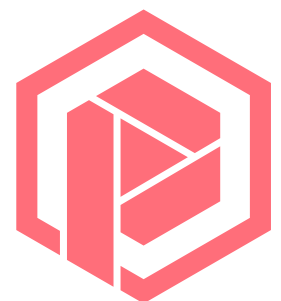
What are some ways you can remember to thank God regularly for His holiness?



Thursday - Leviticus 19:2

Because God is holy, we are commanded to be holy. This means that just as God is pure in heart, not doing anything out of sinful motivation, and distinct from everything else, we are supposed to be pure and distinct as well. He calls us to be pure in heart by being obedient to Him rather than a slave to sin; and He calls us to be distinct, or different, from the culture when it celebrates sin. Just as God refined Isaiah with a lump of burning coal, if we have surrendered our life to Christ, then we are refined every day to look more like God and less like the world.

What are some ways Christians should be different from the world?



Friday - Hebrews 12:10

We are commanded to be holy, but this doesn't happen by accident. God leads us to be set apart, or distinct, from our culture. He leads us by refining us, and His refinement looks like discipline to His children. This verse tells us to remember that God's discipline is for our good; He is helping us to share in His holiness. God's discipline is good because it teaches us to trust in the Lord.

When in your life has God disciplined you? How did it turn out?



SUMMER 2022

DEVO

WEEK 31 | JULY 31ST

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

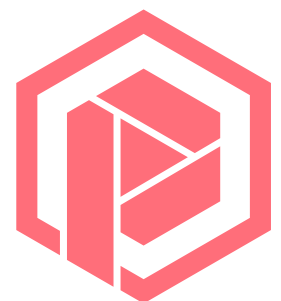


Series: God's Holiness

Monday - Revelation 21:6; Romans 13:1; John 19:11

What an amazing way Christ describes Himself to us in the book of Revelation. "Alpha" is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, "Omega" the last. When I was a child, my pastor explained God's sovereign will this way. Imagine a massive ship is sailing from London to New York. Every person who ever lived, is living, or will live is upon the ship. Each person is given free will as to how to spend his or her time. There are those who seek wealth and the praise of men; others seek to avoid pain and pursue pleasure. Some men sleep their days away, while others, predestined by the grace of our Lord, give themselves wholly to God. The key is, no matter what they do or how they struggle, nothing and no one will stop the ship from reaching its destination. This is the sovereign will of God for creation.

Every day of your life, from the womb to the tomb, was ordained by God. Accepting this truth, how will you choose to spend today in honor of the Alpha and Omega?



Tuesday – Proverbs 21:1; Daniel 4:35

This last verse should bring peace into the hearts of all believers convinced they are under the authority of a leader who does not know God the Creator of heaven and earth. We should be reminded of Cyrus, the ruler of the Medes and the Persians, who conquered Babylon. At the time, the Jews were under Babylonian captivity, a deserved punishment for walking away from the Lord. Cyrus, for no other reason than the sovereign will of God, released the Jews to their homeland, free to worship the one true God. More remarkable is a prophecy from Isaiah 45:4. This is God, speaking of Cyrus who will not be born for another 150 years! *“I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me.”* If that doesn’t give you goosebumps, I don’t know what will!

In God’s sovereignty, He chose before time began who would have leadership in the United States. How does that change the way you view our current government?



Wednesday – Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 46:9-10

“... him who *works* ...” Pastor and best-selling author John MacArthur encourages us to focus on this piece of God’s sovereignty in the book of Ephesians. Work can be translated to *energy*. When God created the world, He gave it sufficient energy to begin immediately to operate as He had planned. He *energizes* every believer with the power necessary for His spiritual completion. In Proverbs 16:9, Solomon tells us “*In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.*” It is God’s energy that pushes believers along in His will. We must remember that His will supersedes our plans. As James 4:14-15 explains, “*What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.*”

God’s sovereign energy is pushing you along at this very moment. Today, this unique day, you get to live once; how will you submit to His will in your life?



Thursday – Romans 8:28–32

Somehow, it falls upon me to summarize arguably the most comforting and important Scripture in the New Testament... in five sentences (LOL!) – the orchestration of God’s providence. He takes our suffering, temptation, struggles and sin, mixes them in the bowl of His sovereign will, and creates goodness. What a miracle! In Deuteronomy 8:1–15, Moses reminds the Israelites of their journey before entering the Promised Land. What began in horrific slavery under Pharaoh, followed by crossing the Red Sea, then on to wandering in the desert for 40 years, all while watching their parents die. And how does God present His goodness to Israel? He gives them land they did not farm, wells they did not dig, and houses they did not build. An amazing gift bestowed on the faithful of God.

We all suffer and struggle. If not now, then soon. What can you do to remind yourself of the goodness of God’s sovereignty when suffering blankets your heart?



Friday – Mark 5:35–36; 5:21–24a; James 5:13–15

Want to know a powerful verse to associate with this? It's a statement made that many faithful overlook in the book of John. Observe what Mary said the day Jesus turned the water to wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:5): *His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."* That is the Gospel, short and sweet, for us all. Do what Jesus tells you. BAM! The response of Jesus to Jairus fortifies this message. This powerful man was overcome with grief from the loss of his only daughter at age 12. Jesus encourages him, *"Only believe."* Notice the tense of the verb is present and the action continuous, which means (hold on tight) Jesus urges Jairus to maintain the faith he had initially demonstrated in coming to Him. Be confident in faith's outcome. God is sovereign over life and death, and that includes COVID, btw.

We are but a vapor, the mist in the morning, grass that sprouts then withers away. With such limited time on earth, will you give God control over your life? What area of life do you need to "maintain the faith you began with when you accepted Jesus as Lord?"



SUMMER 2022

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WEEK 32 | AUGUST 7TH

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



Series: God's Holiness

Monday - Romans 8:1

Romans 7 talks about how our old nature and new nature wrestle against one another for supremacy in our hearts. The apostle Paul knew what it was like not always to live and act in alignment with his convictions and values. Maybe you know how that feels, too; to really want to love and serve Jesus, but not always to follow through. But even in the midst of not always doing what he wanted to do, Paul's great comfort was that when you place your faith in Jesus, He does not stand over you to condemn you. When you come to Jesus, He welcomes you with open arms, forgives you, and cleanses you.

He sees you not as you were, but as you are in Him, made new. If Jesus does not condemn you, will you continue to condemn yourself?



Tuesday – Isaiah 61:10

Have you ever had a makeover? You obtain new clothes, new shoes, maybe some new makeup or a new hat or bracelet. You walk into the room, and your friends are all looking at you and maybe saying, “Whoa, is something different? Did you just buy all of that?” That’s what Jesus does with you! Isaiah says that the joy of salvation is like Jesus’ coming in, cleaning out our closet and buying us new clothes. He enrobes us in righteousness and dresses us with salvation, beautifying us like a bride or bridegroom preparing for a wedding.

So, what are you wearing? Will you let Jesus buy you a whole new look? Or are you going to keep trying to dress yourself in brokenness and religious rituals?



Wednesday - Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:7

Grace is a gift from the Father to His sons and daughters. It isn't something that can be earned or worked for. So, what you have to decide in your heart is whether you want to be a child of God or an employee. Children, through the sheer love and joy of God, receive an inheritance. Employees, through back-breaking work, receive a paycheck. Scripture says that the wage of our work is death. We don't want to get paid by God. But the Father offers something better, not giving us what we deserve in death, but instead giving us the gift of grace and forgiveness that we don't deserve in eternal life. And if we receive it in faith, grace promises us an inheritance of eternal life.

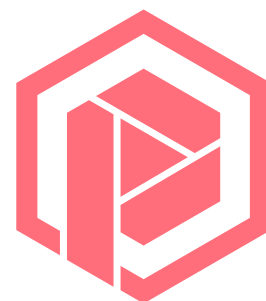
So, who will you be? A child or an employee?



Thursday – Romans 5:19

The story of humanity is complicated. We were made in God's image, a special creation with the very breath of God in our lungs. We were given a garden to enjoy and a job to work, tending to the earth. We were called "very good." And yet, that was all turned upside down in a single, disobedient moment. That moment gave us a heritage of sin and death passed down to every generation. What we perceive to be small decisions can have humongous impacts. But in Jesus, God came to restore what had been lost. And just as sin and death became the inheritance of men through one man's disobedience, forgiveness and grace came through the obedience of Jesus at the Cross.

You were born into sin through Adam; but you can be born into righteousness and life through Jesus. Whom will you follow?



Friday - Romans 3:23-24

If you don't measure up to God's standard of holiness, you aren't alone. According to Paul, everyone falls short of where we are supposed to be. Imagine an Olympic long-jumper sprinting toward the launch point, pushing off the ground, and immediately flopping straight into the sand. Meanwhile, the line to beat was 15 feet ahead. That's what we look like when we try to do things on our own. We end up trying to jump toward forgiveness, when in fact, Jesus jumped from heaven to save you and me. He made up all of the ground that we couldn't in order to make us right and whole again, redeeming our sin and healing our hearts. The question is whether you will keep jumping or start believing. You can believe that Jesus forgives all of your sin and washes you to be white as snow.



SUMMER 2022

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WEEK 33 | AUGUST 14TH

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



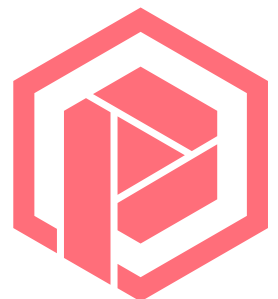
Series: Reach, Learn, Love

Monday - Luke 15:1-7

In this portion of Scripture, we see the Pharisees in shock at the sight of Jesus' eating with tax collectors and other notorious sinners. Jesus, in response to the Pharisees, tells them a story about a shepherd. The shepherd was celebrating something that was once lost but is now found. The father represents Jesus, and the son represents the notorious sinners. Jesus did not just come for those who already knew God. He came for those who don't have a relationship with Him. Jesus came to seek, save, and rejoice, and we should be doing the same. God sees lost people coming to Him and He responds with open arms.

What did your life look like before you accepted Christ as your Savior?

If you are a Christian, are you reaching others as Jesus did? If so, how are you reaching them? When a sinner comes to know Jesus, do you act like the brother who stayed? Or the father?



Tuesday – Jude 1:17-23; Hebrews 10:23-25

Jude calls his readers to remember the future that is promised. God tells us that those who do not know Jesus will mock God and follow their natural desires (vv. 17-18). Jude instructs Christians to persevere by building fellow Christians in faith, prayer, love and mercy. When we face hard times, we might wonder, where is God? Jude, though, tells us to be patient and wait for the Lord. This waiting is not in vain because believers are assured of their hope that Jesus is coming back. Finally, Jude calls Christians to show mercy to people who doubt God and don't have faith. As Christians, we are called to reach people with the Gospel.

What does suffering and pain look like in your school?

How are you reaching people who do not believe in Jesus?

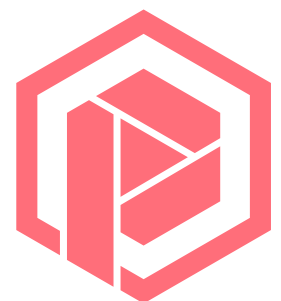


Wednesday - Ephesians 4:11-16

Paul tells his readers that they need to grow in their faith and become like Christ. In verse 13, Paul says that unity in our faith and knowledge of God will create a maturity that measures the fullness of Christ. Anything that is not from God represents Satan's schemes that attempt to take people from the Lord. For Christians to mature, they must learn about Christ and become more like Him. All Christians, no matter what age or maturity, should be actively disciplined by someone wiser than they.

Would you consider yourself a young Christian or a mature Christian according to Ephesians 4:13?

This week, what is one way you can learn and imitate Christ?



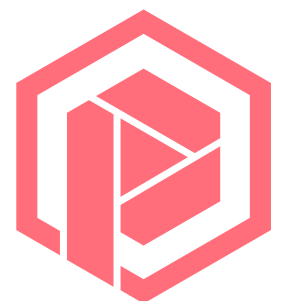
Thursday - Luke 23:32-29

The aspect of the Crucifixion we are looking at is Jesus' being crucified next to two criminals. These criminals represent the people in our world. Criminal #1 hated Jesus. However, Jesus did not respond with hate, but with love. *"Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing."* As Jesus struggles to breathe and continues to suffer for those who hate Him, He chooses to love them. He showed His love for them by staying on the Cross and dropping every drop of blood for those who hated Him. The love we read here is unconditional, never-ending, and sacrificial. Even as Jesus died for those who mocked Him while He was on the Cross, He continues to love the people who still deny Him today. Jesus did not die just for those who love Him. He also faced the most painful death for those who mocked, flogged, and spat at Him.

Have you ever faced someone who was mocking Jesus? How did you react to his or her statement?

Would you choose to die for someone who hated you?

Are your daily actions mocking who Jesus is?



Friday - Luke 23:40-43

Yesterday, we read about criminal #1 who denied Jesus as Lord. Yet, Jesus still died for him. While Jesus still died for those who hate Him, he also died for those who would follow Him. Criminal #2 represents those who confess and believe that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9). Criminal #2, who loves Jesus, calls out criminal #1 for not fearing God. Criminal #2 continues to say how Jesus is facing the worst death imaginable, yet He never committed any sin. He also states how they, as criminals, deserve every bit of pain from their crucifixion. He was bringing light (Christ) into the darkness (sin). Afterward, Jesus responded to criminal #2 with love, once again. "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." The only way we can be with God in paradise is through the death and Resurrection of Jesus. This criminal shows us that Jesus did not just die for those who hate Him, but for those who would follow Him.

Which criminal represents you? Are you denying Jesus or serving Jesus?

Why would Jesus see the Cross as an act of love?

Do you love the body of Christ?

