

FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 35 | AUG 28

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



## Series: Hot Topics – Sexual Preference

Monday - Genesis 2:7; Psalm 119:73; Colossians 1:22

Have you ever wondered why most social media platforms portray such a different view of physical and sexual values than Christianity does? Society sees our bodies as tools to be used as we please. This view has implications for sexuality, gender and unborn babies. This week's devotionals will highlight God's design and contrast it with ideas dominating our current culture.

The New Testament writers had to battle with an early version of this same view called Gnosticism, which taught that the world in our minds is all good and pure, yet the physical world around us is dirty and evil. But as today's verses show, the Bible treats all of us as good. Our Holy God not only gives us spiritual life and understanding, but He also formed us physically with His very own hands. In fact, Christ's physical body was a fundamental part of our salvation. Does this sound as though the physical body is just an unimportant afterthought? The Bible shows no division between a "good mental/spiritual" and a "bad physical." God is the loving Creator of both.

**We often give God thanks for our spiritual lives. Do you thank God for the gift of your physical life as well?**

**Does this change how you see yourself when you look at yourself in the mirror?**



**Tuesday – Hebrews 3:4; Colossians 1:16-17; Jeremiah 29:11**

For about 1,400 years, almost everyone saw the world as designed by God. Then in 1859, Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*. Over the next century, his idea that the world evolved by random chance became the dominant worldview. Sadly, many people traded in a belief in a loving Creator for belief in an uncaring universe. They exchanged a God-given moral code for a “survival of the fittest” mindset. It would be become normal for us to treat each other as competition or obstacles to be overcome. Have you ever experienced this? Have you seen big kids who push others around? Have you read cruel posts on social media where students are trying to show they are better than others?

How different the world looks to those of us who hold onto God’s truth. Today’s verses show that God has designed us for Himself. He has given us a good moral law and wants us to love others, no matter their abilities. He cares for us and has a future in store for us where we will be made right and whole.

**How does a belief in a loving God give you hope and peace about the future that others around you don’t have?**

**Does this help you to have compassion for those who feel like they live in a universe without purpose?**

**How does this change the way you view your “enemies”?**



Wednesday – Romans 1:20; Ecclesiastes 7:25; Jeremiah 17:9

How do the past two days of devotionals impact our current culture?

Biologists tell us that humans are born as male or female. Men and women are designed in specific ways to be partners. These facts are essential for humanity's survival. Yet in today's culture it is acceptable for people to prefer sex with their same gender or to decide that the gender they were born as is not who they truly are. This is a rejection of what biologists would tell them they were born to be. This becomes the cultural norm when we believe the physical is the result of random chance (secular evolution) or the physical is dirty and worthless (Gnosticism). These non-Christian attitudes place how people *feel* over the actual reality of who they physically *are* in Christ.

Instead, today's verses tell us God's creation shows a divine purpose, that we should use our minds to understand creation, and that we are not to rely on deceitful emotions.

**Have you been misled by your emotions in the past?**

**For years, non-Christians have tried to poke fun at Christians for relying on emotions instead of science. Do you see any irony in that today?**



**Thursday – 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:22–23; 1 Corinthians 15:42**

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve's sin resulted in the curse of death which will cause a separation of our spirits from our bodies. But this will not remain the case forever. Our bodies are not some dirty piece of us that we will get rid of when we go to heaven. Remember what happened at Christ's Resurrection? God's victory over death was shown when His spirit was rejoined to an updated version of His physical body. The same thing will happen to us! God's plan includes us enjoying wonderful new physical bodies on a glorious new physical earth.

Today's verses show that the Holy Spirit lives in our bodies today, that the whole world is waiting for Jesus to make us new again, and these updated bodies and earth will last forever. Society might see the physical as unimportant or accidental, but the Bible stresses the value of the physical world through the end of time.

**A popular phrase today is “if it feels good, do it!” How does an understanding of God's eternal purpose for the physical change your view on this phrase?**

**In what ways are you using your physical body as an instrument for God's good?**



**Friday – Proverbs 3:33; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6**

Do you plan to marry someday? Possibly have a family? Well, you'll be glad to know that studies show you'll do better in marriage as well as family life if you follow God's plan. Today's verses emphasize the consequences of rejecting God's will. But let's look at recent secular studies that even non-Christians must deal with.

Marriage has its difficulties. Some studies have shown that 13 percent of heterosexual couples get divorced within 6 years of marriage. Sweden has been named the most LBGQT+ friendly country in the world. Yet the same study found that homosexual marriages, even where most supported, have about twice the chance of divorce in that time (20 percent for gay men and 30 percent for gay women).

What about raising a family? Studies have shown that children raised in gay households are at a much higher risk of poor outcomes than children raised in a heterosexual household. They are twice as likely to be unemployed, be in therapy, and have an affair while in a committed relationship. Tragically, they are three times as likely to have thought recently about suicide.

**God's Word has many guidelines for us, and it can sometimes feel like a lot. Do these studies help you see God's purpose in these guidelines?**

**Do these statistics give you greater motivation to speak the truth in love?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 36 | SEP 4

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



## Series: Hot Topics – Deconstruction

Monday - Matthew 7:21-23, 15-20

You've seen it. The student who was once super-involved in the ministry, and one day stopped attending church altogether. Maybe it's a friend who used to call himself or herself a Christian but is now a professing atheist. You might even be unsure of what you believe in; for years, church has been a place that you've been forced to go to, not a place to discover what you actually believe! Now is the time to define a term that has recently grown in popularity with the rise in technology and media: *deconstruction*. According to one author, "Deconstruction is the process of systematically dissecting and often rejecting the beliefs you grew up with." However, even though this term might be new to you, deconstruction has been occurring for centuries, and is even discussed in the Bible. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus calls out those who claim religion other than Jesus Himself. Because He is the source of our strength, we can persevere, and as a result, bear fruit. Without first surrendering and fully accepting Jesus as Lord, our days will be lived within our own, limited strength - leaving us broken down and exhausted, ready to walk away from it all.

**List and identify fruit in your life that points to your relationship with Christ. Spend a moment in prayer thanking Him for this!**

**How can we as believers combat doubt?**





**Tuesday – John 20:19–29; Matthew 11:3**

So often we don't want to talk about doubt. Doubt is something that has often been shamed in the Christian world, but doubt is something that can point us back to the person of Christ. When Thomas doubted Jesus' Resurrection, it led him not only to ask important questions about who Jesus is, but it also led to a beautiful profession of faith! While deconstruction leads us away from who God is, doubt can lead us back to who God is. When questions arise about who God is, dig into Scripture, ask spiritual leaders around you, and pray God would lead you back to who He is!

**Are there people in your life to whom you can ask questions without judgment? If so, who are they?**

**If not, what steps do you need to take to find counsel?**



## Wednesday – Isaiah 40:28; Romans 11:33

The terms “deconstruction” and “deconversion” often get used interchangeably, but they are two very different things; whereas deconstruction is the **process** of dissecting one’s own beliefs, deconversion is the **result** of deconstruction that involves one discovering the fault in their belief and deciding to leave the faith. When one uses the term deconstruction to describe someone’s walking away from the faith, he or she is using the term incorrectly – this implies deconversion. For some, deconstruction is the place where they can break down and discover what it means to follow Christ. The Lord has proven Himself sovereign, and He is not scared of our doubts or questions. In fact, the more we dig in, the more we allow the Spirit to reveal Himself to us! Isaiah 40:38 says that there is no limit to our understanding of who God is; therefore, we won’t have all the answers! However, as Christians, the more we seek to comprehend, the more likely we are to be of His likeliness.

**Are you seeking out the Lord, or are you completing a task?**

**He wants to hear your questions! Pause and voice them to Him.**



## Thursday - Mark 9:24

Unbelief is something that every believer will struggle with at some point in his or her life. Whether it's a season of disappointment, a loss of a loved one, or missed expectations, there are times of genuine struggle in regard to what God is doing. Unhealthy deconstruction looks like giving up and avoiding God in the search for answers. A healthy deconstruction invites the One who knows all (Jesus) into the process of finding answers. We should cry out to God during these times of struggle just as the man in this passage did. When we cry out to God, He is faithful to hear us and bring us answers to the questions we have!

**What are some current struggles in your life?**

**Why is it easier to hide these struggles than to share them?**



## Friday – Ephesians 4:29; Philippians 1:9

Despite its recent rise in popularity, deconstruction is not a new term. However, navigating how to best guide someone in his or her journey of doubts and questions can be overwhelming.

“What if I don’t have all of his answers?”

“What if I end up causing her to stumble more?”

However, the answer is simple: Love that person well.

In His ministry, Jesus clearly displayed an equal balance of grace and truth. In speaking with sinners and outcasts, Jesus blessed them and treated them highly, but He was also quick to teach them the truth of who He was! He did this because He knew the best way to love those around Him was to deliver truth in a loving matter: Sometimes this was with words, other times with caring acts. Often someone who is deconstructing his or her faith has experienced pain and is reworking his or her entire belief system to account for it. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to love those around us – just as Christ has loved us! Rather than slandering with truth or giving grace alone, we can look to Jesus and seek to show love by combining both grace *and* truth.

**Give an example of someone showing another person “just grace” and “just truth.” How can we as believers tangibly show grace and truth together?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 37 | SEP 11

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



## Series: Hot Topics – Fighting Sin

Monday - James 4:1-6

Have you ever been angry at someone or something, only to realize how foolish your reaction was? Maybe you have thought if a certain problem could be fixed, or if a certain person acted differently, everything would be better, and you wouldn't get so frustrated. How do we figure out where this frustration comes from? This frustration comes from desire in our heart to sin. Without sin, there would be no wars, anger, evil or hate. Not to fight the sin in your life means to give way to a rhythm of anger and frustration.

**Where have you seen yourself get frustrated or angry recently?**

**What has been the cause of it?**



## Tuesday - James 4:7

The first thing an injured patient must do to receive care is to submit to the authority of the doctor. When sin comes into our life, it causes pain and disruption to our self, our world and our relationship with God. How do we solve it? First, we must submit ourselves to God. To submit to God means to make what is important to God, important to us. If we want to find hope and healing through Christ, we must submit to Him, to His authority, to trusting that what He says and does is best for you and your good. Like any good doctor, our Father in heaven allows us to ask questions, talk with Him, and learn more about His character through His divine Word. In submitting to God, and trusting Him, He is available to us.

**Do you have a hard time submitting to people in your life?**

**What scares you about submitting your life to God?**



## Wednesday - James 4:7

Once we submit to the God's authority, the battle for healing just begins. Now you must resist the Devil. The tactics the Devil uses will try to make you doubt, deny, disobey, or disregard God's Word. The Enemy knows that God's design for life brings peace and freedom. If someone told you to eat a can of spinach instead of a Whataburger, would you just blindly do it because that person told you to? Of course not! In the same way, God doesn't just tell you to resist the Devil because He is mean. He does it because it leads to the most freedom and fulfillment this life has to offer.

**In what ways have you ever doubted, denied, disobeyed, or disregarded God?**

**How can you combat the Enemy's lies?**





## Thursday - James 4:8

In Jesus' day, the first thing people arriving in a village would do would be to walk straight to the well to get water. People had to walk out of their way not only to find water, but also draw it in order to drink. Sometimes these people would walk upwards of 10 to 15 miles a day just to arrive at a well to draw water because of how desperately we, as humans, need water.

In the same way, our spiritual walk cannot exist, function, or work properly without drawing near to God, who is the wellspring of life. We are called to draw near to God with the same need and intentionality that someone would have in drawing water that is near for their physical health. In combatting sin, we must draw near to God first and foremost every day.

**When was the last time that you felt “filled up” by your time with God?**



## Friday – James 4:8, 10

Water has been deemed “earth’s most valuable resource” due to its ability not only to replenish thirsty bodies, but also to clean dirty things.

In James, we are called to clean up our actions – but not only our actions. He goes on to urge believers to have God purify their heart since it is torn between giving into sin and pursuing holiness.

The beauty of Christianity is it is the only religion that doesn’t say you have to work for your salvation; rather, it says Christ already did. All you must do is believe what He has done and ask Him into your heart, and you will always have the wellspring of life within you (Romans 10:9). Since you cannot earn your salvation, you cannot lose it either. Regardless of how much you have messed up, you will always be able to come to Christ and ask for forgiveness, cleanse your hands, and humble yourself (Hebrews 4:14-16). One last encouragement is 1 Peter 5:6: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

**When was the last time you talked with God honestly about your heart?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 38 | SEP 18

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



## Series: Jesus the Miracle Worker

Monday - Luke 8:26-33

In His brief conversation with the demon-possessed man, Jesus asked for the demon's name. He did not do this as a means to gain power over it. He already had the power. Jesus needed no magic or ritual to free the man from his oppressor. He is the Son of the Most High God, and one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). But it is worth noting that at this moment, the demon-possessed man fell at Jesus' feet. While the fullness of Jesus' rule hasn't been fully realized by us, Jesus remains sovereign nonetheless, a truth even the demons know full well.

Because Jesus is sovereign over this world, over all things both physical and spiritual, we can know that nothing, including the sinful and scary work of demons, has the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39). By faith in Jesus, we are forever free to live, run, fall, and crawl in His never-ending love.

**How does Jesus' sovereignty over all things encourage you to step out in the obedience of faith?**



## Tuesday - Luke 8:34-37

The people in the Gerasene region asked Jesus to leave, and it is natural to wonder why. He could have healed people; He could have cast out more demons; He could have provided satisfying meals. But the Scripture passage simply says they were afraid.

It is common here to analyze the people's state of mind and conclude that perhaps they were a bit upset and unnerved that a large herd of pigs had just been destroyed in the sea. The idea is that financial concerns weighed heavy upon them, and that Jesus just couldn't be trusted not to cause the destruction of other sources of income, so they asked Him to leave.

But our main goal in reading and studying the Bible is to go where the authors and the Author - God Himself - want us to go. The text says they were "afraid" and had "great fear." This fear was not aimed at the loss of pigs but at the One who had the power to command demons.

**How have you experienced fear directed toward God? How did you respond to that fear?**



## Wednesday - Luke 8:38-39

This brief passage contains a subtle yet beautiful statement about the deity of Jesus. As the Son of the Most High God, Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity. The “legion” of demons possessing the man knew this to be true, and it seems their spiritual knowledge rubbed off on him.

Jesus refused the man’s request to join in His travels, but He gave him a mission instead - go home and declare what “God has done for you.” This the man gladly obeyed; after all, he had been freed from his demonic oppression. But curiously, his obedience involved a slight adjustment in the message he was told to proclaim. He did go home, and he did tell what God had done for him, but he did so by proclaiming what “*Jesus* had done for him.” Previously, Jesus’ disciples had wondered “Who is this?” when Jesus calmed a storm on the sea with a word (Luke 8:25). The man whose soul had been calmed and saved with a word had no need to question - Jesus is the divine Son of the Most High God.

**What are some ways you will honor the Son of the Most High God with your thoughts, words and actions?**



## Thursday - Luke 11:14-16

What sort of ailments are demons not responsible for? They drove a man mad in Luke 8 and here prevented a man from speaking. Demons were also attributed with seizures and deafness in the Gospels (Mark 9:17-27). Satan was guilty of causing natural disasters and boils that affected Job (Job 1-2). It seems there could be no end to the mischief, torment and destruction perpetrated by demons in the spiritual realm.

But we must be careful not to give demons more credit than they are due. Not every ailment is the direct result of a demon's work (John 9). We shouldn't neglect going to the doctors and hospitals when sick. Nor should we ignore the reality that spiritual forces do manifest their work in tangible ways, for good or for ill. Beyond these points, we must remember that God alone is sovereign. Demons can only go as far as God allows them to go, and they can never hold sway over God's children.

**How do you reconcile the activity in the spiritual realm with what you see and experience in the physical realm?**



**Friday - Luke 11:17-23**

Jesus knew people were questioning His power to command and exorcise demons. But logically, this made no sense. If Jesus cast demons out by the power of Beelzebub, another name for Satan, then this would have been evidence of an internal turf war among the demons. A kingdom divided from within has no strength to defend from without.

So, logically, Jesus wasn't casting demons out by the power of Satan, and if not that, then He must have been doing so by the power of God. Instead of a coup or infighting, Jesus was demonstrating His superior status and strength over spiritual matters. He marched into this world under the sway of demonic forces and began dismantling their power because He is the superior force.

So the question arises: Whom will you side with? The demonic forces of this world that have lost and are losing or the victorious Son of the Most High God, the rightful and good ruler over all of creation?

**How can you help people see the logic of siding with Jesus? Pray that they will see and believe in Him for salvation.**





FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 39 | SEP 25

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



## Series: Jesus the Miracle Worker

Monday - John 6:1-10

Being the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus knows all things (though there are times when He chose not to act on that prerogative according to the will of God the Father). Here, Jesus saw the hungry crowd and already knew how He would feed them.

Yet Jesus took this opportunity to test Philip with a question, not for His sake but for Philip's. A test shows something about the person being tested. The teacher already knows the material and presumably has taught it to the students, so the test reveals whether the students have grasped the material. Philip believed Jesus was the Prophet greater than Moses (John 1:45), but how far did that belief go? When tested, Philip resorted to earthly considerations for providing food; yet he was about to learn through a hands-on, miraculous experience that with Jesus, nothing is impossible.

**How is your faith in Jesus being tested today, and how will you respond?**



## Tuesday - John 6:11-14

Every word of Scripture has been inspired by God for our benefit, that we may be taught, rebuked, corrected, and trained in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Even small phrases serve this purpose, such as “giving thanks,” which Jesus did when He received the bread and fish and began breaking them apart to pass out to the hungry crowd. Jesus, who already knew what He was going to do to feed the crowd, thanked His Father for the provision of bread.

Jesus Himself had experienced hunger, though on a much greater scale, and still He trusted in His Father to provide for His needs at the right time (Matthew 4). He also taught His disciples to pray to the Father for their daily bread (Matthew 6:11). So if we are going to follow Jesus’ example and teaching, we ought to pray to God in faith for His provision, and when we receive it, just as God has promised to give it, then we ought to thank Him for His care.

**What are some ways you need to thank the Lord for His faithful provision in your life?**



## Wednesday - John 6:22-27

Have you ever had a person in your life who only talked to you when he or she wanted something? The crowd that Jesus had fed so well the day before couldn't find Jesus, so they began investigating where He went and eventually found Him on the other side of the sea.

We could applaud their diligence in searching for Jesus; it seems as though they wouldn't stop until they found Him. But Jesus knew why they were looking for Him: They had received a free lunch the day before and they wanted more. They were following Jesus because of what He gave them.

Jesus loves blessing His people, but His gifts pale in comparison to who He is. When we follow Him in faith, He promises that He'll give us more of Himself, and we'll find out that's what we needed all along.

**How has Jesus satisfied your heart this past week?**



## Thursday - John 6:28-46

The day after Jesus fed the 5,000, the crowd searched Him out, hoping for another round of bread. They had visions of their glorious history in mind when manna was provided for their ancestors in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 16). (Incidentally, manna was first graciously provided for the Israelites in response to their grumbling about being hungry and blaming Moses for their troubles.) They mistakenly attributed this miracle to Moses, but Jesus was clear that manna was a provision from God Himself. Still, Moses was the prophet and leader in charge while the people received manna from heaven.

Manna was a temporary bread. It lasted for the day, or the weekend, to sustain the people. Any leftovers the people tried to keep overnight spoiled. They received exactly what they needed for the day. But Jesus is the greater Moses. He Himself provided bread and did so in abundance, to the tune of 5,000-plus full bellies and 12 full baskets. And Jesus is the greater manna - Jesus is the true bread from heaven.

**What are some other ways you have seen Jesus portrayed as greater than a person or thing from the Old Testament?**



## Friday - John 6:47-59

Jesus' words point to His sacrifice on the Cross: His body broken, and blood poured out so that we might have eternal life. Whoever believes in Jesus and what He has accomplished will be saved. But we're so prone to forget what Christ has done and accomplished for us.

The night before He was betrayed, Jesus instituted a practice for believers to commemorate the Cross and remember Jesus. We call this the Lord's Supper. As we eat the bread, we remember the body of Christ broken for us, and as we drink the cup, we remember the blood that was poured out for the forgiveness of sins. This practice isn't a magical ceremony, as if we physically eat the transformed body and blood of Jesus; it is a regular reminder and proclamation of the Gospel for those who have put their faith in Jesus. We aren't just remembering the facts of an event 2,000 years ago; we are remembering the experience of true deliverance from our sin!

**What are some ways you can “remember” what Jesus has done and worship Him?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 40 | OCT 2

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



## Series: Jesus the Miracle Worker

### Monday - Matthew 14:1-12

The beheading of John the Baptist might seem like a random historical detail to note at this point in his Gospel, but there is rhyme and reason to Matthew's inclusion of this side story. Jesus and John had more in common than merely being cousins; they were both prophets (and certainly Jesus was more than a prophet). Not only were both men prophets, but they were also prophets who faced rejection and persecution. In Matthew 13:54-58, we see Jesus rejected by those in His own hometown. In Matthew 14:1-12, we read that John was imprisoned for his rebuke of Herod's sexual immorality, only later to be executed.

By including these details about John the Baptist and his faithfulness as a prophet to the point of death, Matthew esteems his place in God's story as the prophetic forerunner to the Messiah. The kingdom of God was at hand in Jesus' coming, and thus John acted accordingly as a prophet among God's covenant people, even if faithfulness meant imprisonment and perhaps even death. Though John did not get to experience the miracles in the firsthand way that Jesus' first disciples did, he nonetheless saw Jesus as worthy of his total allegiance.

**How have you faced rejection because of your allegiance to Jesus as the Messiah?**





## Tuesday - Matthew 14:13-21

Foreshadowing Jesus' own eventual slaying at the hands of corrupt rulers, the sequence of events surrounding the end of John the Baptist's life invites us into Jesus' humanity. After learning the news about His departed cousin, Jesus sought seclusion from the crowds (vv. 12-13). In observing this willful practice of solitude in Jesus' life, we must come to grips with His profound and real humanity.

Even while the Creator of the Universe, the Son of God incarnate also experienced the highs and lows of life as a human being. As He prepared to perform the most spectacular of miracles, Jesus prioritized prayer, displaying for us His immense practical wisdom that would serve us well to imitate. Though He was on a mission to save the world through His life, death and Resurrection, Jesus still took time to find a quiet place and commune with the Father in isolation. It is impossible to overestimate the value of this practice in the Christian life.

**What would your prayer life look like if you were able to overcome your biggest roadblocks on a regular basis?**



## Wednesday - Matthew 14:22-24

The book of Matthew, along with the other Gospels, ordinarily uses the word “immediately” (see 14:22, 27, 31). In this single verse, the word is used to describe the punctuality of Jesus’ command and the disciples’ quickness to obey. When it comes to our obedience of Jesus, “immediate” is a good and helpful word. Our obedience should not be delayed, but rather every moment calls for our obedience.

We often excuse or delay obedience until we reach a certain point or time in our lives. We lie to ourselves, saying, “I’ll stop with this sin when I get over this thing,” or “I’ll confess and repent of this sin when my schedule is different.” However, the Christian life is not one of delayed obedience; it should be marked by “immediate” obedience. In what ways have you ever doubted, denied, disobeyed, or disregarded God?

**What steps can you take today to pursue immediate obedience to Jesus?**



## Thursday - Matthew 14:25-31

After the disciples wrongly identified Jesus as a threatening ghost on the waters, He calmed them by saying, "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." There is an important lesson for us to notice in this exhortation. The lesson is this: The presence of Jesus is cause for courage, not fear.

In the story, the revelation that it is Jesus and not a ghost is good news. This can only be good news if the disciples know the presence of Jesus is for their benefit. We know from Paul's letters that where the presence of the Lord is, there is freedom and joy (2 Corinthians 3:17). Even amidst sorrow and tragedy, if the Lord is with us, His presence is inexplicably good news, though it may feel bittersweet at times.

**At what points in life have you felt closest to the Lord? How has His presence brought you comfort and joy, especially during difficult times?**



## Friday - Matthew 14:32-36

More often than not, the main point we should take away from a story within the Gospels occurs near the end of the passage. Such is the case with Jesus' walking on water. After Jesus rebuked Peter for his lack of faith, the disciples, in response to His power over creation, worshipped Jesus and confessed Him as the Son of God. We, in turn, should respond to Jesus in the same way as we read of His many good works collectively, which culminate in His death, burial, Resurrection and Ascension.

Additionally, we should take note of what takes place in the transitional details that follow in Matthew's narrative (vv. 34-36). The recognition of Jesus spurs people into action, bringing to Him those who need Him. We should do the same with those in our vicinity. Once we recognize Jesus for who He is, it only makes sense that we should want others to meet Him in hope that they might place their faith in Him and be healed.

**How are you involved with leading people in your vicinity to Jesus?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 41 | OCT 9

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



## Series: Jesus the Miracle Worker

Monday - Matthew 17:1-6

In this first verse of the Transfiguration account, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain so they can see His glory. This must have been a fantastic and yet terrifying scene to behold. Many of us would love a chance to climb the mountain and get a glimpse of Christ's glory. However, the good news of Christianity is that God brought His glory down the mountain to us. Christianity doesn't call us to trek a mountain in order to see God; it tells us to behold the God who descended from the mountain and makes Himself accessible to us.

Beyond just coming down from a mountain, Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven by taking on flesh and meeting us in our mess. Ultimately, He will "come down the mountain" again when He comes back for His Bride - the Church - at the end of all things.

**Why should we regularly reflect on the lengths to which God went to meet with us in the person of His Son, Jesus?**



## Tuesday – Matthew 17:7-8

When the disciples heard the thunderous voice from heaven proclaim that Jesus is God's beloved Son, they fell on their faces as they were terrified. Yet, Jesus did not leave them in their terror. Rather He went to them and comforted them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear" (v. 8).

This call for courage is found throughout Scripture: "Have no fear." In Deuteronomy 31:7-8, Moses told Joshua to be "strong and courageous" because the Lord would go before him and the Israelites into the Promised Land, not abandoning them but rather ensuring their success. In Isaiah 43, God encouraged the people of Israel with the words "fear not" (v. 5) by promising to protect them even through fire and flood in light of prospective exile. In 1 John 4:18, the apostle John writes, "Perfect love casts out fear."

God does not call His people to a life of fear but one of courage. The fear of the Lord casts out all other fears because we know with Him on our side, there is nothing left worthy of our fear. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

**How do God and His Gospel bring you courage and drive away your fears?**



## Wednesday – Matthew 17:9–13

At various points in the Gospels, we come across Jesus as He is instructing certain people not to tell others about Him or what He did (Matthew 16:20; Mark 7:36; Luke 8:56). However, this certainly seems counter-intuitive to us, as we are charged with heeding the Great Commission. Doesn't Jesus want His followers to tell the entire world that He is King? Well, He does, but timing is everything.

As the Gospel of Matthew records in its closing lines, Jesus stated that His authority as king over heaven and earth was given to him (Matthew 28:18). Sure, Jesus as the eternal Son of God possessed authority over the world as its Creator, but He was also sent to rule as humanity's true king, the Messiah, which required Him to succeed in taking proper dominion over the world as a human being (Hebrews 2:5–9). Now, we no longer live during Jesus' humble period of obedience on earth when He had to keep things quiet for a time. Instead, we live during His exalted reign from heaven. Therefore, we have been charged to announce to everyone everywhere that Jesus is the risen and rightful King.

**When it comes to sharing the Gospel with others, do you find it burdensome or invigorating? Why?**





## Thursday - Malachi 4:4-6

The lights along the aisle dim and the screen widens. That's what often happens in a movie theater once the succession of trailers has finally come to an end, and it becomes time for the main feature to begin. The audience responds accordingly, ready to settle in for what they came to see. We encounter a similar dynamic at work in Malachi's prophesying a "second coming" of Elijah. The return of Elijah was the last of the previews to appear before the main feature would begin.

Indeed, Jesus confirmed that "the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5) had come, Elijah being symbolically represented by John the Baptist: "Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him" (Matthew 17:12). By affirming that Malachi's prophecy had been fulfilled in John the Baptist's preaching, Jesus was signaling to His hearers that the time of mere trailers and previews had ended; the main feature was imminent, namely, His own death and Resurrection.

**How does looking at Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah help us to see Jesus as the central figure of the Bible's storyline?**



## Friday - Matthew 17:22-23

Though we all know death is coming for each of us, including our loved ones, there is still only so much we can do to prepare ourselves when we face death firsthand. The loss of anyone close to us will inevitably lead to our being stunned and perplexed on some level. We should therefore sympathize with Jesus' original disciples who, during His mock trial and temporary burial, didn't seem to recall immediately the times Jesus had foretold of His death and Resurrection in front of them (Matthew 16:21-22; 17:12,22-23; 20:17-19). Even the prospect of His death distressed them (v. 23).

On the other hand, Christians who have been alive since those days have the distinguished benefit of being able to look back on the Gospel narratives that specifically highlight this event. More than likely, we would have been slow on the uptake, too, concerning the necessity and significance of Jesus' looming Crucifixion. We should thus humbly thank God for providing and preserving these inspired, well-designed accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.

**How does the changed lives of the disciples - moving from cowards who were afraid to associate with Jesus during His trial to faithful and bold preachers post-Resurrection - strengthen our faith and increase our boldness in the Gospel?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 42 | OCT 16

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



## Series: The Kingdom to Come

Monday - Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Life is full of cares and worries that can potentially steal your joy in Christ, if left unsubmitted to His care. You may not even be going through anything especially difficult, anything “big,” but the danger to get off mission is always there. In fact, it may be during times of relative ease that we are most in danger since suffering and hardship typically have a way of pushing us closer to God in faith.

So, consider your day, your week, and your upcoming plans or obligations. They could feel perfectly routine or ordinary. But in your preoccupation and planning, are you forgetting to meditate on God’s Word, to pray honestly to Him, and to apply His Word to your life?

One thing these kingdom parables help us do is see everyday life with spiritual resonance. Things in the news or in the neighborhood may look bleak, but Christ upholds the universe. His plan will be fulfilled. The proliferation of evil seems inevitable, but Christ’s Church is continuing and will continue to bear fruit.

**What daily steps do you take to make sure the thorns of daily life do not choke out the seed of the kingdom in your life?**



## Tuesday – Matthew 13:10-17

It was an odd thing to say about these stories, wasn't it? Jesus said that He used parables just as much for obscuring as for unveiling, as much for concealing as for revealing.

This is a reminder, first of all, that truly seeing the kingdom of God depends upon God's revealing power. Think of Paul's enlightening words in Romans 8:7.

Second, however, these words are another reminder of just how polarizing the person and work of Christ is today. It explains why when you share the Gospel with one friend, he or she leans in to know more, and when you share with another, he or she becomes uncomfortable or offended. The message is the same, but the way it "lands" on people can be different.

This is a reminder to even believers that when our minds are set constantly on the cares of the world – on pleasure, on accumulation, on popularity or reputation – we can miss the work of the kingdom in our midst.

**How can you be more mindful of the reality of the kingdom in your everyday life?**



## Wednesday - Matthew 13:24-33

It seems counterintuitive to keep the two main thoughts of these two kingdom parables together but doing so can be an immense encouragement to us. First, the parable about the wheat and the tares is a caution to the Church that just because someone identifies as a Christian or with the Christian religion doesn't mean he or she has become a converted believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself affirmed that unbelievers will be masquerading as believers - often self-deceived about their spiritual state due to their affiliation - until the end of the age.

You would think, then, that any growth of the Church should strike us as suspicious. If the wheat and tares grow side by side until the end, the number of the "wheat" must end up depressingly lower than expected. Yet the second parable tells us that the kingdom will continue to grow and flourish. At the end of days, there will be an innumerable count of genuine believers eager to worship Christ for all eternity (Revelation 7:9).

**What does the parable of the wheat and the tares mean for your understanding of the church and your expectations for its purity?**



## Thursday - Matthew 13:34-43

It is not popular these days to speak of hell. Certainly in the wider culture the very assumptions that give rise to religious perspectives on afterlife have long since fallen out of favor. Hell in America is more of a curse word than a real danger that has faced every person who ever lived.

In Matthew 13:34-43, Jesus points to a stark truth that every person must reckon with: There is such a thing as “evil” and such a thing as “lawlessness,” and the end result for both is a place of eternal conscious torment. Hell is real, and it will be a place of unending and excruciating judgment, the unending experience of God’s wrath.

In the light of this important truth, the last line of Jesus’ exposition of the parable is gripping: “Let anyone who has ears listen.”

**How often do you think of hell? How does knowing hell awaits every unrepentant sinner motivate you in prayer and evangelism?**



## Friday – Matthew 13:44–58

In this passage, we see just how polarizing the Gospel of Jesus is. We who believe in Jesus know the Gospel truly is good news! It announces our only hope of forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and the gift of eternal life. Who wouldn't want that?

Well, it turns out that plenty of people want nothing to do with the kingdom and all the blessings that come with it. At the end of Matthew 13, just as Jesus had been foretelling or saying through His parables, the people in His very hometown rejected Him. They were offended by Him.

One reason for their rejection was their inability to fathom how anything mighty of God could come from their own surroundings. They knew Jesus' family. They knew His earthly father's trade. They could not see how any of that could amount to anything glorious.

The truth for today is that Christ plans to redeem everything we see. He can (and will) take what is ordinary and use it for His own glory. Just as He Himself came in a poor, ordinary family – born even in a feeding stall – Jesus is still using ordinary, unassuming people to spread His kingdom throughout the world.

**What do the circumstances of Jesus' birth and upbringing say about God's plans and priorities?**





FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 43 | OCT 23

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



## Series: The Kingdom to Come

Monday - Luke 15:1-7

Jesus responds to the accusatory insults about His “welcoming sinners” with a story about a shepherd who prioritizes the lost sheep. This turns our spiritual meritocracy on its head. In the economy of the kingdom of God, there are no “good people” and “bad people.” There are just sinners (all people), and then there’s Jesus.

So the next time you’re tempted to be outraged because lost people do indeed act like lost people, remember your Savior – who was not repulsed by you, who did not hold you at arm’s length or rail against you and your unholy transgressions – rushed to embrace you. Remember that Christ sees the lost not as gross or untouchable but as those who are “like sheep without a shepherd.”

When He saw sinners, He had compassion for them. This is not just good news for those offensive sinners “out there.” It’s good news for you, too.

**How can you cultivate the mindset in yourself of the apostle Paul, who considered himself the “worst of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15)?**



## Tuesday - Luke 15:8-10

How much is one person worth to Jesus? In Luke 15, Jesus gave us the image of a woman who has cleared everything out and lit everything up in order to find one lost coin. The woman acted as if this one lost coin made all the difference in the world.

In the same way, the Lord and His heavenly hosts celebrate the salvation of one sinner as if that one makes all the difference. Every time a lost person is saved, every time a stranger comes into the fellowship of the Church, we should act as though we didn't know how incomplete we were without them until they finally appeared. We treat every found person as if he or she were the missing piece.

That's how much one person is worth to Jesus. Each person is valuable, necessary and important to the kingdom.

**Based on your attitude and behavior, how much is a lost person worth to you?**



## Wednesday - Luke 15:11-16

The younger son's request for an early inheritance was obviously driven by his belief that something was missing from his life. Maybe he was bored. Maybe he felt stifled by life on his father's estate. Maybe he wanted to experience the world and indulge himself. In any event, he imagined that the money and what that money could buy would bring him a satisfaction he didn't have.

In the end, of course, he learned this was a fruitless pursuit. He ended up emptier than when he began, even less satisfied than he was before he had the inheritance. After all, he was staring at pig food with hungry eyes.

Sadly, it often takes getting to the end of our fruitless pursuits for us to learn that Jesus has always been more than enough. The truth is, Christ is more than enough, and if we have Him, we can suffer any loss or stifled pleasure because in Him we have everything we need.

**When was a time that you learned, maybe even the hard way, that Jesus is more than satisfying?**



## Thursday - Luke 15:17-24

Do you realize there isn't a day in your life when the Lord is surprised by your flaws and failures? He's not even surprised by your sin. He is God; therefore, He has seen it all coming. If you're a Christian, He knew what He was "signing up for" when He saved you.

This is something that is often very difficult for believers to apprehend. However, you do not get into the kingdom by His grace only to be kept in by your own goodness. It is grace all the way through.

We see a picture of this in the father's reception of the repentant son. When the lost son was found, the father wasn't shaking his head, crossing his arms, and "tsk-tsk"ing from his porch. No, he ran to him. He embraced him with joy. And he threw a party.

Similarly, the disposition of the heavenly Father over you is one of great joy. He's glad you're His. He's never sad to see you. He loves you and rejoices over you (Zephaniah 3:17).

**What difference does it make for you today as a Christian in knowing you woke up under the Lord's approval of you and will finish your day in the same?**



## Friday - Luke 15:25-32

The older son in the parable of the prodigal son was very busy measuring, namely, the younger son against himself. This is often how legalism works. The legalist doesn't really measure other people against the holiness of God but against the perceived holiness of himself.

From an outside perspective, the younger son may have looked like the only one of the two brothers who needed forgiveness. But the older son had also sinned against his father and needed just as much forgiveness as his younger brother needed.

We need to take care in realizing that all fall short of God's glory, including ourselves. This will help us have compassion for others who aren't as "put together" as we think we are, not to mention to express awe and praise for the God who has loved and forgiven even us.

**What can you do to point others to the grace of God over the next few days?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 44 | OCT 30

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



## Series: The Kingdom to Come

Monday - John 6:22-40

Jesus cautioned His hearers not to merely work for food that will not last, but to pursue the Bread of eternal life (Himself). The cares of the world, however, swallow us whole each day. The pressures and priorities of our ordinary lives crowd our attention to God and His Word. We spend most of our lives focused on things that ultimately won't matter. They may be important. They may be necessary. But if they are the heart of our pursuit of meaning, if they are the whole of our affections, we miss out on investing in things that last. Nobody on their deathbed wishes they'd spent more time chasing more money, bigger stuff and other temporary cares.

**Eternity matters in each moment of every day. Do our thoughts, interests and pursuits reflect that?**

**What can you do this week, even today, to invest in eternity?**





## Tuesday - John 6:41-51

What would change your life entirely? If you asked this question to any random person on the street, you might find a variety of answers that all amount to roughly the same thing: an improved set of circumstances. However, Jesus was always pointing us to a deeper and more eternal perspective.

Jesus has not come primarily to make our lives better, but to give us real life! He has come that we might in fact live forever, conquering death and enjoying His presence in the unending paradise of the new heaven and new earth. If you're a Christian, this gift is already yours. The most important things about you have now been settled. Your sins are forever forgiven; your life belongs to Jesus; and you will be raised in a resurrection body to enjoy eternal life.

**How does knowing you have eternal life impact your worries or complaints today?**



## Wednesday - John 6:52-59

Everywhere He went, Jesus was centering everything on Himself. On the road to Emmaus, after His Resurrection, for instance, He told the two disciples that the whole Old Testament is about Him (Luke 24:44-47). He told others that He's the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). In this passage, He said that unless someone lives in Him, they would die (6:53, 58).

Jesus compares how we need Him with how we need food. If you and I don't eat, we will die. We will get malnourished and emaciated, and eventually our bodies will shut down. Jesus made the parallel point about belief in Him. He's not an option. He's not an add-on. Just as not eating food means we will die, not trusting in Him means we will die the second death (Revelation 21:8).

**What are some practical ways that you can “feed on Jesus” today?**



## Thursday - John 6:60-65

When Jesus was being literal with His disciples, they took Him metaphorically. When He was being metaphorical, they took Him literally. They always seemed to be a few steps behind.

Like the disciples, our ignorance is no hindrance to God. Our spiritual lacking seems to be a prerequisite for His awakening grace. In this passage, Jesus taught that it was the Spirit who enlightens sinners to know and believe in the Gospel. Our blindness is no difficulty for God.

We must really be loved by God! If He gave us this gift apart from our efforts and despite our blindness, He must really want us and care for us.

**The greatest proof of God's love is the giving of His own Son to die for us on the Cross, but what are other pieces of evidence that God loves you?**



## Friday - John 6:66-71

Jesus knew full well Peter would later deny Him. He even told Peter that this was going to happen, which Peter denied (Matthew 26:30-35). Jesus said elsewhere that anyone who denied Him before men, He would also deny before the Father. So denying Him is no little sin.

In this passage, however, Jesus appears to have commended Peter's words and hints at condemnation for Judas. Later He would forgive Peter and restore him, whereas Judas carried out his betrayal and ended up taking his own life.

So what makes the difference between Peter and Judas? The difference appears to be repentance. Peter repented of his sin. Judas seemed merely to regret it. Peter faced Jesus with godly sorrow and humility. Judas turned his back, his sorrow being worldly. Repentance isn't feeling sorry you got caught or simply wanting to be free of guilt. Repentance is a despair of your own sin and a desire to be in fellowship with Jesus.

**Since the life of following Jesus means repenting daily, what areas of your life - behaviors, thoughts and words - do you need to turn over to Jesus right now?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 45 | NOV 6

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



## Series: The Kingdom to Come

Monday - John 11:1-27

Now, we know that all illnesses and afflictions – and even death itself – are in the world because of sin. But there isn't a neat mathematical equation between a particular sin and a particular affliction. In other words, someone born blind is not a direct consequence of a specific sin in their lives, but simply the consequence of living in a fallen world. For the Christian especially, we see that the Lord ordains difficulty in our lives so that we might draw closer to Him and rely on His strength in our weakness more fully.

Jesus waited for Lazarus to die because He knew that a miraculous raising would bring more glory to Himself than a miraculous healing. And you can reasonably (and biblically!) assume that Jesus allows difficult things to come into your life because He will get more glory – and you will become more like Him – than if those difficulties didn't come.

**As painful as many of the difficulties we face in life often are, how do they lead us closer to Jesus than do times of ease and comfort?**



## Tuesday - John 11:28-37

“Jesus wept,” John tells us in verse 35 of this passage. It may be the shortest verse in the Bible, but these two words contain depths of wisdom and insight.

To begin with, we see the real humanity of Jesus. He has tear ducts that cry. He has a heart that can be broken by the brokenness of humanity. This certainly adds a profound resonance to our understanding of the incarnation. The Son of God wasn't just willing to put on flesh; He was willing to feel the weight of the human experience. We see the full humanity of Jesus in John 11:35. Jesus, as the ideal image-bearer, presents to us the right human response to death: He wept.

Jesus wasn't just grieving the passing of His friend Lazarus in this moment. He was also grieving the reality of death. This is not the world as He made it to be. Death is a grievous distortion in the creation He called “good.”

**How does Jesus' weeping over Lazarus's death reveal about His character and compassion over our lives?**



## Wednesday - John 11:38-44

The Lord specializes in “hopeless” causes.

When Jesus got to Lazarus’s grave, there was already a stench. The Lord was four days late. Lazarus was dead. He was “deader” than dead. In the hands of anyone else, this case would have been hopeless, impossible. But our God is the God of the impossible. He holds the keys to life and death. He can make life out of nothing! Nothing is too difficult for Him (Jeremiah 32:17).

He has this power over your life, too. No matter what you are facing right now, the Lord is sovereign over it. No, He may not directly deliver you from your present trouble, but He will secure you to Himself in the midst of it, and He will never let you go. As the saying goes, “Sometimes He calms the storm; sometimes He calms the sailor.”

**What is the most significant lesson the Lord has taught you in the midst of suffering or other difficulties?**





## Thursday - John 11:44-57

Once again we see how polarizing the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ was in His own day. For one thing, notice how the most offended at Christ's raising of Lazarus happened to be the religious elite. Why do you think that was? Shouldn't they be celebrating that the Messiah had come? It turns out that their passion was not exactly channeled for messianic expectation - at least, not for this kind of Messiah.

Rather, from a Gospel perspective, Jesus was actually turning them right-side up by overthrowing the expectations and standards of the religious elite of His day. Jesus does the same thing today with our self-righteousness. We, as did the Jewish religious leaders of this era, often use religion to make ourselves look good, to exalt ourselves in the eyes of others, and even to wield a kind of leverage over others who are not as theologically rigorous or spiritually athletic as we are. Thankfully, for our sake, Jesus comes along with His radical grace for sinners and tears down the whole scaffolding of our pride.

**Why is self-righteousness such an offense to God?**



## Friday - John 12:9-11

Assuming that Lazarus had passed into Paradise when he died, he was enjoying the comforts of heaven in the presence of glory for a time. And then Jesus “yanked” him right back out of there. His resurrection was not like Jesus’ Resurrection, or as ours will be at the Second Coming of Christ. We will put on immortality, as Christ did at His rising. But Lazarus was resurrected back into his mortal body. He was going to have to die again!

And in John 12:9-11 we see that this is exactly what his enemies have in mind. You and I may not face the same kind of threat that Lazarus did (nor even the same kind of threat that our brothers and sisters in the persecuted Church around the world do). But to align with Christ - to receive His death and His life as our own - is to make yourself a target of those who hate God. Christ promised this kind of trouble to His followers. But He also promised the victory over the trouble. And we cannot have the latter without the former.

**Have you ever suffered for being a follower of Jesus? If so, how did you find encouragement in the midst of your trouble?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 46 | NOV 13

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



## **Series: Worship**

**Monday - Romans 1:18-20; 1 Chronicles 16:23-31**

Every Sunday for LifeGroup Bible Study, there comes a time where we stand to our feet and sing songs of worship to God. But why do we do that, and what does worship truly mean? This week in our daily devotionals, we will look at what God's Word says about worship and what exactly worship's place is in our life.

Worship is the act of giving honor and praise to someone or something. Worship is within the DNA of all people because everyone worships something. Whether it be a favorite sports team, favorite movie or song, when we witness greatness or beauty, we have to tell about it. God has engraved worship on our hearts because we are designed to give praise and honor to the God who is greater than all else. The question is, what are you worshipping?

**What have you worshipped the most this week?**



## Tuesday - Job 38

Who is the true G.O.A.T.? Jordan or Lebron? Messi or Ronaldo? Debates of “who is the greatest of all time?” will rage on and on, but why? We can’t help talking about successful athletes because what they have done and accomplished inspires awe in everyone who could only dream of accomplishing the same. This is built into who we are because God has created us to worship Him, and we do so because of what He has accomplished.

We worship God for two reasons - what He has made and what He has done. Only God can stretch out the heavens with His words, breathe life into dirt to create humanity, and forgive sin in order to make holy what is broken. This is why we worship. We give God praise and honor because He deserves all of it.

**How does understanding more about God inspire further worship of Him?**



## Wednesday - Luke 4:1-12

As stated earlier in our devotionals, we all worship something. How do I know? Take a moment and recount your day yesterday. What did you think about the most? What did you take the most time doing? What do you spend the most money on? It's very likely that what we spend the most time, energy and resources on, is what we worship.

Throughout our days, we will be tempted to worship everything but God, but in Luke 4 we see how Jesus counteracted that temptation with God's Word. Although temptation will arise, we must choose to worship God instead of the things God created because He is always better.

**What steps do you have in place to fight the temptation to worship things other than God?**



Thursday – Psalm 67:3; 149:3; 144:9; 56:11-12; 72:11-15; 22:3; 145:4

Throughout our devotionals this week, we have outlined why we worship and to whom we give worship, but how do we practice this? In their book *Holy Roar*, Chris Tomlin and Darren Whitehead outline seven words that are used in Scripture to describe unique ways to worship God that we can glean from.

*Yadah* means to worship with extended hands, *Halal* means to worship with celebration and jubilation, *Zamar* means to worship through music, *Towdah* means a worship expectantly of what God has yet to do, *Barak* means to kneel/bow in worship, *Tehillah* means to worship through singing, and *Shabach* means a shout of praise.

Worship can take many forms – and woe to us if we only see worship as singing songs! Let us see worship as a way of life to give praise and honor to God!

**How have these Hebrew words changed your view of worship?**



## Friday – Proverbs 9:10; Acts 1:8

Often, to follow Christ, we must step out of our comfort zone. In the many ways we are called to worship (outlined in yesterday's devotional), stepping out in faith is at the center of it all. What is holding you back from fully surrendering to God the praise and honor He is due?

For many of us, that is the fear of what others will think about us. "If I raise my hands in worship, will people think I'm weird?" or similar thoughts are often what rings in our ears that strikes fear into our hearts and holds us back from worshipping. However, Proverbs 9 says that we should fear God rather than man, caring more about His opinion of us rather than others'. Our praise is a delight to God, so let's praise God with all we have!

**How can you be bold in worship today?**





FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 47 | NOV 20

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



## Series: To the Cross

Monday - Luke 19:28-40

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, He fulfilled a prophecy about Him given by the prophet Zechariah 500 years earlier (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus was able to direct the disciples to the exact location and moment where they could secure the colt for Him to ride. Jesus is the Messiah who was foretold. And He is able both to predict and control the future. Jesus is God.

Yet He rode on a colt, a humble animal. He had not come to conquer but to suffer. He had not come to deal out death, but to die. He came to be humiliated for us on a cross. But His humiliation is now over. He is now highly exalted and has the name that is above every name. When Jesus returns to our world to make all things new, He is going to come on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). The first time He came to our world, He came riding a humble animal and He came to give His life for us. When He returns, He will return in power ready to eliminate evil, pain, and suffering for His people forever.

**What are you most grateful for about the first time Jesus came to our world? What are you most looking forward to about His return?**



## Tuesday - John 12:14-17

Verse 17 tells us who was a part of the crowd the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt. These people had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. Makes sense! If you saw a person raise someone from the dead, you likely would follow that person to see what would happen next. The One who can raise a dead person to life is worth following and worthy of awe and appreciation.

Yet our story is greater than that of the crowd. We have an even greater experience. We have not seen Jesus raise someone from the dead physically, but we have been raised from the dead spiritually. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, but God has made us alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5)! Like Lazarus, we were dead with no hope of bringing ourselves to life. Like Lazarus, Jesus loved us and invited us to come out of our tombs and embrace new life with Him. If the crowd who saw Jesus raise a dead man followed Jesus and worshipped Him, how much more should we?

**What similarities are there to being dead physically and dead spiritually?  
How does this help us understand what it means to be brought to life by Christ?**



## Wednesday - Luke 19:41-44

In this passage, Jesus prophesied judgment upon Jerusalem - that a time was coming when the city would be destroyed. History tells us that what Jesus said would happen did indeed happen. In AD 70, Jerusalem was attacked by Rome and much of the city, along with the temple, was destroyed. Yet in this same passage, we see Jesus weep for His people and express His desire to care for them.

Some theologians have identified two categories of God's attributes: 1) attributes of God's greatness, or His transcendence, and 2) attributes of God's goodness, or His immanence. In this one passage, we see Jesus is both great and good. He can predict the future and ensure it happens while loving people in a tender and merciful way. He is great, and He is good. He is all-knowing and He loves all. In His holiness and power, Jesus is above all and beyond all, and yet, He came here to offer mercy and grace to people.

**What attributes of God are you most grateful for today?**



## Thursday – Matthew 21:10-16

In this passage, we see a stark contrast in how the religious leaders and children responded to Jesus. The religious leaders wanted the children to stop praising Him while the children were excited to praise Him. Several times in the Gospels, we find Jesus affirming the faith of children. He did not affirm them because they were innocent, as we know none of us are righteous and holy before our holy God (Romans 3:10). He affirmed them because of their trust, their awe and their joy.

The faith Jesus affirmed in the children should be the faith of all Christ-followers. The awe the children had should characterize our awe and wonder for Jesus. The trust children place in parents and caregivers should be an illustration of our trust in our Savior. Jesus desires that our faith be childlike.

**Where in your faith should you be more childlike? How can you grow in having faith like a child?**



## Friday - Luke 19:45-48

Luke 19 begins and ends with Jesus and thieves, yet Jesus acted very differently in the two encounters. At the beginning of Luke 19, Zacchaeus was an admitted thief, a tax collector who overtaxed his own people so he could line his own pockets. When Jesus went to his house for a meal, Jesus did not turn over the tables or condemn him. Jesus offered salvation and forgiveness to Zacchaeus. But at the end of Luke 19, Jesus walked into the temple and saw unfair and distracting commerce taking place. Jesus was livid, and He turned over the tables and spoke strongly against the people who were selling because they were stealing from God's intent for the temple and God's desire for all nations to be able to come to the temple.

Jesus' frustration and anger in the temple reminds us how much He hates hypocrisy and how much He longs for true worship. He pursues worshippers. He pursued Zacchaeus and went to his house in spite of the people complaining that He was with a "sinner." Yet Zacchaeus was not a hypocrite; he was honest about who he was and his faults. The temple, however, had become the epitome of hypocrisy.

**Where are you in danger of hypocrisy in your life because your beliefs, words and actions do not match?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 48 | NOV 27

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



## Series: To the Cross

Monday - Mark 12:13-17

For the Pharisees and the Herodians, this was about much more than tax policy. Paying taxes to Rome was somewhat of an open sore for the Jews. After all, they were supposed to be God's free and redeemed people. Their question to Jesus about the lawfulness of Jews paying a Roman tax was their vain attempt to get Him in trouble before the temple crowd. If he said yes, the Jews would reject Him as a Roman sympathizer. If He said no, they could turn Him in to the Romans as a rebel.

Jesus' response was brilliant. He refused to be crammed into a political box. Therefore, He answered with wisdom, emphasizing the priorities of life: Give Caesar his tax, but don't give him ultimate authority over your life; honor the law, but honor the Lord above the law.

**How do you need to shift your priorities to honor the Lord above all?**





## Tuesday – Mark 12:18–27

The Sadducees tried a theological trap, but Jesus revealed that the topic of their misguided question – marriage in the resurrection – is something that will not continue to exist in the new heavens and new earth. Is Jesus minimizing the beauty of marriage? Far from it! We know from Ephesians 5 that Jesus Himself is the archetype for understanding the meaning of marriage. Instead, Jesus is expanding their categories of what heaven will be like.

In heaven, the relationships we have with the Lord and our fellow saints will mysteriously surpass any form of love we experience here on earth. This is the “power of God” that Jesus referred to. He invited the Sadducees to see that God’s wisdom and power are so much greater than we could imagine, and the glories that will be revealed on the other side of eternity will be more magnificent than we could ever dare hope.

**Why is it important that we listen to the Scriptures for our understanding of what heaven will be like?**



## Wednesday - Mark 12:28-34

Jesus cited what the Jews call the Shema from Deuteronomy 6. “Shema” is the Hebrew word for “listen” or “hear.” This passage is one of the most well-known passages of all the Old Testament Scriptures. At the time the Shema was written, there were many false gods and religions competing for the belief of the people. In the middle of all this religious confusion, the Lord revealed through the prophet Moses who He really is: “The Lord is one.” In other words, He is different, unique and set apart in His nature and character. He is all-sufficient and all-powerful. He is the one true God.

We should consider it a great gift that God would be kind enough to reveal Himself to us and tell us something about how to relate to Him and to others.

**What distractions surround you as you go throughout your day? How will you listen to and obey the one true God in the midst of those distractions?**



## Thursday - Mark 12:35-37

With a knowledge of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus' listeners understood there was a Messiah who would come one day to make everything right again in Israel, and this Messiah would be a descendant of David.

Jesus quoted from Psalm 110 to challenge their assumptions about this Messiah. The popular belief was that the Messiah would be merely a human descendant of King David. If that were so, Jesus asked, then why did David call the Messiah his "Lord"? The only way to make sense of Psalm 110 is if the Messiah was not just a man but also God. Jesus revealed that, according to this familiar psalm, the Messiah would be God's Son and come through David's lineage.

Jesus invited His listeners to abandon what they thought or assumed He should be like and to see Him for who He really is according to the Scriptures.

**What are some ways you will show honor to Jesus as your Lord?**



## Friday - Mark 12:38-40

In these three verses, Jesus gave a scathing rebuke to those with hypocritical devotion - they appear to be devoted to God on the outside but are actually far from Him on the inside.

Jesus provided five marks of hypocritical devotion:

1. Focuses on the external over the internal
2. Is driven by the applause of others
3. Craves positions of power and privilege
4. Abuses power for personal gain at the expense of others
5. Has outward religion that doesn't match inward reality

We tend to think of others as hypocrites but not ourselves. We must resist this because we are all prone to hypocrisy to some degree. No one on this side of the resurrection reads the Bible and decides to be a self-righteous Pharisee on purpose, but we all easily drift in that direction if we take our eyes off Jesus.

**Which of the marks of hypocritical devotion do you struggle with, and how will you fight to resist that drift?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 49 | DEC 4

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



## Series: To the Cross

Monday - Luke 22:7-13

The providence and the planning behind the first Lord's Supper is given to us in this passage. We see that the Lord orchestrated the very room where the Passover meal would be taken, planned the meeting between a man carrying water and Peter and John, and even instructed the very words that would be spoken between them. The Lord oversaw all the details leading to this important meal, the meal we celebrate today. Just as the Lord planned all the events that led to the meal, the Lord also planned the death of Jesus for us. At the perfect time in history, God sent Jesus into the world to die for us (Galatians 4:4).

Of that first meal, the Scripture says the Passover lamb "had to be sacrificed" (Luke 22:7). Just as lambs were sacrificed each year to remind the people that they needed their sins forgiven, Jesus, the Lamb of God, had to be sacrificed for our sins to be forgiven. We could not have our sins forgiven without Him. He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

**What does the Lord's involvement in the planning of the first Lord's Supper say to you about the importance of this meal for us?**



## Tuesday - Luke 22:14-18

Jesus told the disciples that He “fervently desired” to eat the Passover with them before He suffered. He knew the Cross was before Him. He knew the suffering and shame He was going to endure, and in the midst of that horror, He “fervently desired” to eat this sacred meal with His disciples, which would commemorate His blood being spilled, because “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

He desired to be with His disciples for this memorial meal and to share with them the significance of His coming death. He desires to be with us, too, which is why He died - so we could know Him and be known by Him. His blood had to be spilled so we could be forgiven of our sins. He had to be condemned in His body so there would be “no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

**What does the phrase “fervently desired” say to you about God’s desire to enjoy a relationship with you?**



## Wednesday - John 13:1-20

The Gospel of John is the only Gospel that does not record any of Jesus' parables. In his book about the Gospel of John, Parable of Joy, Michael Card commented that this is because all of Jesus' life was a parable to John - all that Jesus did was a sermon for John. Jesus taught through His life and John recorded all that he learned. The loudest, most impactful "parable" is recorded in John 13, when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. When Jesus washed feet, He took off His outer garments, knelt before His disciples, and carried out the lowly task of washing their dirty feet. When Jesus served us, He took off His kingly garments and His royal crown and He stepped into our world. He stooped low and put on human skin. He took on the humiliating death of crucifixion to bring us to Himself. We have been served by Jesus, and we are now to serve others.

**Who can you serve this week as you remember how Christ has served you?**





## Thursday - Luke 22:19

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He took the bread and proclaimed it as His body given for us. When the apostle Paul opened his letter to the church in Galatia, he wrote: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:3-4).

Jesus Christ's giving Himself for us is what separates the Christian faith from every other religion. Every other religion is about human beings' attempts to earn their way to the heights of spiritual attainment, giving ourselves to God (or a god) in such a way that God will approve of us and accept us, for example. The message of the Christian faith is not about our giving or our doing but about Christ having given Himself for us.

**Why is it so hard for people to believe the core message of the Christian faith - that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us?**



## Friday - Luke 22:20-23

One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, was at the first Lord's Supper when Jesus declared that His blood was going to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Peter later wrote: "For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Jesus took our sins and the punishment for those sins upon Himself so that we would be redeemed and set free. Theologian C. S. Lewis wrote, "It costs God nothing, so far as we know, to create nice things: but to convert rebellious wills cost Him crucifixion."<sup>1</sup> When God wanted to create the world, He merely had to declare, "Let there be light." When He wanted to make us His sons and daughters, it cost Jesus His life and His blood.

**What are you motivated by gratitude to do because of the Cross and death of Jesus for sinners?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 50 | DEC 11

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



## Series: To the Cross

Monday - Mark 14:27-31

The disciples were so certain that they would never fall away and would always “have Jesus’ back.” Peter dug in his heels the most, but Jesus doubled down: “Even you will deny knowing Me three times!” (paraphrased). Peter and the rest denied the very possibility – they couldn’t imagine betraying Him.

Before we are tempted to look shamefully upon Peter and the others for their inevitable cowardice, we should consider how often we are tempted to abandon our allegiance to Jesus under pressure.

The good news is that although we fail Jesus all the time, He never fails us.

**In what areas of life can you be a witness to the Gospel rather than abandoning your allegiance to Jesus?**



## Tuesday - Luke 22:14-18

There is a jarring contrast in Jesus' disposition between these verses and the ones that came before. Up to this point, Jesus has shown a remarkable sense of controlled confidence. In fact, His calm dignity stirred up awe and amazement among those He encountered. Even when predicting His own death, there wasn't the slightest hint of dread or trepidation.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, something changed. The mighty Messiah was suddenly found calling out to the Father, pleading to be spared from the cup of His wrath. Jesus was so gripped by the horror of this looming suffering that the weight of it dropped Him to His knees.

Luke tells us that this sudden weakness was so fierce that the God the Father was moved to send an angel to assist Jesus (22:43). Jesus is the Lord over all the heavens and its creatures, yet one of those creatures is dispatched to strengthen and sustain Him.

This remarkable display of humility reveals the great lengths the Messiah went through to save sinners such as you and me.

**What does the weight of Jesus' agony say about the weight of God's wrath against our sin?**



## Wednesday - Mark 14:43-52

The gravity of Judas's betrayal cannot be missed. He was one of the inner 12, a chosen disciple of Jesus. Imagine how the other disciples must have felt when one of their own, a teammate and fellow soldier in the trenches of ministry, just does the unthinkable and betrays Jesus for a lump of extra cash.

Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, a quiet place of prayer, and this is the place that Judas leads a mob to arrest him.

Imagine a pastor of your church going into his study for his regularly scheduled quiet time of prayer, and one of His staff members decides to betray him. Knowing exactly when and where the pastor would be for his private prayer time, he leads a mob there. It's the most tragic level of treachery.

And for what? A few pieces of silver and the respect of the hypocrites in power. Judas was more driven by his horizontal consequences than he was by his vertical ones.

**In what ways are you tempted to be more concerned by your relationships with others than by your relationship with God?**



## Thursday - Mark 14:53-65

The main prosecuting charge here is that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple, which, of course, would be an act of vandalism and blasphemy. However, Jesus never actually said that. He predicted the temple would be destroyed, but He never actually called for it to be destroyed.

It becomes clear that Jesus' enemies have to come up with an intricate web of lies to try and make their case against Him; even still, they can't seem to keep their stories straight. It's a mockery of the justice system.

The irony lays on thick as they continue to judge the One who is the righteous Judge of all men. Although He is the very embodiment of truth, they condemn Him on false charges.

Why would Jesus submit Himself to such shameful indignity at the hands of His sinful creatures? Because He was motivated by His love for the Father and for sinners such as you and me.

**Jesus warned us in John 15:20 that we should not expect better treatment than He. Describe the last time you were ridiculed or mocked for your faith in Christ.**



## Friday – Mark 14:66–15:5

The events of these verses take place in the courtyard below (v. 54). Peter was a man who walked with Jesus for three years. He spent almost every waking hour with Jesus from the moment he was called by Him. He learned the Scriptures by sitting at Jesus' feet. He witnessed the kingdom of God by standing next to Jesus as He performed miracle after miracle. He was invited into the inner circle of Jesus; in fact, he was one of only three men invited by Jesus to pray with Him in Gethsemane. It was there that he told Jesus, "Even if others deny you, I never will."

This Peter denies Jesus three times in these verses. Upstairs, Jesus declared who He truly is; although He would lose His life over it, he was winning the pleasure of the Father. Peter cowardly and shamefully denied his own relationship with Jesus; he was in danger of losing everything because of it.

The good news for Peter is there is grace for sinners (even momentary betrayers) in Jesus Christ. Peter went from denying Jesus at His death to preaching at Pentecost after Jesus' Ascension.

**Have you ever felt unworthy of God's grace because of the ways you've sinned against Him? How does Peter's story comfort you?**





FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 51 | DEC 18

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



## Series: To the Cross

Monday - Mark 15:6-15

Pilate offered to release one of two prisoners, as was his custom during the Passover festival. To his surprise, and likely disappointment, the crowd asked for the freedom of Barabbas, a murderous insurrectionist, and for the crucifixion of Jesus, a man he could not seem to find much fault with.

Pilate, of course, reluctantly released Barabbas and delivered the Messiah to be crucified. Imagine how unbelievable the news must have been for the murderous convict when he found out his scheduled execution was canceled, that a man named Jesus would be crucified, and that he was now free to go.

For those of us who know Christ as Lord, the news of deliverance means so much more than escaping death; it means having a new life in Christ and eternity of enjoying our Lord together.

We might be tempted to think we would never be guilty of preferring Barabbas to Christ, but in some sense, that is what we do when we choose sin over Christ. Instead, let us never stop remembering all that Jesus suffered on our behalf so we can endure and never give up running the race of faith.

**How does it impact you to know that Jesus suffered on your behalf?**



## Tuesday – Mark 15:16–20

A whole company of soldiers took Jesus away to their private quarters so they could beat Him and ridicule Him further. They dressed Him in royal colors, crowned Him with thorns, and then mocked Him as the so-called “King of the Jews.”

Consider the scandal of all this: This mockery was delivered by mere men against the Maker of men! Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the sovereign Lord over all, the eternal Word of life, the Maker and Sustainer of all. Yet here we see Him shredded, bruised and bloodied, treated worse than a criminal, and mocked when He should have been worshipped.

The result was complete humiliation and degradation. The goal was not just to break Him down physically but emotionally and spiritually as well.

Jesus was torn to shreds and mocked so we could be made whole and reconciled with God.

**In what ways is Jesus mocked today?**



## Wednesday - Mark 15:21-32

Mark highlighted the mocking of Jesus more than any other Gospel writer. Jesus was mocked by soldiers. He was mocked by passersby. He was mocked by the two thieves occupying crosses next to Him.

Ironically, we still find truths in their mocking. For example, they mocked Him for saying the temple would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. But what they didn't realize was that when Jesus said He would raise the temple in three days, He was using the physical temple as a metaphor for His body, which is the true temple of God.

Furthermore, through His Cross and Resurrection, Jesus would fulfill everything that the temple prefigured. Through His death, there would be no more need for temple sacrifices because God and sinner would be reconciled through Him. Through the Cross, the presence of God is no longer found in a place but in a person - Jesus.

**How can believers turn the mocking of Jesus into an opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus?**



## Thursday - Mark 15:33-41

For centuries before Jesus, the glory of God was considered to be veiled in the Holy of Holies, in the center of the Jewish temple. Now with the sacrificial death of Jesus, the glory of God is freely accessible to all who come to Him through faith in Jesus. The dwelling place of God is no longer in a place but a person (Jesus) and His people (the Church). The old order is done, and the new order is here.

Each year, only one person in all of Judea was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, and only on one day of the year and only with the blood of a sacrifice (Leviticus 16). But with the holy and perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, the only sacrifice that could actually stand in our place and atone for our sins, the veil is no longer needed and the sacrifices are no longer needed. All that is needed is faith in Jesus, the Son of God, who laid down His life to save us.

**What reasons do you have for believing Jesus is the Son of God sent for your salvation?**



## Friday - Mark 15:42-47

Imagine what it must have been like for Joseph of Arimathea, and any other disciples present, to remove Jesus' body from the cross. To pull the nails out of His hands - hands that once healed and helped many. To free His feet from the cross - feet that took Him throughout the area, teaching, healing, and performing miracles. To wrap His broken body - the very embodiment of the love of God. In that moment, Jesus' disciples would have wrestled with the hard question: Was this really the Messiah?

If the story ended there, then we could know He wasn't, of course. Even though the centurion thought the way Jesus died was significant enough to call Him the Son of God, it is Jesus' death, burial and Resurrection, according to the Scriptures, that assures us of His identity and the success of His mission (1 Corinthians 15).

Jesus was beaten, flogged, pierced, wrapped in linen, and buried. He was dead; everyone knew it. And three days later, He rose again!

**How should Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross cause us to think about death for ourselves and others?**



FALL 2022

**DEVO**

WEEK 52 | DEC 25

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



## Series: Christmas

Monday - John 1:1-5

With the first portion of John's prologue speaking about the Word's eternal divinity and cosmic activity, why is the middle portion concerned with John the Baptist (vv. 6-9)?

The Old Testament pointed forward to a messenger whom God would send to prepare the way for the Messiah. In Isaiah 40:3, a voice is described as crying out, "Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert." In Malachi 3:1, "See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me." John the Baptist was not the light, but he pointed to the Light - to Jesus, the eternal Word, the One who shines life-giving light to humanity. The forerunner himself therefore testified that Jesus is the Messiah who was and is the eternal Word.

This Christmas, let's make sure we don't lose sight of the staggering significance of the incarnation. John the Baptist, the last in line of the old-covenant prophets, prepared people for the coming of the Messiah who was also God. The true light indeed was coming into the world.

**Why is it overwhelming to consider the cosmic breadth of the Word's activity?**





## Tuesday – John 1:6–9

“The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world” (v. 9).  
What does this light do?

First, it opens our eyes to the truth of Jesus. We live in darkness without Christ, and the only way that we can come to know Him is through the light that shines in the darkness. Second, the light exposes. The light rightly judges all humankind – our works, and even our motives and desires. We don’t see our lives accurately until we see ourselves in the light of Jesus. Third, the light guides us. The Holy Spirit, as He helps us understand Scripture, guides us in the ways we are to live. Finally, the light divides. Though eternal life is offered to all humanity, the light nonetheless divides those who reject Christ from those who turn to Him. Jesus, the true Light, came into the world so that all might believe.

**How have you seen these works of the Word’s light – illuminating, exposing, guiding, and dividing – in your own life?**



## Wednesday - John 1:10-13

Adoption is a beautiful picture of the Gospel in the home. Apart from Jesus Christ, we were all orphans, separated from God. We were all in sin, alienated from the life God desires for us, but God has adopted us through faith in Christ (Galatians 4:4-7). We are made part of God's family through our faith in Jesus. What an incredible thought: We who were once enemies of God could be called children of God and co-heirs with Christ, receiving His inheritance (Romans 8:16-17). It's all because of God's grace and mercy: "See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children - and we are!" (1 John 3:1).

**What are the benefits of being a child of God that most stand out to you?**



## Thursday - John 1:14-15

In verse 14, the apostle John brings himself into the story: “We observed his glory...” In other words, John was saying, I was there with the others, and we witnessed the Son’s incarnate glory. John saw the transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain, where Jesus’ face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light. John heard the voice of the Father say, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7). This witness is essential to John, as stated in his first epistle: “What we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). And he wrote about these things “so that our joy may be complete” (v. 4).

**In what ways do you testify to those around you of what you have seen and heard of Jesus?**



**Friday - John 1:16-18**

As the eternal Word, Jesus revealed God to us. Further, He identified with us as a human being. The last phrase, “he has revealed him,” in verse 18 means that Jesus came to clarify for us who God is. The reason Jesus came to this earth is because God wants to be known, and Jesus is the fullest way we can know who God is. Not only does Jesus identify with God. In putting on human flesh, Jesus identified with us in our humanity (Hebrews 4:15). Have you ever thought, “Where is God?” Or, “Why is He allowing this to happen to me?” Christmas is meant to tell us that God does care - and He does understand. In fact, God cared so much that Jesus became a man in order to experience the things we do. We have a Savior who not only suffered with us, but also suffered for us, so that one day all suffering would end.

**How does it bring comfort to you to know that the Son of God cares about human suffering and experienced it Himself as a human being?**

