

More About Jesus

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More About Jesus

What is a Christian?

or

It's Who You Know That Matters!

In the book *The Little Prince*, the author describes a conversation between a fox and a small boy. The boy, who asks how he should try to communicate with the fox, is told to say nothing at first. “Words are the source of misunderstanding,” says the fox. Have you ever noticed how misleading the English language can be? If you always took it literally, many common expressions would make no sense at all.

For example, ask to buy a yard or a garage at a *Yard or Garage Sale* and see what they say. Seems like false advertising doesn't it? Have you ever seen a *Body of Water*? Is that describing somebody who gets around by just going with the flow?

Many signs, like *Watch Your Head*, seem to ask the impossible. You're likely to get a whiplash trying. Ever seen *Slow Children Playing*? Do they grow up to be *Slow Men Working*? How about a sign saying *Clean Restrooms*? You'd think they'd have employees to take care of that!

What do you do with instructions that are not specific enough like those on a can of spray deodorant, *Shake Well Before Using*? Are they referring to you or the can?

Many people have a fear of flying—why do airlines refer to *Departing Passengers* and call the destination *Terminal*?

Some words when used together seem mutually exclusive like *Good Grief*.

Unfortunately, it can be just as confusing in the religious world. Have you ever wondered about *Those on Beds of Sickness*? If they would just stay off of those beds they'd probably feel fine. Have you ever been asked to *Kneel as Far as Possible*? Just how far is it possible to kneel, anyway?

Has a song leader ever asked you to *Turn Over In Your Hymnal*? Impossible until they make larger hymnals. It's

even harder when a pastor invites you to *Turn With Me In Your Bible*. Sounds like some sort of gymnastics routine.

Perhaps you've been told how important it is to *Give God Your Heart* and wondered how you could do it. Of course it can't be taken literally, but when you try to apply the concept any other way, you find it's no easier. Some say, “You give God your heart by *Surrendering Your Will*. How do you do that? By *Giving Your All* or *Putting Your Hand in God's Hand*?

Maybe you've been told that no one ever comes to God who does not first *Fall on The Rock and Be Broken*, but where is the rock and how do you break? Some say you need to use the *Eye of Faith* and *Behold the Lamb*. What does that mean?

It gets worse because Jesus said you need to *Be Born Again*. Since you had no control over your first birth it's easy to wonder what you can do about a second one.

If you feel confused, you're not alone. Nicodemus, one of the brightest religious leaders of Christ's day, had trouble understanding. When Jesus told him about the need for a new birth, Nick responded, “But how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?” (John 3:4). There ought to be a plain and simple answer to a question this important. There is!

“And this is eternal life: [it means] to know (to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with, and understand) You, the only true and real God, and [likewise] to know Him, Jesus [as the] Christ, (the Anointed One, the Messiah), Whom You have sent” John 17:3 (The Amplified Bible)

What is a Christian?

After receiving a lengthy standing ovation, a great actor offered to do recitations at audience request. The delighted crowd called for one recitation after another as the actor complied. A request was made for the 23rd Psalm, which the actor recited with wonderful expression. As he finished the passage, the audience broke into cheers and applause. Suddenly, the actor noticed an elderly man in the audience whom he recognized as the godly pastor of his boyhood church. On impulse he invited the old man to come forward and asked him to recite the same Psalm. The old gentleman did so, and when he had finished, nearly all in the theatre were silent—many, including the great actor, were weeping. Regaining his composure the actor commented, “I knew the 23rd Psalm, but my old pastor knows the Shepherd.”

1. What is a Christian?

You may be surprised to know that most people who are asked that question give answers that have to do with how a person acts. They usually mention things you must or must not do if you are a Christian. If a person defines a Christian as someone who is nice or good, there is a problem, because there are many nice people who are not Christians. There are even some disagreeable people who claim to be Christians.

2. Are we saved because we do good things?

- Romans 3:20
- Galatians 2:16
- Galatians 3:11
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Titus 3:5

3. Is the following statement true or false? A person will never go to hell, simply for being bad!

4. How are we saved?

Read John 17:3 several times (maybe even out loud a time or two). Compare your translation with the Amplified Bible. (found on the bottom of the prior page)

5. Who spoke the words found in this verse?

6. Based on this verse, how do you get eternal life?

7. If there is someone you wish to get to know, how do you do it? What are some things that you would do together to get better acquainted?

8. How would you go about getting to know Jesus and God?

According to Jesus, eternal life is based on knowing Him and His Father. That's it! If I don't make it to heaven one day it will be because I don't know Jesus. If I do make it to heaven it will be because I know Jesus as my Friend. Therefore, spending time getting to know Him as a Friend is the most important thing I can do as a Christian!

9. According to Matthew 7:21-23 and Luke 13:24-30 what sort of people are denied entrance? Do they sound like bad people? Why are the people denied entrance?

Did you notice that in Matthew 7, the Lord calls some people who did good things, “workers of iniquity”? Apparently, the Lord has a different definition for good and evil than most of us do—His definition centers not on what we do, but on Who we know!

Read Matthew 25:1-12 a couple of times. Imagine the joy and excitement of a wedding celebration and the disappointment of those who did not get in.

10. Who is the Groom? What does the wedding celebration represent?

11. What reason does the Groom give for denying some people entrance?

Have you ever heard someone say “In order to get into that club or that organization you have to know the right people?” Or, “You have to have friends in high places if you want to get in there?” That’s what Heaven is all about—knowing the right Person. Knowing the right people—“God the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent” (John 17:3)

12. Would you change the description of a Christian you wrote in question one? If so, how would you change it and why?

Daily Bites

A young boy once walked past a long line of waiting dignitaries and past the guards stationed to protect Abraham Lincoln. Without even knocking, he opened the door and walked into the President's White House office. Those in line angrily protested to the guards that *they* had been waiting their proper turn and the boy was out of line. "No he's not," came the reply, "His last name is Lincoln and he has gone in to see his father." Todd Lincoln had a special relationship with the right person and that made all the difference!

The most important thing about Christianity is developing a friendship with Jesus (get to *know* Him!). This is done by spending time each day with Him reading the Bible, meditating on what He is saying to you through it, and talking to Him through prayer. Below you will find one way to do this along with some suggested passages of Scripture to use. You may find it more meaningful if you write your thoughts in a journal.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: "Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together..."
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned.

Passages for This Week

- John 1:1-18
- John 1:19-28
- John 1:29-34
- John 1:35-42
- John 1:43-51
- John 2:1-11
- John 2:12-25

Have You Ever?

Do you know what it's like to be lonely? So alone that your thoughts are your only companions? Do you know what it's like as a child to want to play with other children and meet only ridicule? Do you know what it's like to wish for a retreat in the quiet of your own home, but even there find laughter and sarcasm? Do you know what it's like to spend hours, days and nights in the lonely refuge of a mountain or desert? Do you know what it's like to sit high on a lonely mountain overlooking a city, wishing you could be someone's friend? Do you know how it feels to sleep on rough ground without a blanket year after year?

Have you ever walked through a crowd, attended a dinner party, or passed through a marketplace teeming with people yet somehow still felt alone? Have you ever watched from the shadows while others enjoyed an activity or game? Have you ever been invited by someone to get acquainted and then been asked to come after dark so no one would glimpse you together?

Have you ever fed a large crowd and discovered that the food you provided was more appreciated than you were?

Have you ever walked 30 miles to comfort a bereaved family only to be treated as if it were your fault the sick had died? Have you ever been turned away no matter where you went or whom you asked for lodging?

Do you know how it hurts to have no one to talk to, no one to share with, even if that person would only listen? Have you ever cried so hard that your eyes ached and, trying to talk, you could only moan between sobs? Have you ever spent nights in tears that no one will ever know of except you?

Have you ever thought you had found a few who accepted you as their friend and then watched as they left or ignored you so as not to be embarrassed by you? Have you ever felt the pain of rejection or the bitter disappointment of broken trust? Have you ever given of yourself until there was nothing left to give and then heard mocking laughter because you were so vulnerable?

Have you ever sat alone by the edge of a lake and watched gulls drift above the water, wishing you could fly away? Have you ever struggled against giving up the effort to give yourself, struggled until you actually sweat blood?

Have you ever spent entire nights worried and praying for a troubled friend? Have you gone to that same friend for comfort and understanding and heard him say, "I'm too tired to listen?"

Have you ever had people follow you so that they might distort something you say and justify putting you to death? Have you ever been rudely jostled by calloused men, helpless within their menacing circle, because of love? Have you ever had someone spit upon your bruised and bleeding face? Have you ever felt blood trickle down your back from torn flesh while being beaten by a leather whip with metal strips attached to it?

Have you ever felt the sharp pain of thorns forcefully pressed deep into your scalp and temples? Have you ever had to wipe your eyes with a blood-sopped sleeve in order to see through tears? Do you know how it feels to struggle through your own blood while dragging heavy timbers? Do you think you could stagger on, willingly, toward dying for those who hate, despise, and reject you? Would you bear screaming insults, laughter, and mockery as you collapsed beneath your instrument of death? Would you struggle desperately to rise and continue towards your place of execution?

Have you ever felt the tearing, grinding crunch of nails being pounded through your hands and feet? Have you ever felt, with every nerve, the jolting thud of a cross dropped into its deeply dug hole? Have you ever hung from nails, with open wounds gaping ever wider while crowds taunted, throwing rocks at your bruised and lacerated body? Have you ever hung outstretched as rain and wind buffeted your exhausted body against a cross?

Have you ever gasped hoarsely for breath, aware that you are dying? Do you know how it feels to have vision grow dim as your eyes glaze? Have you ever exhaled your last breath, knowing it is finished?

Have you ever hurt? Have you ever ached? Have you ever suffered? Have you ever died—alone—for those who refused to let you be their friend? While on this earth, Jesus longed for companionship. He still does. Will you be His friend?

Bible Texts

Romans 3:20 “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Galatians 2:16 “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

Galatians 3:11 “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Titus 3:5 “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,”

John 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Matthew 7:21-23* “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Luke 13:24-30 “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

Matthew 25:1-12 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

Are You Born Again?

or

Keep Looking at Your Friend!

Two medical students went off to school to study for medicine. One of the first things they were introduced to was the anatomy lab. In this lab there was a heavy silence. It was kind of cold, and things were really dead there! But these med students were anxious to make a good showing, so they analyzed the situation. They noticed that there was a good deal of unity there in the lab. There didn't seem to be any fights going on; no one was vying for the highest place. They were all in the same position. As the med students considered the situation, they become convinced that what these patients needed was improved health. They tried introducing the patients to a new diet, but nobody seemed to care about eating. They told the patients about the benefits of exercise, but no one seemed interested. These students determined there must be an even deeper problem.

They wondered if the problem was a lack of fellowship. But that turned out to be a dead-end street. The patients refused to be sociable. They tried to develop a statement of mission—it was ignored. They considered a lack of resources may be the problem and took up an offering—no one gave.

In the end, the med students discovered to their dismay that the people in the lab all had a common problem. They were not breathing ... they weren't even alive.

I grew up being friends with Kelly. Our parents attended school together and as the years passed, our families often enjoyed each other's company. My friendship with Kelly continued through elementary school, high school and college. We did a lot together and enjoyed talking about all kinds of things. We gave each other encouragement and advise, and I remember romances that were improved because I followed Kelly's counsel.

On more than one occasion, friends of mine suggested that I consider dating Kelly. Many of Kelly's friends suggested that she and I would make a great couple. At first, neither of us gave the matter much serious thought. Then our parents began dropping hints in that direction and I remember taking a new look at Kelly.

She was cute, bright, fun to be around, athletic, outdoorsy, and spiritual. All qualities I deemed necessary for a life companion. I'm not sure how many of those

adjectives Kelly felt applied to me, but the truth is, we both decided to seriously pursue a romance together.

Then came an insurmountable problem. Neither of us seemed able to fall in love with the other. We tried! We went on official dates. We worked at it. We agreed that we were *right* for each other. We couldn't imagine having more in common with any one else. We discussed our inability to "click." Try as we might, there was no red-hot flame, in fact, there wasn't even a spark. It was really quite discouraging to have finally found that *perfect person* and then realize that you would rather swallow gravel than kiss, snuggle or hold hands. We finally gave up trying.

A few years later, I met Marji. The chemistry was there from the start. We didn't try to *make* it happen, it just did. It was more than a spark too, it was a nuclear reaction and less than a year later we were married. We have been kissing, snuggling and holding hands ever since. The difference between those relationships was a "click" that transformed the second one into love.

Breathless cadavers and self-willed romances have something in common with a message Jesus gave to Nicodemus. They were talking one night about conversion, a "second birth" that Jesus said was necessary before anyone could see the heavenly kingdom. Nicodemus asked, "How can a person be born again?" *That's a good question!*

"And I, if and when I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw and attract all men [Gentiles as well as Jews] to Myself." John 12:32 (The Amplified Bible)

Are You Born Again?

1. Based on John 3:1-2, what sort of a person was Nicodemus? What sort of upbringing do you suppose he had?

Pharisees were the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They concentrated on external goodness and believed salvation was something they earned. (Matthew 23:1-35 contains Jesus' response to that way of thinking)

2. Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus?
3. According to John 3:3, how did Jesus respond to Nicodemus' opening words? Does His response strike you as strange?
4. What do you think Jesus means when He says (in verse 3), "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again?"
5. Some people say that reading a dictionary or telephone book is more interesting than the Bible or stories about Jesus. Is that natural? Based on the passages below, explain why that might be?
 - Isaiah 44:18
 - Ezekiel 12:1-2
 - Matthew 13:13-15
 - 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

At the Pacific Science Center in Seattle there is a display that tests for color-blindness. It consists of 30 individual squares of multi-colored shapes and patterns with a number at the center. People with normal vision can easily see each number. However, a color-blind person cannot see some of the numbers no matter how hard they try-even if they know what to look for and where to look. It is a physical impossibility for them. In spiritual terms, we are all "color blind." It is impossible for us to see and understand God and His ways on our own. In this world it is not natural to enjoy spending time with Jesus.

Read John 3:3-15 through a couple of times (maybe even out loud) before answering the following questions.

6. According to Jesus, what has to happen before we can "see the kingdom of God?"
7. What was Nicodemus' response?
8. According to Jesus, Who is responsible for our "New Birth" or conversion and how can you know if He is working?

It is clear that just as you did not have much control over your first birth, you do not have much control over being "born again." It is the supernatural result of God's Holy Spirit working in your mind or heart (for more on this read John 1:12-13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3). You might wonder, "Is there anything I can do?"

In John 3:14-15 Jesus referred back to a story in Israel's history. That story is found in Numbers 21:4-9.

9. Why did the snakes come into the camp?
10. What was the solution to getting bit by a snake?
11. How does this apply to us today?

The condition for healing from a snake bite was to look at the snake on the pole—just look. It asked them to do something they could do—look. The story is for us as well. We cannot change our lives. We cannot force ourselves to be interested in Jesus. We cannot control our feelings. We cannot generate faith and belief. We can come to Jesus and “look” at Him. John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb” (John 1:29). Jesus said, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). When we “look” at Jesus, it puts us in a place where the Holy Spirit can do the supernatural work of “New Birth.” And how do we look at Jesus? By spending time each day asking Him to make himself real to us and reading His word—like you have been doing in the “Daily Bites.” Keep looking!

Daily Bites

There's a saying that has been quoted for many years, especially related to romance, as though it were absolutely true: "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Experience has shown otherwise in many incidents. It is often more true that "absence makes the heart wander." This is true in our relationship with Jesus. If you do not invest time in getting to know Him, you will be growing further away from Him. This is why regular [daily, non-negotiable, significant, and prime] time with Jesus is so important.

Remember, you are spending time with Jesus *to get to know Him as a friend*, not just to put in time!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: "Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together..."
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned.

Passages for This Week

- John 3:1-21
- John 3:22-36
- John 4:1-26
- John 4:27-38
- John 4:39-42
- John 4:43-54
- John 5:1-15

Priscilla

I watched quietly from the throng that lined the street as He stumbled forward beneath a burden which seemed much heavier than the cross He bore. The day was dark and grim. The mob was loud and boisterous and pressed so tightly together that you could feel the breath of the person next to you. Yet it all seemed to be happening far away, as if in a dream. As I made my way along the stone street following the bloody footprints, I kept hearing the question in my mind, *Why are you here?* I had no answer.

My father is a Roman centurion and my mother a Jewess. I had lived my life hung painfully between the two, never satisfying either, never knowing who I was. Then my mother became a believer in Jesus of Nazareth. He spoke of a new kingdom, one that would never pass away. My father lived in a kingdom built on the Roman foundation of pride and self-sufficiency; he wanted no new kingdom.

I was glad when Jesus was arrested and felt a sick satisfaction at the sentence pronounced upon Him. My eyes again fell on the bloody footprints, *Why are you here?*

I stood transfixed as the crucifixion wore on. The air grew cold. The sun became lost in a blanket of gray which seemed to encircle the cross. Though the mood was ominous and foreboding, on the face of Jesus was a look of serenity and love.

My father nailed an inscription to the top of the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Though I saw no emotion on my father's face, I was sure he approved of this execution.

Jesus showed no indication of displeasure at the sign, only pity. He seemed more concerned for those standing beneath Him, as though we were the ones dying.

I stood there all day, watching life slowly fade from those piercing eyes. His complexion took on the color of the grey dampness around Him and I knew it was almost over. Then the cry "It is finished" ripped the stillness. It was not a cry of defeat or dejection but of victory and majesty. Every eye saw Him heave His last breath and slowly bow His head in death.

Somewhere deep inside of me I felt a gnawing pain. As I turned to leave I heard again the nagging question, *Why are you here?*

Suddenly my father's voice broke violently into my thoughts, "Surely this was the Son of God." I turned and saw my father looking up at Jesus. I ran sobbing towards him catching my mother's hand. Together we knelt united at the foot of the cross. Peace filled my heart. Looking up at the crucified form of the Son of God, I knew why I was there ... I knew.

Written by Shay Wooten, from Masterpieces, copyright © 1988 Reflections, used by permission. Reflections is the drama ministry of Campion Academy, directed by Thure Martinsen from 1982 to 1993. Masterpieces is a play written by the students about Jesus

"And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as that metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert. Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life. God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never die." John 3:14-16 (CEV)

Bible Texts

John 3:1-2 “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Matthew 23:1-35 Summarized in lesson. Space does not permit including full reference here.

John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Isaiah 44:18* “They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.”

Ezekiel 12:1-2* “The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.’”

Matthew 13:13-15* “This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them’”

2 Corinthians 4:3-4* “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

John 3:3-15 “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?””

Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

John 1:12-13 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Titus 3:5 “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,”

1 Peter 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

John 3:14-15 See above.

Numbers 21:4-9 “And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread. So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”

John 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

John 12:32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

Are You Secure?

or

You Are Part of His Family!

I can remember the day each of my children first arrived at my home—most parents probably can. My son arrived in the afternoon. He was eight weeks old when a social worker brought him to our front door and rang the bell. As we answered the door my wife and I saw him for the first time! I got to hold him first! He looked up at me and smiled (I'm sure he was *not* suffering from gas pains!). No boy was more prayed for, more desired, or more loved than he! He was, and still is, my favorite son (my only son)!

Three and a half years later we met our daughter for the first time, at the airport. We arrived early. In suspense, we watched most everyone get off the plane—including several flight attendants. Then she arrived—a little five-week old bundle of energy. The watching flight attendants got misty-eyed as we held her, hugged her, loved her, and accepted her into our family. She was, and still is, my favorite daughter (my only daughter)!

After each of our children arrived, the second most exciting day was when we stood before the judge legalizing the adoptions. Up until that time, they were not legally a part of our family—they could have been taken away or we could have given them back (we never even considered it!). After we met with the judge a birth certificate was issued that showed them being born into our family, even though we were not the birth parents. They were now *our* children!

It *would be* nice to report that both of my children are perfect. It would have been nice if they had always told us when they needed to go to the bathroom so they would not mess up their diapers. It would have been nice if they always, cheerfully cleaned their rooms. It would have been nice if there were never any displays of temper. It would have been nice if they were always truthful, always thankful, and always polite. It would have been nice if they always ate their vegetables without complaining, always got along, and always did their homework without being asked. Alas, they were

(and are) no more perfect than I am. They have made their share of mistakes—some even deliberately.

It *is* nice to report that they are both still my children (my favorite children)—loved, prayed for, disciplined, and desired. We knew they would make mistakes ... so do we. We know they are growing in their understanding of what is good, right, and wholesome ... so are we.

We love and accept our children because we have chosen them to be a part of our family. We love them not because they do all the right things or avoid doing all the wrong things—we love them because *they are our children!*

As parents, we expect our children to be growing and maturing. We expect mistakes. We deal with rebellion and disobedience. We teach, we nag, we beg, we discipline—but we never disown. We know that in spite of any difficulties, unless our children *leave* us, we will love them into maturity. In our family there is security.

Many Christians feel a whole lot less secure in their relationship with God than they do in their family—and God is supposed to be the ultimate Father! They feel like they are constantly "in" or "out" of the relationship. Why do so many have such a hard time feeling secure? What does it mean to be secure in Jesus? What is our security in Jesus based on?

"And this is that testimony (that evidence); God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who possesses the Son has that life; he who does not possess the Son of God does not have that life. I write this to you who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) the name of the Son of God ..., so that you may know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that you [already] have life, yes, eternal life." 1 John 5:11-13 (The Amplified Bible)

Are You Secure?

1. If you were killed in a car accident later today, would you be resurrected with the righteous?
2. Is it possible that you could be kept out of Heaven because of unconfessed sins?
3. How would you define sin?
4. If possible, use more than one translation to read 1 John 3:4. Does this text seem to define sin as disobedience or breaking God's law?
5. In Matthew 22:37-40, how does Jesus summarize the Law?
6. In Romans 13:10, how does Paul summarize the Law?
7. In 1 John 4:8, how does John define God?

In algebra, we learn that two things equal to the same thing are also equal to each other. If $A=B$ and $B=C$, then $A=C$. (The transitive property of course!) If we let A represent the Law, B represent Love, and C represent God; then, based on the above texts, God and His Law are equal. Therefore, breaking the Law (Lawlessness) would actually be the same as separating from God (Godlessness). At its heart, sin is really a broken relationship.

8. According to Romans 6:23 the consequences of sin (separation from God) is death. How does Acts 17:28 help you understand why this is true?

Choosing to separate from God would naturally result in death. It's not that God punishes those who don't choose Him, it's just the natural consequence of separation or "pulling the plug." (An electric light cannot work if it is "unplugged.") Imagine you're trapped underwater while scuba diving. While waiting for help, to make things more exciting, you cut the hose between your air tank and regulator-just so you can watch the bubbles. Whose fault is it if you drown? Is the tank punishing you for cutting the hose?

9. How do Romans 14:23 and 1 John 3:6 define sin?

Once again we see that sin is NOT about bad deeds, but rather, about living outside of a relationship with God.

10. Based on 1 John 5:11-13, is it possible to know if you have (present tense) eternal life? What are the conditions?

Let's say you've always wanted to have a corvette and you marry someone who already has one. Within the context of a normal marriage, you now become a legitimate owner of the corvette. However, if you were to divorce, most courts would give the corvette to your spouse because he/she had acquired it prior to the marriage. Did you ever really own it? Why would you lose it? How would you keep it?

11. If eternal life comes from Jesus, how can it be yours? How can you lose it? How can you keep it?

12. What familiar human relationship does God use to illustrate our relationships to Him?

- Romans 8:15-16
- Galatians 4:4-7
- Ephesians 1:3-6
- 1 John 3:2

13. How do “bad deeds” and “failures” affect a child’s standing in a loving home? How do they affect our relationship with Jesus?

A good father knows that unless his child leaves him, he will love the child into maturity. The child’s security is not in his or her performance, but in the love of the father. If you stay with Jesus (have the Son), “He who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion ...” Phil 1:6 NEV

Good News! If you know Jesus, you can know you are saved and you can know you will become like Him—and you will know Who does both.

Daily Bites

When you find a new friend, you often spend a lot of time together just getting to know each other. You may eat meals together, play together, study together, walk together, laugh together-and spend lots of time talking together! Why not try an experiment this week. Pick one day (or maybe two or three) and for that day make it a point to talk to Jesus about everything you do. Talk to Him when you first get up, as you shower, as you walk from place to place, as you work or sit in classes, as you ... (you get the idea)! Pray about this-ask Jesus to remind you that He is right with you each step of your day! What do you say to Him? Just tell Him what you are doing, how you feel about it, your dreams and fears for the day—talk to Him as a Friend. And then, listen for impressions He may put into your mind.

Remember, you are spending time with Jesus *to get to know Him as a friend*, not just to put in time!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned.

Passages for This Week

- John 5:16-30
- John 5:31-47
- John 6:1-15
- John 6:16-24
- John 6:35-40
- John 6:40-59
- John 6:60-71

Elizabeth

Jesus was always my favorite big brother, ever since I can remember. He was about 13 when I was born. They named me Elizabeth, after one of my great aunts, but everyone calls me Beth. Mother says that Jesus was the one who really took care of me, even when I was a baby. I guess that's why I've always loved Him so fiercely. I was his Beth; and He was—well—He was my Jesus.

As a child I was His shadow. I worshipped Him in my own way. He always had time to tell me a story or sing me a song and give me one of His special hugs. He's just that way, always putting others before Himself. As I grew older, I was forever running to father's shop to visit Him. Sitting among the woodshavings, we would talk of high and noble things.

Mostly we talked of Jehovah. Jesus seemed to know so much about Him, not only because He had been taught from the Scriptures, but because He spent so much time with Him. He loved to be in the hills at sunrise and dusk, to talk with Him or observe His handiwork. He learned so much in those hills!

He used to say, "All of creation depends on Jehovah for existence. To the flowers He gives sun and rain; to the creatures He gives food and drink. To us," He would turn and smile, "To us, little Beth, He gives something far richer and deeper and more wonderful than life itself. He gives us love. First we use that love to honor and worship Him. Then, wrapped in His glory, we can use it to make the world a better place. It's the kind of love that enables one to even lay down his life for another ..." His

voice would trail off and He would suddenly be far, far away. Then He would say, "Greater love has no man."

Years passed, and though He remained my thoughtful, loving Jesus—He was something more. In His face I saw a strength and wisdom beyond His years. He began spending more time in the hills. He and Jehovah drew closer, so close that ... well I can't really explain it and I never really understood it; that is, until today.

When Jesus came out of the water this morning, I saw Him kneel and watched the heavens open. I saw the dovelike form. I saw the glorious light in Jesus' face. And I heard the voice say, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (*Matt. 3:17 KJV*) At last I knew who Jesus really was.

The Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb ..." (*John 1:29 KJV*) Those are strange words, since lambs are used for sacrifice. What was it Jesus used to say—"Greater love has no man than this...?"

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"A new command I give you: Love one another as I have loved you ... Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. I no longer call you servants ... Instead, I have called you friends. John 13:34, 15:13,15

Credits

1 John 3:4* “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”

Matthew 22:37-40 “Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Romans 13:10 “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

1 John 4:8 “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Acts 17:28 “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’”

Romans 14:23* “But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.”

1 John 3:6 “Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.”

1 John 5:11-13 “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Romans 8:15-16 “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”

Galatians 4:4-7 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

Ephesians 1:3-6 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

1 John 3:2 “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Philippians 1:6 “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

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More About Jesus

What is Prayer?

or

Talk to Your Friend!

Have you ever been unable to breathe? When I was a young boy there was a Horse Chestnut tree across the street from my home. It was a great climbing tree—tall with big branches! But, the first branch was more than six feet off the ground (when you're only three feet eleven inches tall, that's a problem). Once I fell from that first branch and landed flat on my back. The wind was knocked out of me. This had never happened to me before. It was a panic sort of situation. I couldn't breathe and I hurt. I thought I was going to die!

Sometimes, we *try* to hold our breath. One summer, during my college years, a friend and I did "overseas mission service" in Hawaii (hey, someone had to do it). We often were able to arrange our schedules to go snorkeling in the afternoons (we worked hard mornings and evenings). On one such occasion, I saw something at the bottom I wanted. It didn't appear too far down so I took a deep breath and dove. It was further than I realized.

As I approached the bottom my body screamed "breathe." I lost interest in whatever it was that I had gone down for and frantically headed for the surface—it seemed a lot further coming up than it had going down! At the surface I drew in a deep breath anticipating the feeling of air only to discover that my snorkel was still full of water!! While it is true that water is largely composed of oxygen, it doesn't feel the same in the lungs.

How important is breathing to you? I discovered it's really important to me!! After much contemplation, I have found the following facts about breathing to be true:

- When you breathe normally you tend not to notice it. Even so, the oxygen you are taking in is supporting your life.
- If something gets in the way of breathing, the only security is to drop everything else and take care of it—if you stop breathing for very long other things stop being important!

- What you breathe is important. Breathing is to bring *oxygen* into your body. Breathing the wrong things can be fatal. Breathing is the only means of getting *oxygen* into your body. *Oxygen* sustains life.
- We are made for more than breathing. We are not just a giant lung—our bodies are made for activity. Unless we breathe, nothing else matters much. When we breathe, all sorts of opportunities are available.
- For the most part you have to breathe for yourself. Life can be supported in an emergency by respirators or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation; however, the goal of even these procedures is to get *you* breathing again.
- One big breath in the morning along with some little breaths at mealtime is not sufficient to sustain life!

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul says to "pray continually." Sounds a bit like breathing doesn't it? Perhaps that's why some Christian authors refer to prayer as the "Breath of the soul." Could prayer be as important to our spiritual life as breathing is to our physical life? Could the facts we noticed about breathing hold true for praying as well? Look at them again with that in mind; then, turn the page to see what the Bible has to say.

"Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philipians 4:6-7 (The Amplified Bible)

Jesus & Prayer

Jesus, our Example and Friend, prayed and taught His disciples to pray. As you learn more about Jesus and prayer keep one thing in mind—He was perfect and He felt the need to pray! What does this say about our needs?

1. When did Jesus pray?
 - Matthew 14:21-23
 - Matthew 26:36
 - Mark 1:33-35
 - Luke 5:16
 - Luke 6:12

Jesus prayed before He entered into important events (choosing the disciples, raising Lazarus, crucifixion, etc.), after great successes (baptism, feeding 5,000, etc.), and regularly in between. Prayer was an important part of Jesus' life—He even prayed for you! (John 17:20).

2. What did Jesus have to say about prayer?
 - Mark 14:38
 - Luke 6:28
 - Luke 11:9-13
 - John 14:12-14

Philippians 4:6-7 gives some practical council regarding prayer. (You might want to read it in several translations.)

3. According to this passage, what should you talk to God about?
4. According to this passage is prayer a “last-ditch” effort or a place to begin? Explain.
5. What promise does Jesus make to you through this passage?

Since the basis of Christianity is friendship with Jesus, prayer is communicating with God as we would with a friend. Share with Jesus your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears. (Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.— 1 Peter 5:7).

Ephesians 6:10-18 describes the Christian life in terms of warfare.

6. What commands are given in this passage?
7. As Christians, who do we struggle against? Are you stronger than that power?

8. After we are all suited up in our “spiritual armor” what is the battle plan? (vs. 18)

Prayer is so important that it is the focus of Satan’s attack and needs to be protected by an impressive array of “spiritual armor.” Our success in developing and maintaining a relationship with Jesus depends largely on prayer. Prayer is keeping in touch with our Friend. Prayer is connecting with the Source of every good gift. Prayer is spiritual warfare against the supernatural powers of evil. Our battle plan is prayer!

9. There are many passages and promises related to prayer in the Bible. This shows how much God wants to communicate with us! What promises are contained in the following verses?

- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Psalm 91:15
- Isaiah 65:24
- Romans 8:26

10. How can you put 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 into practice?

Daily Bites

This week, use the passages in John to “listen” for Jesus’ voice speaking to you. Pray about these things. For instance, if you are convicted of sin in your life—don’t deny it, talk to Jesus about it! If you see something to be thankful for—thank Him for it! If you find something that troubles you—ask Him about it. If you are facing a difficult situation—share it with Him and ask Him to show you from His word how to handle it! Talk to God and Jesus like you would talk to a friend—because *you are talking to a friend!*

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving *you*?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned.

Passages for This Week

- John 7:1-13
- John 7:14-24
- John 7:25-44
- John 7:45-52
- John 8:1-11
- John 8:12-30
- John 8:31-41

Sonrise – While the City Slept

Gingerly planting His bare feet on the cold stone floor, He rises and begins dressing, careful lest He should wake the other members of the yet sleeping household. Stepping into a pair of sandals, He reaches for his outer garment, then quietly opens the door and moves out into the darkness. The stars, twinkling remotely in the black sky, do not betray the imminence of dawn. As He makes his way through the city He thinks of the throngs of people who will soon fill the now quiet streets. Day after day He has walked among them and with them, seeking to befriend the friendless, comfort the lonely, and to help wherever possible. Day after day He has walked and worked in loneliness; always in the midst of crowds, yet somehow still alone ... so far from home.

He reaches the outskirts of the city now and continues walking, descending through fields and pastures towards a valley below the city. Walking. He has walked much in the past few years. Driven by a burden for humanity He has moved from city to city—encouraging, listening, understanding, bringing hope. Yet little human encouragement offers consolation to his weary heart. True, a handful seem to appreciate His efforts ... appreciate Him. But even they do not really understand.

Crossing the valley, He begins to ascend the mountain on the other side. The mountain. How often He has come here! How often He has enjoyed the beauty that abounds here! His steps slow as the path steepens, yet He is scarcely aware of physical exertion, for He is consumed by a burden that weighs upon His heart—a burden to see the complete happiness of those around Him. This is His joy. But He seems so alone in His efforts to help. Always alone. It is at times such as this when He especially longs for the companionship of others ... if only one other. Another who appreciates. Another to understand, to offer encouragement.

A great weariness seems almost to overwhelm Him. If only ... He lurches forward, stumbling over an unnoticed rock in the path and falls to the ground. No one but the birds behold His prostrate form. No one witnesses his

struggle to rise and then fall again, as though toiling under an overwhelming load.

Perspiration, such as no exertion ever caused mingles with tears in finding its way down His face, where it falls upon the grass that cushions His head. Early—morning dew casts a damp cover, as if nature weeps with Him, sharing the mental anguish that oppresses this lonely, human form.

Gasping as one who runs a long race, He buries His face in the grass, arms outstretched on the cold ground. His fingers dig slowly into the sod. Clutching handfuls of moist soil, He pulls Himself to His knees and with a voice barely audible says, "Father. Oh, My Father."

Only the trees see the crumpled Figure with bowed head. Only the hushed song-birds hear the sobs that pour from His very soul. And only nature witnesses as peace settles upon the kneeling form.

As the rich colors of purple, crimson and gold bathe the mountain top in resplendent glory, a Figure is silhouetted against the dawn. Standing alone, the world's Redeemer pauses for a moment, gazing upon the still-sleeping city below, then begins walking *back*, strengthened for another day.

"And Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning He came again into the temple." John 8:1-2

Bible Texts

Matthew 14:21-23 “Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.”

Matthew 26:36 “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.”

Mark 1:33-35 “And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”

Luke 5:16 “So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.”

Luke 6:12 “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

John 17:20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word”

Mark 14:38* “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Luke 6:28 “bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”

Luke 11:9-13 “And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

John 14:12-14 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

Philippians 4:6-7 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 5:7 “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Ephesians 6:10-18* “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

2 Chronicles 7:14 “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Psalms 91:15 “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.”

Isaiah 65:24* “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”

Romans 8:26* “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18* “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

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is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

What is Bible Study?

or

A Letter From Your Friend!

I love bread! I enjoy it toasted, roasted, fried, grilled, hot, cold, buttered, honeyed, jammed, sandwiched, fresh, day-old, sweet or sour. Just about every kind there is appeals to me—except Rye and Pumpernickel. I love Wheatberry, Sourdough, Cornbread, Raisin, English Muffins (with or without raisins), Australian Toaster Biscuits (with or without raisins or honey-bits), White, Cinnamon, Wholewheat, Blueberry, Raspberry and Apple/Cinnamon Muffins, Biscuits, soft warm Dinner Rolls, German Black, Danish, Pocket and Pita, Stoneground, Grilled Cheese, Poppyseed, Crumpets, Oatmeal, French, Garlic, Unleavened, Breadsticks, and the list goes on—I haven't even begun writing about pastries.

Many of my favorite places are associated with bread. Anderson's Pea Soup restaurant in Solvang, California serves three kinds of hot miniature loaves and real butter with every meal. Marie Calendar's has the thickest fresh cornbread I have ever seen and their honey-butter makes it even better. A cook named Ladonna in Modesto, California creates wonders with her own sourdough starter. Pat Martinsen, my co-author's wife in Auburn, Washington, makes better use of a Bosch than anyone I know. (For my 40th birthday she gave me a fresh loaf which I ate all by myself.)

You might think it strange, but I prefer a peanut butter and jam sandwich to spaghetti, pizza, cauliflower, asparagus, and even stewed tomatoes. I once went on a three day backpacking trip with pre-made sandwiches for my only food. The meals were wonderful, quick and tasty! I particularly enjoyed the way three-day-old peanut butter and honey sandwiches sort of crystallize the bread into a crunchy sweetness. Things did get a little sticky as the days passed and I had to reach farther into the bag for the next one.

I especially love my wife Marji's home-made bread! There is nothing quite like coming into the house and smelling the delicious aroma of baking bread! My mouth

has begun watering just thinking about it. Somewhere I heard that fresh, hot bread and butter are not good for you, but I confess without a shred of guilt that I will place my life at risk every time it is available!

This year at Christmas, I wanted to get my wife one of those new-fangled bread machines—you know, the things you just pour ingredients into and then leave alone. As you go about your day, it mixes, kneads, raises, kneads again, bakes and cools bread that is almost as delicious as it is easy. The machine's teflon coated bread-dish almost cleans itself. I wanted to get her one, but I didn't. She reminded me that we are trying to save for a family vacation to Hawaii and can't afford such a thing. I am tempted to trade my plane ticket for a bread machine. Do you have one?

This probably seems like a crummy way to introduce a Bible Study and I hope you don't toast me for it. All my other study-starters seemed like half-baked ideas. I knew we kneaded something to increase our appetite and this was fresh out of the oven ... So crusty as it may seem, I'm going to serve it anyway. Hope you eat your fill. There may be a reason Jesus compared Himself to bread. It's hard to imagine a meal without it.

Jesus replied, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never be hungry and he who believes in and cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me will never thirst any more (at any time)." John 6:35 (The Amplified Bible)

Jesus & Bible Study

In our last lesson, we looked at the importance of breathing and noticed that prayer is to spiritual life what breathing is to physical life. In this lesson, we will discover that spending time reading the Bible for the purpose of getting to know Jesus is to spiritual life, what bread and water are to physical life. Read John 6 to get an overview of Jesus' teaching.

1. What is the longest you have ever gone without food? Without water? How does missing a meal affect you? How does lack of water affect you?
2. How many meals do you usually eat a day? How many glasses of water do you drink?
3. What claim does Jesus make in John 4:14; 6:32-35; 47-51?
4. What is the relationship between Jesus' claim (in question 3) and your answers to questions 1 and 2?
5. Is there work involved in a relationship with Jesus?
 - John 6:27
 - Hebrews 4:11

As I was preparing this study, it came time for lunch. I decided to stop and make some raspberry muffins to eat. I mixed the ingredients, poured the batter into muffin tins and stuck it in the oven to bake. Before long, a delicious aroma began to fill the room. (Are you getting hungry?) I had to do a little work before I could eat the food. There is some work involved in becoming familiar with Jesus and what He had to say.

6. What is the work or labor that we must do? Read and summarize the following texts.
 - John 6:29

Believe and trust mean the same thing. If someone was completely trustworthy, what would you need to do in order to be able to trust them? Get to know them, right? So how would you work on trusting Jesus?

- Matthew 11:28
- Matthew 11:29

You prepare the meal (labor) by taking daily time to look at Jesus. Think of opening a book about Jesus as preparing the meal. Consider reading, thinking, contemplating and meditating about Jesus as eating the meal. The steps outlined in our "Daily Bites" section are about eating, chewing, absorbing, taking in the food (which is Jesus).

7. In John 6:31-33, 58 Jesus compared Himself to manna—the food given to the Israelites while they traveled through the wilderness. How can you apply the instructions of the following verses about manna to your spiritual life?
 - Exodus 16:16
 - Exodus 16:19
 - Exodus 16:21

8. How do these truths apply to our life with Jesus? (consider Philippians 1:6 for a hint)

- Food must be taken into your body to do you any good.
- Watching someone else eat does you no good.
- Once you have eaten something, you lose control of it. It will do to you whatever it is supposed to do.
- Food will affect your body regardless of your enjoyment of it.

Spiritual life is the result of coming to know Jesus as a Friend by becoming familiar (on a daily basis) with Jesus and what He had to say. This means that, just as you eat food every day, you need to spend some time each day with Jesus through reading about Him, thinking about Him, talking to Him—that's how your friendship grows!

Daily Bites

This week, consider the time you spend with Jesus each day as your “spiritual food.” Don’t rush through your “meal” but take some time to enjoy it. Remember that your job is to spend time with Jesus each day allowing Him to become a part of you. His job is to make you grow.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 8:42-47
- John 8:48-59
- John 9:1-12
- John 9:13-34
- John 9:35-41
- John 10:1-21
- John 10:22-42

The Banquet Table

When I awoke in the morning the table was there. Perhaps it had been there before, but I had never noticed it. It was such a large table, so colorfully spread, that I can't imagine how anyone could have missed it.

I approached the table for a closer look and was greeted by a tall Man, apparently the Host. "Come and dine," He said joyfully. "Would you like for Me to show you to a seat?"

I hesitated. "Well, I'm not sure. Could I ask you a few questions first?"

"Certainly," He replied.

"Whose banquet is this—I mean, who prepared it? Who is issuing the invitations?"

He said, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him who is athirst come, and take the water and bread of life freely."

"You mean I don't have to pay anything?"

"That's right."

"I don't usually get that hungry for breakfast," I said, as I considered the offer. I looked hopefully up and down the table. "You don't happen to have some of those breakfast bars, that I could just stick in my pocket and eat on my way to work? It would sure save time."

The Host smiled. "If you sit down and eat, you'll find that you have more appetite than you think you do, at least most of the time."

Still I hesitated, "I've known some people who started out eating breakfast, next thing it was breakfast, dinner, and supper. Then they added a few snacks in between. Finally, they were eating all day long and got so fat they could hardly walk around."

"It's true," the Host replied, "that those who do *nothing* but eat will grow fat. But it is equally true that those who *don't* eat will die."

He was winning me to His side—but then I noticed something. Sitting on the far side of the table was the preacher from my church. His plate was filled with good things, and he was eating with obvious enjoyment.

"Oh, look! There's my preacher!" I said to the Host.

"Yes," He responded. "He's here every morning. He is a great believer in eating a good breakfast."

"That's wonderful!" I said. "That will save *me* a lot of time, because I go to hear him every week. He can tell me what the food is really like and I won't have to take the time to come here and eat for myself."

"No one can eat for another," the Host responded, "In order for *you* to receive strength and nourishment, *you* must come and eat."

Just then I caught sight of another familiar face. There was Billy Graham, down at the end of the table. "Does he come here every day too?" I asked the Host.

"Yes, he's here for several hours every morning."

"Several hours?" I gulped, "Then I'd better not come. Because I know I don't have enough of an appetite to eat for that long."

"You're only expected to eat for your own needs, not for someone else's," replied the Host. "This is your first morning. Maybe for today you'll want to start out with a couple of those thin, crispy breadsticks, and a glass of juice. You'll be surprised how quickly your appetite will grow, as long as you continue to balance your eating with the proper exercise."

I was just about ready to ask Him to show me to a place at the table when I thought of one more thing. "Hey, wait a minute! This whole business suddenly sounds pretty legalistic. You wouldn't want me coming here to Your banquet table just out of habit, would you?"

"I can't think of another `habit' that would bring you greater health," said my Host. "But you're missing the point. *I'm* here, every day, waiting to serve you, waiting to share good things that I have prepared for you. *I'm* here, the table is here, there's a place for you here. I really look forward to having your company for breakfast, why would you just walk by the table and go on your way? It's here, it's free, it's for you.

Then He took my hand and led me to my place at the table. He filled my plate with grapes and cherries and strawberries and waffles ... but wait! I'm telling you about my meal. Your favorite things may be entirely different. Why don't you come to the banquet, and eat for yourself?

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20 (NIV).

Bible Texts

John 4:14* “but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 6:32-35 “Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always. And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

John 6:47-51 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

John 6:27 “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

Hebrews 4:11* “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”

John 6:29 “Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.””

Matthew 11:28* ““Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:29* “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

John 6:31-33 & 58 “Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

Exodus 16:16* “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent’”

Exodus 16:19* “Then Moses said to them, ‘No one is to keep any of it until morning.’”

Exodus 16:21 “So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.”

Philippians 1:6 “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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Why Witness?

or

Introduce Your Friends!

High in the Colorado Rockies, my parents own a redwood cabin sitting on a parcel of land surrounded by National Forest. Our family affectionately refers to it as *The Property*.

We first visited *The Property* in April. While exploring, we came across a grove of Aspen trees surrounded by ferns and tall grass. The soil was dark and damp. Wondering if digging would uncover a spring, we got tools from the cabin and prepared to find out.

We soon had a hole carved into the mountain side—a distorted circle about four feet across and two feet deep. The soil became more damp with each shovel full of earth we removed. Gradually the dampness changed to mud. Finally water bubbled up.

The puddle that formed was muddy. It seeped in so slowly that we decided to leave it alone for a while. After a couple of hours we were delighted to find the hole two-thirds full of cold, clear water. We took a drink and left, hoping that when we returned it would be full and overflowing.

Imagine our disappointment two hours later when we discovered the water level to be exactly the same as it had been earlier. We pondered the mystery and wondered why it had stopped filling. We probed about in the bottom to see if the seep spots had gotten clogged or covered, but we only made the water muddy again.

We wondered if the pressure on the bottom had increased (as the hole filled) to the point where it could no longer seep. To test that theory, we took an old pipe and pushed it through the soil from the downhill side. It penetrated our reservoir below the water line acting as a drain.

We watched as the reservoir drained lower and lower. Finally it reached the top of the drainpipe. Then an

amazing thing happened. Water kept draining out, but the water line remained constant at the top of the drainpipe! We kept waiting for the water to stop draining, but it never happened. In amazement we watched a steady stream continue pouring from the end of the drainpipe.

We ran and got a six gallon container from the cabin. Placing the container beneath the stream of water, we clocked the rate of fill with a stop watch. We couldn't believe the results! The little "seeps" we had uncovered in the ground were producing water at the rate of 3 gallons per minute! We were pleased and drank deeply.

Later that year we returned to *The Property* in late October for another visit. The aspen leaves had turned to gold, falling like nuggets to the ground. I went for a walk in the forest and decided to check the spring. I was disappointed to find no water coming out of the pipe. The once clear water had become murky and stagnant with tiny insects swimming about.

At first I thought it was simply because the water source had dried up. Then I noticed leaves and debris clogging the outlet. Reaching through the muck, I cleared the drain. Water began flowing once again and before I left for home that week, the spring was clear.

Nature demonstrated this spiritual principle: As you share what you know and love about Jesus, you will receive more to share. Your experience with Him will continue fresh and new each day. If you don't "let it out," what was once new will become old, stagnant and undesirable.

The man who had been controlled by the unclean spirits kept begging Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus refused to permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your own [family and relatives and friends] and bring back word to them of how much the Lord has done for you, and [how He has] had sympathy for you and mercy on you." Mark 5:18-19 (The Amplified Bible)

How Do You Grow in Jesus

Before he left for Heaven, Jesus asked His followers to share with others the good news about Himself (see Matthew 28:19-20). He must have had good reasons for leaving us with these marching orders. In earlier lessons, we have compared prayer to breathing and Bible study to eating and drinking. The Christian witness has been compared to exercise—something essential to good health. In this lesson we will discover how witnessing not only improves your spiritual health, but benefits other and God as well!

1. Have you ever broken a bone that had to be set in a cast? What happens to the muscles that have to be inactive?
2. Give some examples that demonstrate the truth of the expression Use It Or Lose It.
3. In a legal courtroom, what is a witness and what are they expected to say?
4. According to the following verses, what is a Christian witness?
 - Psalms 66:16
 - Daniel 4:2
 - John 3:11
 - Acts 4:20
5. Explain the difference between sharing information and sharing an experience? What experience is being shared in the verses listed above?
6. Based on what you've read so far, define Christian witness.
7. In what ways is your definition similar to 1 John 1:1-3? In what ways different?
8. In a court of law, the person on trial hopes to benefit by the testimony of witnesses for the defense. What are some ways in which your witness could benefit God?
 - Matthew 5:16
 - Luke 18:43
 - John 15:8
 - 1 Peter 2:9
9. What is the value of your testimony to others?
 - John 1:36-37
 - John 1:40-41
 - John 4:42
 - John 12:32

10. Mark 5:19 and Luke 8:39 end the story of the healed demoniac. What did Jesus ask him to do?
11. Why would Jesus send a person to witness to people they already know? Does this say anything about what our first goal should be in regards to strangers?
12. How can sharing what Jesus is to you and what you are to Him, benefit you in the following areas:
 - Make life an adventure
 - Provide real purpose for living
 - Give you fulfillment
 - Spiritual confidence
 - Your understanding & appreciation of Jesus

As you tell others the good things you are discovering about Jesus, it brings joy to Him, increases the opportunities for your friends to know Him, and brings you happiness as well. And one more thing-it keeps the spring clear!

Daily Bites

This week as you spend time with Jesus each day, getting to know Him better, look for things you could share with someone else. If Jesus is becoming your friend, it is natural for you to introduce Him to your other friends. Be prepared to share with them what your friend Jesus is doing for you and why you enjoy His friendship.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 11:1-16
- John 11:17-44
- John 11:45-57
- John 12:1-11
- John 12:12-19
- John 12:20-36
- John 12:37-50

Talitha Cumi

My name is Jairus and I want to tell you what Jesus did for me, my wife Deborah, and our daughter—who we affectionately call Princess.

Princess brightens our home with her laughter, singing, and frequent smiles. Her zest for living is contagious. That’s why for us, the sun ceased to shine when she became deathly sick.

Her forehead burned with fever. She complained of severe stomach cramps. Nothing she ate or drank would stay down. In fact, she came to the point of vomiting bile and blood.

Deborah and I were frantic! Nothing we did seemed to make any difference and I ached to see her so sick. We called the doctor. The news he gave us was devastating.

I was overwhelmed with grief! I went to Princess and sat beside her bed. I bathed her brow and stroked her flaming cheeks. I asked her if there was *anything* I could bring her and her answer startled me. “Yes,” she said, “Jesus.”

Oh how I struggled with that request. I loved my daughter but I couldn’t ask *Him* for help. He was in opposition to much of what I did and taught as synagogue ruler. Furthermore, I was haunted by the thought that *even if He could do something, He wouldn’t do it for a doubter like me. He wouldn’t come to my house.*

Her condition worsened. I pleaded with God for her life. My neighbor came over to ask if there was something he could do. Bitterly I told him he could arrange for hired mourners because we had no hope for her recovery.

I sat by her bed feeling desperate and helpless. I held her hand tightly, as if my grasp could keep her from slipping away. Her breathing began to rattle in her chest and suddenly my desperation pushed me past my pride. I bolted for the door and ran down the cobblestone street.

Tears blurred my vision as I stumbled recklessly toward the outskirts of Capernaum. My breath came rapidly, my throat burned, my muscles screamed but I couldn’t stop. Then I saw Him and fell at His feet. I clutched at the hem of His garment and gasped, “Please ... please! My daughter is dying! I beg you, come and touch her, that she may be healed!”

“Let’s go,” He said, and we headed for home.

Then my worst fears came true. I saw friends and neighbors coming towards us. “She died,” they said, “No use bringing Jesus, it’s too late now.”

I wished *I* could die! I had let her down. She had asked me to get Jesus, but I left too late. Then He took my arm and I heard Him say, “Don’t be afraid. She’s going to be all right!”

Before we got home, we could hear the mourners. Looking in their direction, Jesus held up a hand. “Why do you make so much commotion?” He said, “this little girl is only sleeping.”

For a moment, there was silence, then one of the mourners spat at Jesus feet. “Who are you to come here at a time like this with your jokes. When someone stops breathing it is not because they fell asleep! We’ve seen her ourselves and she is **DEAD!**”

Jesus looked from one face to another. He spoke deliberately, calmly and quietly, “Please leave!” He said. Motioning for three of His disciples to follow, He took my arm, and moved me through the open door of my home.

Like a man in a dream, I led the way to my daughter’s room. Deborah was kneeling beside the bed cradling Princess’ head against her cheek. She was sobbing uncontrollably. Seeing them there loosed the fountain of my own tears. Regardless of what Jesus called it, my daughter *was* dead!

Then I looked at Jesus and realized that *He* was the one who was most saddened! His own eyes brimmed over as He gently helped Deborah to her feet. I reached for her and we clung to one another. Jesus moved towards the bed *and time stood still.* He stood looking down on our daughter’s ashen face. Stooping slightly, He reached out with His right hand and gently stroked her cheek.

A silence came over all of us as we watched and wondered. I could feel my heartbeat in my neck and temples. Deborah’s grip on my hand tightened. The room grew suddenly brighter.

Then Jesus took her hand and spoke. “Princess,” He said, “Princess. I say to you arise.” As if it were possible! And it *was!* A tremor passed through her unconscious form. Her lips unclosed with a smile and her eyes opened widely as if from sleep. She sat up and gave Jesus a hug, as our hearts overflowed with joy!

For a while, we were so overcome with happiness, that no one spoke. Then Jesus said, “Why don’t you give her something to eat?”

Clinging to Princess, I turned toward Jesus and said, “Master, it is impossible for me to ever thank You enough!”

I will always wonder about His reply. “Please don’t tell anyone what has happened here today,” He said.

I would like to be able to honor His request, but let me ask *you*, could *you* keep quiet about what He has done?

And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:39 (NKJV).

Bible Texts

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Psalms 66:16* “Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.”

Daniel 4:2* “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.”

John 3:11 “Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.”

Acts 4:20* “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

1 John 1:1-3* “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Luke 18:43* “Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.”

John 15:8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

John 1:36-37* “When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.”

John 1:40-41* “Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).”

John 4:42 “Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.””

John 12:32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

Mark 5:19 “However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.””

Luke 8:39 ““Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.”

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How Do I Deal With Failure?

or

Leave It To Your Friend!

I am in a ring. A boxing ring. My gloves are on and I am ready to fight. My tag partner is waiting outside the ring. My eyes are cast down on the canvas which begins to shake and tremble.

I look up, and discover to my slackjawed horror, that my opponent is bigger than I am! He weighs in at 1,500 pounds, stands over 12 feet tall and has loose flesh hanging about his jaw. He has a slanted forehead.

If I were smarter, I wouldn't even dream of going up against him, but somehow I'm strangely confident. After all, he looks very old-perhaps about 7,000 years any way.

The bell rings and we rise. Before I take my second step toward him, a three foot glove meets my face and I'm out cold. The next round I am somewhat apprehensive. I plan a new strategy of attack, but the same three foot glove crashes into my head and I'm out again.

My partner has an anxious look of pity on His face, but I'm still confident. Every time I rise to fight, he leans into the ring so I can tag Him. But I don't. After all, someone once told me that he was only the son of a carpenter.

After a thousand rounds with my 1,500 pound opponent I become discouraged and think to give up. Somehow I am not doing so well.

In my discouragement, I begin talking to my tag partner. I can't believe how understanding He is! I discover that He understands my grief and a new bond of friendship begins to develop between us.

I discover that He has fought before. He drops a few names of His former partners. There was Able, a shepherd; and a man named Enoch; a ship builder called

Noah; a father named Abraham and his son Isaac; even a woman by the name of Sarah. The list gets longer-Joseph, a leader in Egypt; Moses, a shepherd turned prophet; Samuel; David; and even a man named Paul. I am impressed!

The next time I go to battle, I notice my partner seems more anxious than ever to enter the ring. Our relationship has grown closer as we've spent time together and I can tell He wants to be tagged into the fight. At one point He even crawls into the ring to be closer to me.

Finally, as my opponent, full of confidence, stands towering over me, my heart fails. I want out. I'm tired of fighting. Just as I am about to be clobbered, I reach over and tag my partner. *In a flash* He is in the ring!

Through blackened eyes I notice that He enters with both hands stretched in the air, *the sign of victory!* And to my amazement, the 1,500 pound bully races out of the ring, completely overcome with fear. The battle has been won and my partner gives me the victory.

I soon discover that as long as I invite Him to remain in the ring, the enemy is always totally defeated. My partner and I now spend a lot of time together. I found out that He is not only a superb fighter, but He's a problem solver, a teacher, a comforter, a guide and my best friend.

Jesus has won the victory for us. And that victory-won upon a wooden cross-is still good today! Its good every day!

And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you. Philippians 1:6 (The Amplified Bible)

How Do I Deal With Failure?

1. Do the following texts fill you with hope and courage? Why?

- Matthew 5:48
- Romans 7:15-24
- 2 Corinthians 7:1

In Lesson Three we discovered that sin is really a broken relationship with God. We also discovered that “bad deeds” don’t keep God from loving us. God is interested in a relationship with us regardless of how we are “doing.” We often let our failures discourage us from seeking Him. In this lesson, we will look at how to deal with failure.

2. In a battle, before you can know *how* to fight, you have to know who the enemy is. According to the following texts, who is the enemy?

- Ephesians 6:12
- James 4:7

Can you see the enemy? If you could see him, is it even possible for you to overcome him?

3. Considering Jeremiah 13:23, how much can you do?

During World War II, the Allied Army placed fake plans for attack on the body of a dead airman and left him floating off enemy shores. The Germans found the “plans” and moved their troops to defend the location that was mentioned in them. The Allies then entered several undefended locations and it became a turning point in the war. When you fight the battle at the wrong location, you end up losing the war! In spiritual life, trying to overcome our bad habits is like fighting at the “wrong location.”

4. According to 1 Timothy 6:12 what is the right fight? How do you fight it?

Remember, faith is the same as trust. In order to trust somebody who is completely trustworthy, all I have to do is get to know them. Therefore, the “fight of faith” would be the effort to get better acquainted with my Friend, Jesus.

5. Read James 4:7-8 again, looking for two clues on how to “resist the devil.”

6. According to John 15:5, how much can you do apart from Jesus?

7. According to Philippians 4:13, how much can you do with Jesus?

8. If without Jesus I can do nothing, but with Him I can do everything, where should I put all my effort? (Did you notice “submit” and “draw near” in question five?)

9. In John 15:1-8, does Jesus command us to “bear fruit” or to “abide?” How many times does Jesus mention the words “abide” or “remain?” How would you apply this in dealing with failures in your life?

10. If we remain connected to Jesus (the Vine) what does He promise to do for us?

- Isaiah 59:19
- Philippians 2:13
- Philippians 1:6

It is not the responsibility of a garden to get rid of its weeds—that is the work of the Gardener. The garden's responsibility is to absorb the water, sun, and nutrients that are provided. Jesus promises to fight our enemy (Satan) for us. He promises to make us healthy, "fruit bearing" Christians if we remain connected to Him (abide).

11. What assurance do we have while waiting for Him to finish His work?

- Romans 8:1
- John 5:24

You can choose two positions relative to the circle to the right-in or out. If we are "in" Jesus, we can have perfect confidence in His ability to save us and to change us as needed. Our focus (our work) is to get "in Jesus" and to stay "in Jesus!" We do this by spending time with Him for the purpose of getting to know Him as a friend!

If Bill Gates wrote you a check for 1 million dollars, you could deposit it knowing that it wouldn't bounce. His name and his word are worth a lot. When Jesus says He started the work in you and He is going to finish it, you can go to the bank with that too. He's given you His Word on it.

Daily Bites

This week, consider the time you spend with Jesus each day as your “spiritual victory!” Everything that you need will be provided by Jesus. The real battle is to keep coming to Him-in prayer, meditation, and Bible study. If you will continue coming to Him each day, for the purpose of getting to know Him better, in His time He will remove the desire for sin from your life and replace it with a deeper craving to know Him and to have fellowship with Him!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 13:1-17
- John 13:18-30
- John 13:31-14:4
- John 14:5-14
- John 14:15-31
- John 15:1-17
- John 15:18-27

In Her Own Words

Oh, I've seen Him. I've seen Him many times as He passed by with crowds on every side. I remember the first time! It was hard to be sure, but it seemed as if He paused to look right at me. His eyes were so filled with compassion that I had to look away - and He passed by. When I looked again, the only reminder of His passing was an eddy of dust settling upon the road.

Then one day, He passed again. I heard a large crowd and went to my window. He was there, in the center and they were headed toward the lake. I grabbed a shawl and hurried after them. If He was going to say something I wanted to hear it.

We stopped on a grassy hillside that gently sloped into Galilee. He was standing on the lake shore. From where we sat, reflected sunlight in the water at His back, created a halo effect about Him. A stillness spread over the crowd and then He spoke.

His words were like water to my parched soul. For a long time afterward, I lingered by-waiting for an opportunity to talk to Him. Finally He turned to me and in His eyes I saw the same welcome that His words had made me feel. I fell on the ground at His feet and wept.

Through bitter sobs I told Him the dark, ugly secrets of my life. He listened without condemnation and when I finished, He knelt beside me and prayed in my behalf. I felt my guilt and uncleanness drop away from me like the leaves of autumn. The winter in my life was over. Springtime had come.

Well, Jesus passed on to other towns, but I stayed in Magdala. Perhaps staying wasn't such a good idea, for the same old friends and clients kept coming around. It wasn't long before I found myself involved again in the life I had thought to leave behind. The old burden of guilt returned, along with sleeplessness and regret. I wished that Jesus lived in Magdala so I could go to Him for help.

I heard He was teaching at the north end of the lake, so one morning I set out to find Him. It wasn't difficult. When I got there, I saw a crowd gathered on the beach. Joining them, I discovered Jesus was teaching from a fishing boat anchored just off shore.

He was telling a story about a wayward son who journeyed to a far country and became involved in a life of sin. I could relate to the misery that boy felt as he fed pigs and thought of home! When Jesus pictured God rushing out to meet the returning prodigal, my heart leapt within me. There was even hope for people who knowingly became involved in sin. There was hope for me!

I found myself at Jesus' feet once more. Again I heard His prayers in my behalf, and felt the prodigal's joy in belonging to the family.

Sadly, I have to tell you my joy was shortlived. I returned to Magdala and my life of failure. But the Good News is that Jesus never gave up on me. Over the next few months our paths continued to cross, and each time I came into His presence, I felt welcome and forgiven. Finally, I determined *to stay in His presence*. And that is how I became a *transformed* follower of Jesus.

In the weeks that followed, I listened as He told us of the Father with stories I'll never forget. I saw the Father planting a vineyard and doing all possible for its growth (He even pulled the weeds). I saw Him preparing a wedding feast with a guest list that left out no one. On the darkest night, the Father was out looking for lost sheep. At midnight, He was helping a neighbor in need. He was the king who made the common man His friend.

He made the picture so clear! Just seeing Jesus, made me feel as though I had seen the Father. God loved through Jesus and as I watched Him, I began to understand where the love came from. He would rise up a great while before day and go out to some solitary place where He would pray. No matter how late He had gone to sleep or how tired He had been the night before, He always kept that appointment. Sometimes He would even spend entire nights in prayer and come forth refreshed and strengthened for another day.

I began to understand that *I could have* a relationship with His Father. In fact, He once said that eternal life was based on knowing God. At first I had difficulty believing God could be interested in spending time with someone like me. But as I watched Him in His Son, I knew it was true. Jesus mingled and mixed with common, everyday people, fisherfolk by the sea, farmers in the field, women at the well.

The Pharisees thought they slandered Him when they said, "He eats with publicans and sinners," but to me they were speaking precious truth! God became man and sat at the table with sinners! He was *my* Friend, and that has made all the difference!

Bible Texts

Matthew 5:48 “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Romans 7:15-24* “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

2 Corinthians 7:1* “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

Ephesians 6:12* “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

James 4:7 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Jeremiah 13:23* “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”

1 Timothy 6:12* “Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

James 4:7-8 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

John 15:5* “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

John 15:1-8 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Isaiah 59:19 “So shall they fear The name of the LORD from the west, And His glory from the rising of the sun; When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.”

Philippians 2:13^ “for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Philippians 1:6* “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”

John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My words and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

^ New Revised Standard Version

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

Is Jesus Coming Again?

or

Going Home With Your Friend!

Though I was only five years old, I can still remember the long trip from Oregon to Grandpa Venden's house in California—so we could be “Home for the Holidays.” As we traveled, the day came and went. Night settled down and I remember being struck with the thought that the moon was following us. The moon faded into dreams and the next thing I knew, Dad was carrying me beneath the Ponderosa pines that grew in Grandpa's yard.

The next morning was Christmas day. I helped Grandpa get a fire going with a bellows he had brought from Norway. Breakfast preceded present opening and took several years to finish. We finally opened our presents and my favorite was a blue blankie made by Grandma that had horses running across it. I still have it.

We had Christmas a second time that year. Home for the holidays had to include both sets of Grandparents. Grandpa Moore had an enormous tree ornamented with lighted glass tubes that bubbled with colored water. Yellow angels flew about the tree and hovered over the presents. Grandpa Moore always gave each grandchild a silver dollar for Christmas so we could be rich.

Aunt Barbara came over with *Idiot's Delight*, her fabulous whipped cream and strawberry jello. After eating, the adults played table games, while we cousins all enjoyed having the run of the house. There was homemade fudge and taffy and other goodies scattered around, where nobody was watching. It snowed that night, adding a final touch of enchantment.

Christmas after Christmas passed and I went away to college where I met a girl who was later to become my wife. I remember going home with her for Christmas. Her family had a rock fireplace strung with lights which

were left up year round. Nostalgia at the flick of a switch.

Our first year of marriage, we lived in a one room apartment furnished with orange crates and foam pads. That wasn't the home we wanted to be in for Christmas, so we fueled our Datsun and headed for Northern California. Ten hours later we approached a door by moonlight and discovered a note tacked to it. Somebody had written with a felt tip marker “There is room in our inn and the door is unlocked.” Once more, we were Home for the Holidays.

The next year, I got my first job teaching school. My folks moved to Nebraska, where they were spending their first year in a 100 year old farmhouse. They were confident that having the whole family together would make the farmhouse home, so they sent airline tickets and we had a white Christmas on the hill.

There's something special about getting together with loved ones and friends for Christmas. Over the years we've driven thousands of miles to be Home for the Holidays. Some of the journeys have been difficult as we crawled along on icy roads with vehicles that had long ago seen their best years of service. Why do we do it? Perhaps it is because within us all, there is a desire to go Home.

Do not let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated). You believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely on God; believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely also on Me. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going away to prepare a place for you. And when I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. John 14:1-3 (The Amplified Bible)

Is Jesus Coming Again?

Each year at Christmas, we celebrate the first Advent of Jesus. As that time approaches, the weather cools, trees change color and then lose their leaves, the days grow shorter and the nights longer, window panes wear morning frost, and in many places, snow blankets the land. The second Advent of Jesus will be Christmas on the grandest scale. As you look at conditions in the world around us, perhaps you've noticed that "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas."

1. What do each of the following texts say about conditions in our world just prior to the 2nd Advent of Jesus?
 - Daniel 12:4
 - Isaiah 51:6
 - Matthew 24:6,7
 - Matthew 24:12
 - Thessalonians 5:3
2. Jesus recognized that the world, as we know it, is not the sort of home He intends for His children. According to John 14:1-3, what is He doing about that?
3. What will it be like to live in that home?
 - Isaiah 25:8
 - Isaiah 35:4-10
 - Matthew 6:20-21
 - Revelation 7:16-17
 - Revelation 21:3-4
4. What promise did Jesus make in Matthew 26:63-64 while testifying under oath?

In the Bible, the prophecies about Christ's coming are divided into two parts, Suffering Savior and Coming King. There are eight times as many texts predicting Jesus' 2nd coming as there are predicting His first coming. Every prophecy relating to the Suffering Savior has been fulfilled exactly. We can expect the Coming King ones to be fulfilled as well!

5. When our soldiers came home from Desert Storm, the homecoming celebration made headlines and TV. The following texts describe what it will be like when Jesus returns to take His friends home.
 - Matthew 24:27 & 30
 - Matthew 25:31-32
 - Luke 21:27
 - Acts 1:11
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

- 2 Peter 3:10-12
- Jude 1:14
- Revelation 1:7

When Jesus returns to take His friends home it will be the most spectacular event in history. There will be nothing secretive about it. Nobody is going to miss it when it happens!. This is going to be BIG!!

6. Considering the following passages, who will be going home with Him when He comes? Why are some denied entrance into Heaven.

- Matthew 7:21-23
- Luke 13:24-30
- Matthew 25:1-12

In Lesson 1, we noticed Christianity is really about getting to know Jesus as your friend. When Jesus comes the second time, He will be coming for His friends. It's wonderful that when He comes, pain, suffering and sickness will be gone! It's wonderful that we'll receive mansions and crowns and immortality! But the best thing about His return is that then, time will finally begin in person with the best Friend we have ever come to know! Some day a cloud in the east will begin to grow. It will capture the attention of every one on earth as Jesus rides forth, shining brighter than the sun. Suddenly, a cry will go up from His friends, "We know you!" He will look back into the eyes of each one and say, "I know you too! And I've come to take you home—home to a party."!

Daily Bites

Often, when you are away, getting a letter from those you love is like receiving a little piece of home. This week as you study the passages from John, consider them a letter from “home”—from a Brother and a Father who love you and intend to come to take you home soon!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 16:1-4
- John 16:5-15
- John 16:16-24
- John 16:25-33
- John 17:1-5
- John 17:6-19
- John 17:20-26

Don't They Want to Come Home?

It is evening—if heaven has an evening. Two figures walk silently together through the golden streets. The taller one is the Master. The other is the angel Gabriel. On they walk through beauty beyond description. But the beauty tonight seems marred by the strange silence of the two. They have come into that vast part of the city which is uninhabited. Just why it should remain so is hard to understand. For the homes that line its winding streets are lovely beyond words. The terraces, the lawns of living green, the rose gardens rich with bloom, would bring tears of joy to any child of God who could see it.

At last Gabriel breaks the silence.

“Master,” he says, “all that has come from your hand is good. And these homes are no exception. They are beautiful—as only you could make them.”

Again there is silence. And again Gabriel speaks.

“Master, when do you plan to bring them home?”

“Not yet,” He replies. And then softly, with a look of yearning sadness, “Not yet.”

“Didn't you plan to go for them long before this?”

“Yes.” His sadness seems to deepen.

There is another silence, and then—

“Master, you know there is a housing shortage down there. Many have no homes. There is a continual clamor to find them. And those that do have them seem to be satisfied with earth. But, Master, the loveliest homes down there are only shacks compared to those that you have built.”

“I know,” the Savior says.

There is more silence, and this time it is the Master who breaks it.

“Gabriel, do you see those groups of people in all lands—the ones who are kneeling?”

“Yes, Master.”

“They are My people, Gabriel. They are faithful to Me. They keep my commandments. They love My words. They tell others I am coming back. And they pray, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’”

The Master hesitates. Then He continues, “But Gabriel, sometimes when My people feel that I am about to come for them, I detect a worried look on their faces, as if—”

The Master cannot say what is in His heart. But Gabriel knows, and turns his face. He has no answer for his Lord.

A few moments pass and the angel turns again, his face expressing the love and admiration that are in his heart.

“Jesus,” he says.

And the Savior's face seems to light up as Gabriel addresses Him. He loves to be called by that name which in a special way expresses His mission to a fallen world. “And thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.”

Gabriel pauses an instant, as he looks at the nailprints in the Savior's hands. Then, clasping both wounded hands in his own, he continues:

“Jesus, you gave so much for them.” He says no more, for even an angel cannot find words adequate to describe such infinite love.

The tears that a moment ago were stealing down the Master's cheek, now flow unchecked. His disappointment is so great that its intensity cannot be described. At last, motioning toward the empty mansions about Him, He finds words:

“Gabriel, I'm so anxious for homecoming! I want them to be with Me, here, where I am. Just imagine the times we're going to have! It's hard to wait, Gabriel. It's tough being so far away from My friends. I miss being able to go on walks with them. I miss being able to look into their eyes.”

“Gabriel, don't they want to come home?”

Bible Texts

Daniel 12:4 "...Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

Isaiah 51:6 "...The heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment..."

Matthew 24:6-7 "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars...These things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Nation will rise against nation, & kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, pestilences, & earthquakes."

Matthew 24:12* "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold"

1 Thessalonians 5:3 "When they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."

John 14:1-3 Please see beginning of lesson 8.

Isaiah 25:8 "He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 35:4-10 "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, & the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. The lame shall leap like a deer, the tongue of the dumb sing...They shall obtain joy & gladness, & sorrow & sighing shall flee away

Matthew 6:20-21 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Revelation 7:16-17 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; the Lamb...will shepherd them & lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear."

Revelation 21:3-4 "God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Matthew 26:63-64* "But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'"

Matthew 24:27 & 30* "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (30) At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him."

Luke 21:27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Acts 1:11* "...This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

2 Peter 3:10-12 "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, & the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Jude 1:14 "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,

Revelation 1:7 "He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him."

Matthew 7:21-23 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Luke 13:24-30* “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

“But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

Matthew 25:1-12* - “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

What Happens When You Die?

or

Awakened by a Friend!

Do you like to sleep? I love to sleep-I mean *really* sleep. I don't like it when I toss and turn in bed for half the night or have wild dreams and nightmares. I like to hit the pillow, talk to my friend Jesus for a few moments, then waken to discover that it's morning with the sunshine streaming through the window (I prefer not to get up before the sun does!). After that kind of night, I feel rested and ready to face another day..

Do you remember taking long trips in the car when you were little-trips when it seemed like you would never arrive? Then, somehow you fell asleep and next thing you knew you were there, being carried from the car in your father's strong arms.

Have you ever had surgery? I have had several. I always liked it best when they put me *all* the way "out" while they fixed whatever needed fixing. I remember being wheeled into the operating room where doctors and nurses briefly talked with me before administering the anesthetic. The world would spin for a moment as I teetered between being awake and asleep-and then, (the next instant?) I would wake up. During the surgery I would feel no pain, have no concept of the passing of time, and have no recollection of what happened.

Jesus often used familiar experiences and events to illustrate important eternal truths. What we call death, Jesus called sleep!

Many years ago the family of a very sick man, sent word to Jesus that one of His friend was dying. Jesus responded by saying, "This sickness is not unto death."

Things got confusing for that family because Lazarus died. Apparently though, it was no big deal to Jesus, because a few days later He said to His disciples, "Our friend, Lazarus is sleeping, but I go that I might wake him out of sleep." (You may want to read the whole story in John 11:1-45.)

Death is nothing to Jesus. He calls it sleep because He doesn't want us to be afraid of it! There are some advantages to sleep, you know. You don't feel pain when you're asleep. Long trips pass more quickly and it's nice to wake up to find that you have arrived. Imagine opening your eyes and seeing Jesus!

If you have ever gone the long walk and come back alone, the best news about death is that one day in Heaven, Jesus will say to the angels, "My friends on earth are sleeping, but I go that I might wake them out of sleep!"

He *is* the Resurrection, the Life, and *your* Friend! What is more, if you should die before He returns, know this: He is coming back for His friends and He will not leave earth without 'em.

Now also we would not have you ignorant, brethren, about those who fall asleep [in death], that you may not grieve [for them] as the rest do who have no hope [beyond the grave]. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him through Jesus those who have fallen asleep [in death].

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (The Amplified Bible)

What Happens When We Die?

Lesson eight concluded with a description of the glorious second coming of Jesus as He returns for His friends. But what about those who have died while waiting for His return? Where are they when He comes and what has happened to them since they were laid to rest? This lesson takes a look at what we can learn from the Bible concerning those questions.

1. According to John 6:40 how and when do we receive eternal life?
2. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 what hope do we have that helps us deal with death and sorrow as we wait for Jesus to come back?
3. Did you notice that the “dead in Christ” rise first? According to John 5:28 where are the dead when they hear the Lord’s voice?
4. Who gets to live forever, and who doesn’t?
 - John 3:36
 - John 3:16

Notice there are only two choices (they are opposites), perish or everlasting life. When we talk about death, we are commonly referring to the loss of life on this planet. When God talks about death, He is referring to something that has not yet happened to anyone.

5. According to Matthew 16:27 does man go to his reward (good or bad) at death or at Jesus’ second coming? (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:17 & 5:23)
6. What happens to the spirit, soul and body of those who “fall asleep” now? Ecclesiastes 12:7
7. What does the Bible mean when it refers to “spirit?” Job 27:3
8. So what is taken away, or returns to God at death? Psalms 104:29
9. What is the soul? Genesis 2:7.

Based on the above texts, the formula for a living soul is: Dust + Breath of Life = Living Soul. According to Webster death is the “opposite of life”. Therefore the formula for death is: Living Soul - Breath of Life = Dust. The combination of electricity and a light bulb produces light. Take away either the current or the bulb and the light is gone. Where did the light go? It didn’t go anywhere! It simply no longer exists. So it is with the soul. At death it no longer exists because the two ingredients that make the soul are separated.

10. According to Psalms 146:4 is there anything conscious about man in death?

In the NIV Bible it indicates that when a person dies, their “plans come to nothing.” The Hebrew word which is translated as “plans” in this verse is “esh-tonah” which actually means thoughts or thinking. A more accurate translation would be that when a person dies, their thinking or thoughts cease.

11. According to Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 & 10 do the dead have any thoughts or feelings to communicate with us?

12. Who originated the idea that man does not die? Genesis 3:4.

This was the devil's lie. Believing this deception could lead one to conclude that God doesn't mean what he says (death is not the consequence of sin). It could also prepare the way for Satan to introduce other lies about God by pretending to bring us messages from the dead.

13. What did Jesus call what we call death?

- Matthew 9:24
- John 11:4
- John 11:11

14. What did Paul call what we call death? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Don't ever forget that Jesus called it sleep! As mentioned on page 1, sleep is not bad! Especially when Jesus is the One who wakes you.

15. Who is the Resurrection and the Life? John 11:25-26

It's good news that one day in heaven, Jesus will say to the angels, "Our friends on earth are sleeping. Let's go! I'm going to wake them up!" He is coming back for His friends.

Daily Bites

Some time ago in Texas, a six-year-old girl was tragically killed in an accident. After the funeral, her father (an atheist) approached the open casket. Rigid, angry and tight-fisted, he looked down at his child. Through clenched teeth, he muttered, “Good-by, forever!” then abruptly turned and left. Her mother (a Christian) approached and gazed down. Lovingly, she stroked the little girl’s forehead, then bent over and gave her a kiss. “Good-night, honey,” she whispered, “Mommy will see you in the Morning, when all the shadows flee.”

Jesus makes all the difference! As you read this weeks Scriptures, you are getting better acquainted with your Friend, the Resurrection and the Life.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 18:1-11
- John 18:12-14
- John 18:15-18
- John 18:19-24
- John 18:25-27
- John 18:28-40
- John 19:1-16

The Tomb

Sabbath came and went. I slept little and moved as if in a dream. I kept hoping I would waken to find the nightmare over. I remember walking numbly to the edge of town and sitting beside the empty tomb where Lazarus had been buried. There I recalled that Jesus had said, "I am the resurrection and the life."

He had given life to others. How could it be that His own could be taken? When Lazarus came forth, I had thought that death had met its match. Now the grave had taken Him who said that He was the way, the truth and the life. Death was victorious after all, and even the best of men could not prevent its sting. Such were my thoughts as the hours dragged painfully by.

Out of exhaustion I finally slept a few hours during the second night after Jesus' death. Some time after midnight I awoke with the overwhelming desire to return to the tomb where Jesus was. I knew that the tomb was sealed and that a Roman guard had been posted. I knew that it would be impossible to see His body, but I just wanted to be near Him. I had always known comfort in His presence before; perhaps the same could still be mine even now. And so in tears I walked the two or three miles to Jerusalem.

Along the way, I met Joanna, Salome and Mary the mother of James taking more spices to the tomb. I joined them and we continued walking together. About a mile from the grave we were suddenly thrown with violence to the ground. The earth heaved and shook and a sound like thunder filled my ears. In the distance I could hear the clatter of rocks tumbling down a hillside, and my heart became fearful. Was this death's way of boasting, or was all creation groaning without Jesus?

The tremors subsided, and cautiously we rose to our feet. We continued toward the tomb, wondering whether the quake had disturbed His body or affected the hillside that contained His grave. It had! The guard had fled, but how I wished they had stayed, for the sepulcher was rent and Jesus' body had been taken.

My grief knew no bounds! Not only was Jesus dead, but they had taken away his body, and I did not know where they had taken Him. Being robbed of His body was more injustice than I could bear. In despair I turned and ran to tell the disciples.

When Peter and John heard the news, they raced to the tomb, and I followed, some distance behind. By the time I got there, they had gone, and I was alone. I went to the entrance of the tomb and looked inside.

Through my tears I saw two men sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. One of them asked why I was crying, and I told him that I had wanted to be near Jesus but that someone had taken His body and I didn't know where it was. I didn't feel like talking more, so I turned away, and when I did I saw Someone standing in my path. It was another Man, and he too asked me why I was weeping.

At his question I began sobbing uncontrollably. I tried to talk, but could only moan. I struggled to gain composure, but it would not come. I thought He was the gardener, and brokenly I tried to ask if He knew where they had taken my Lord.

Perhaps Joseph's sepulcher was considered too fine for a carpenter. If that was the case, I knew of another empty tomb just outside of Bethany. I could take Him there if they would let me. Through my tears, I told Him so.

And then I heard Him speak my name. "Mary," He said, and my heart stood still. "Mary!" It was Jesus!

I fell at His feet and cried, "Master!"

He told me not to touch Him yet, and then He gave me a message for His friends. He said that He was going to the Father and that everything was going to be all right. I'd heard Him talk about "going" before. At *that* time He had said He would come again and receive us to Himself. He said we would be able to be with Him there, and now that is what I live for.

One day He will do for others what He did for our family and for Lazarus. He will come to waken His friends from their long sleep. I expect to hear Him call my name again then. I understand He plans to give us each a crown and I can hardly wait to cast mine at His feet!

Bible Texts

John 6:40 “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17* “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

John 5:28* “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice.”

John 3:36* “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Matthew 16:27 “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

1 Thessalonians 4:17* “After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23* “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

Job 27:3 “As long as my breath is in me, And the breath of God in my nostrils,”

Psalms 104:29 “You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.”

Genesis 2:7 “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

Psalms 146:4 “His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish.”

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6* “For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”

Ecclesiastes 9:10* “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”

Genesis 3:4 “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’”

Matthew 9:24^ “he said, ‘Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him.”

John 11:4* “When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.’”

John 11:11 “After he had said this, he went on to tell them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Please see text #2 near top of this page

John 11:25-26* “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

^ New Revised Standard Version

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

Afraid of Judgment?

or

The Judge is Your Friend!

Harvey Tweegles was a good man. “Honest Harv,” his friends called him. Religion was a large part of Harv’s life. He never missed church, he sang in the choir, gave generous offerings, and tried to participate in all the outreach activities. “Yes,” thought Harv as he prepared for bed one night after attending prayer meeting, “I have covered all the bases!”

“It had been an interesting meeting,” Harv thought as he was dozing off to sleep, “all about the end of time and judgment...”

Suddenly, he was aware of a great throng of people standing around him. “Where am I?” he whispered to a woman standing nearby.

“Judgment,” she answered quietly, pointing to the scene which was unfolding.

A huge crowd of people from every nation and race was gathered together in a mammoth amphitheater. Far below, seated on a throne, was the most awesome and commanding figure Harv had ever seen. His voice thundered as He spoke, and Harv clearly heard Him say, “What is *your* plea?”

One by one, the people in the crowd stepped before the throne, spoke with the One who sat upon it, then joined one of the groups forming on either side of the throne. It was passed among the onlookers that those on the right side were to receive a glorious reward. Those on the left side were uneasy. Despair seemed to hang like a gloomy cloud above their heads.

Suddenly, Harv realized that he was being ushered before the throne. As he stood in awe before the powerful Being seated there, he became aware that he was to *make his own plea*. “I ... I would like to join those on your right,” he stammered.

“And what claim do you have on that inheritance?” came the reply.

Harv found himself saying something vaguely familiar, “Oh, I am acquainted with you. I have eaten and drunk in your presence and you have taught in our streets. Besides that I have prophesied in your name ... in your name I have cast out devils, and I have done many wonderful works. Lord, isn’t that enough?”

Harv trembled as he heard the reply, “Depart from me, you evil-doer. Hear what you have said, ‘I have done many wonderful works. I am all right. Therefore I am entitled to eternal life.’ You see, Harvey, *I* does not count here. The problem is that I do not *know* you and *you do not know Me*.”

As Harv was being escorted toward the group on the left, he heard his neighbor’s name called. Turning, he paused to hear Fred’s reply.

“Oh, I have not done anything at all to deserve the company of those on your right,” Fred answered, “I am a sinner dependent only on the grace of the Lord. I was wretched and completely a captive and in such bondage that nobody but the Lord Himself could deliver me. I was so blind that no one but Jesus could cause me to see. All the claim that I have is what *He has done for me*. When in my wretchedness I cried, He delivered me. When in my misery I needed comfort, He comforted me. When in my poverty I begged, He gave me riches. When in my helplessness I asked Him to show me the way, He led me all the way. When I was so naked that no one could clothe me, He gave me this garment I have on. All that I have to present as any claim that would cause me to enter is just what He has done for me.”

Then a voice like sweetest music came from the throne as the Heavenly Being answered, “We are perfectly satisfied with you. The deliverance that you obtained from your wretchedness is that which My Son has accomplished. He *did* give you that garment you are wearing. He has woven it and it is all divine. Yes! You may enter into eternal life.”

Harv woke with a start. “What a dream,” he thought, “it seemed real enough to have actually happened.” All at once the awful significance of the dream struck him. It was true. “I do not know Jesus as my personal Friend and Savior.” Slipping from his bed, Harv knelt and breathed a prayer of thankfulness that there was still time to really get to know Him.

“I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the person whose ears are open to My words [who listens to My message] and believes and trusts in and clings to and relies on Him Who sent Me has (possess now) eternal life. And he does not come into judgment [does not incur sentence of judgment, will not come under condemnation], but he has already passed over out of death into life.” John 5:24 (The Amplified Bible)

Afraid of Judgment?

A student was startled to hear voices as he walked past a cemetery late one night. On the other side of a hedge two bums, whom he could not see, were dividing a number of walnuts they had gathered. "One for you and one for me," they kept saying, "One for you and one for me." Listening from behind the hedge, his imagination got the best of him and he wondered if the Devil and God were dividing the souls of the dead. Suddenly his heart skipped a beat and he took off like a frightened bird as one of the voices said, "Don't forget about that one over by the bushes."

In this lesson we will take a look at the judgment and how Jesus plans to take care of His friends when that time comes.

1. What does the Bible teach about the reality of a final judgment?

- Psalms 9:7-8
- Psalms 96:13
- Ecclesiastes 12:14
- Matthew 25:31-33
- Revelation 20:11-12

2. Who is the Judge? Look for the answer in the following texts:

- John 5:22
- John 5:26-27
- Romans 2:16
- Romans 14:10-12

3. Who is the prosecuting attorney, the one who accuses?

- Revelation 12:10

If your Bible has a marginal reference, you will find that it refers you to Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1:9-10. Check those verses out to come up with the accuser's name.

The book of Job makes it clear that Satan has accused God of being unfair. He claims that Christians only serve and obey God for the blessings they hope to receive. God's claim is that His government is based on love and that His followers serve and obey Him as a natural response to His love.

4. What does the judgment appear to be based on?

- Matthew 25:34-46
- Revelation 22:12
- 2 Corinthians 5:10

5. What do our actions say about God?

- Isaiah 60:21
- Matthew 5:16
- John 15:1-8 (esp. v. 8)

Good fruit is a reflection on the Gardener. The reason this is so, is that the Gardener (not the vines or branches) is the one responsible for the health of the garden. Those who visit beautiful Butchart Gardens in British Columbia, marvel and comment on the botanical and artistic touch of those responsible for the beautiful combinations of living color and design. They don't praise the flowers for arranging themselves in such an attractive manner. Someone cares for the garden and it shows!

6. What sort of care and responsibility does Jesus take for his friends?

- Philippians 1:6
- Philippians 1:11

In earlier lessons, we discovered that we can't produce obedience, but God promises to take care of that for those who continue to maintain a friendship relationship with Him. Since that is true, our actions reveal whether or not we know Jesus.

7. According to Romans 8:1, If you are in a relationship with Jesus, what is your standing with God?

8. Lessons 1 & 8 referred to three "judgment stories" Jesus told (see Matthew 7:21-23; 25:1-12 and Luke 13:24-30). In each case, what do those who were "let in" have in common?

9. At the judgment, what actually happens to those who have a relationship with Jesus? Consider John 5:24.

- The good news about the judgment is that if you know Jesus:
- He promises to take care of the changes needed in our lives (fruit)!
- He assures you that you are not condemned!
- He sees to it that you don't even face the judgment!

Daily Bites

In Romans 8:31 it says: “If God is for us, who can be against us!” The passages you will be examining in John this week illustrate the truth of this text. They focus on what Jesus did in order to make your eternity secure. Jesus risked hell (eternal separation from God) rather than live without you! You can face the judgment with confidence because of what your Friend, Jesus, did. Remember, you are spending time with Jesus to get to know Him as a friend, not just to put in time!

Begin each session with prayer - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”

- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 18:1-11
- John 19:16-27
- John 19:28-37
- John 19:38-42
- John 20:1-9
- John 20:10-18
- John 20:19-23

Good News

Tom was not an ordinary criminal, he was as bad as they come. But he had been caught. Now he sat in prison thinking desperately of escape or suicide. Neither was possible. He was too closely guarded. The future looked black. He was at the end of his rope.

Then one day a prison official came to Tom's cell and said, "Tom, a lawyer has been assigned to your case and he is the best lawyer in the whole world." Tom knew there must be a catch somewhere. The official continued, "The prosecuting attorney has also been assigned and he's the best prosecuting attorney in the world."

The next day a quiet sort of gentleman came to Tom's cell and knocked. Tom looked up startled, "You've got the key, man," he said. "Why knock?"

"I only go where I'm invited," replied the visitor.

"Well come in," Tom said. "I wasn't going anywhere."

The man entered the cell. "I'm a lawyer," he said. "I understand you're looking for a lawyer to take your case."

"Yes," said Tom. "It's about time they finally sent me someone. Tell me about yourself. I hear you're supposed to be good."

"Well," said the lawyer, "I have some good news for you and bad news. The good news is that I've never lost a case. If you place yourself in my hands, I can guarantee the outcome."

"The bad news is the price, right?" said Tom. "OK, lay it on me. How much will it cost?"

"It's free," said the lawyer.

"Hey, I don't need your charity," said Tom stiffly. "Get me out of here and I *will* pay for it!"

The lawyer smiled kindly, "If you want my help, you must accept it as a gift. It is totally and completely free."

Tom was silent for a few minutes and then asked, "Are there any other conditions?"

"I have some more good news and bad news," the lawyer said. "The good news is that all you have to do, if you want me to take your case, is just ask me. I'll take it immediately. The bad news is you'll have to plead guilty."

"Guilty!" interrupted Tom, "But how can you help me if I plead guilty?"

"I have some bad news for you and some good news," said the lawyer. "The bad news is that if you plead

guilty, you'll be convicted. And, if you don't plead guilty, there is enough evidence to convict you anyway. Either way you'll get the death sentence."

"Then why even have a trial?" said Tom.

"You've forgotten that I have some good news," said the lawyer. "I'm willing to take your sentence and let you go free."

"I can't let *you* pay for *my* crimes!" cried Tom.

"But I already have paid," replied the lawyer. "If you'll accept my substitution in your behalf, it's yours."

A turmoil of thoughts whirled in Tom's brain. At last he spoke, "I'm interested, but are there any other conditions?"

"Yes," said the lawyer with a smile. "You and I must become friends and spend time together. As our friendship grows, you'll become more like me and less like a criminal."

"Wow!" exclaimed Tom. "Who wouldn't want a friend like you? That sounds wonderful! I accept! Is there anything else I should know?"

"One final thing," said the lawyer. "I have one last bit of good news and bad news for you."

Tom smiled. "Give me the bad news first and get it over with, although all of a sudden it doesn't seem as though any of your bad news has been that bad!"

The lawyer smiled too. "All right. The bad news is that we have set the date for your trial."

"Why, that's not bad news at all," exclaimed Tom. "With a lawyer like you, do you think I would want to stay here in this place forever and never even have my case come to court?!? Your good news will have to be pretty good to out do that."

The lawyer looked into Tom's eyes for a moment before he said gently, "The good news is this: When you come to trial, I will not only be your lawyer. I will be your judge as well."

Do you know your *friend*, Jesus? ... the Judge!

Bible Texts

Psalms 9:7-8 “He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.”

Psalms 96:13 “He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.”

Ecclesiastes 12:14 “For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”

Matthew 25:31-33* “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

Revelation 20:11-12* “I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

John 5:22 “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.”

John 5:26-27 “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”

Romans 2:16 “...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

Romans 14:10-12 “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Revelation 12:10* “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.’”

Zechariah 3:1-2 “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?””

Job 1:9-10* “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.”

Matthew 25:34-46 “Lack of space prevents including this text. Please read it from your Bible.”

Revelation 22:12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

2 Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Isaiah 60:21 “Also your people shall all be righteous; They shall inherit the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified.”

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

John 15:8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Philippians 1:6* “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:11 “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Bible Texts

Romans 8:1 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

Matthew 7:21-23; 25:1-12 and **Luke 13:24-30** - Because of space, these texts have not been included.

John 5:24[^] “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

^ New Revised Standard Version

Credits

More About Jesus

is written by Lee Venden and Thure Martinsen

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More About Jesus

Is God's Law Important?

or

Guidance From Your Friend!

And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and do not sin again." The woman rose from her frightened crouch and started to scurry away. But then, as though suddenly aware of Jesus' closing injunction, she stopped and looked quizzically at her rescuer. "What do you mean, 'do not sin again?'" She asked.

"I think you know what I mean." Jesus replied.

"But I don't know, Rabbi; unless you are suggesting that my relationship with Ruben is sinful."

"What would you call it?"

"A significant relationship." The woman answered. "An interpersonal commitment, in which each of us seeks to realize our full potential."

"Oh, really!" Jesus said.

"Ruben and I love one another. Surely you know what that means! How can a relationship be sinful when it expresses true love?"

"Well, what about your covenant with your husband?"

"Isaac? Well, Rabbi, Isaac and I never have really excited one another. We cannot realize our full potential together."

"What does that have to do with...?"

"Come now Rabboni. People have a duty to themselves. You know, a right to their happiness."

"They do?"

"Certainly, and why should we let an outmoded legalism tie us into relationships that are sterile and unfulfilling."

"Oh, you mean that Isaac is unable to father children and you hope that Ruben..."

"Rabbi, You're putting me on. You know very well what I mean. God knows Isaac can father children. I have three of them to prove that."

"You have three children? And you propose to ignore your marriage vows and carry on with this man Ruben?"

"Oh Rabbi, you're really cute! 'Carry on with this man Ruben.' That kind of talk went out with the age of the judges. I'm not saying that Ruben and I will stay together

for ever, we may very well outgrow one another after a time and need room to explore our authentic selfhoods. People do change, you know."

"But the children?"

"Kids aren't as fragile as you think, Rabboni. You'd be surprised at how well they get along with Ruben; the way they hang on him when he stays for breakfast, when Isaac is away on a camel drive that is. They call him Uncle Rube and he does magic tricks for them and they like that. They much prefer him to Nathan."

"Nathan!"

"My previous significant relationship. He got to be a terrible drag. Said his conscious bothered him and legalistic stuff like that. I told him he should pay more attention to people like you."

"Like me? How might I have helped him?"

"Oh, you know that business you say about not being paralyzed by guilt and fearing human opinion."

"Oh, um..., but tell me if this Ruben loves you so deeply why wasn't he here today?"

"He wanted to be Rabbi, he really did, very much. But, he just can't stand the sight of blood. He is a very sensitive person, not at all like Joshua."

"Joshua? Another significant..."

"Oh, that was over a long time ago and it wasn't really significant, not really. You might say I was just trying my wings."

"What will you say to your husband about today?"

"I'll tell him to view it as a learning experience. A chance to broaden his horizons. Well, I must run now. Bye bye, Rabboni. Have a good day."

Jesus wept.

"If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands." John 14:15 (The Amplified Bible)

Is God's Law Important?

What comes to your mind when you think of the Ten Commandments? A Hollywood movie? Stone tablets? Rules and regulations? Restraints to personal freedom? Please read Exodus 20:3-17 --counting the commandments as you go. (Compare Deuteronomy 5:7-21).

1. Some time ago, I saw a sign in front of a church that read, "They're Not Called The Ten Suggestions." It reminded me of a similar sign I'd seen which said, "The Ten Commandments Are Not Multiple Choice." What do you think the sign painters were trying to say with these signs?
2. According to Exodus 19:5-8, how did the Israelites respond to God's instruction and commands? Do you think they gave a good answer?
3. Is man *able* to keep God's Commandments?
 - Jeremiah 13:23
 - Romans 8:7
4. It sounds like we are being asked to do the impossible. Is God's law really important? Is obedience really required?
 - Ecclesiastics 12:13
 - Matthew 19:17
 - Romans 2:13
5. Could it be that the Commandments were meant for the Old Testament people and no longer apply today?
 - Matthew 5:17-18
 - Revelation 14:12

Years ago, the state of Oregon passed a law that convicted murderers should die by hanging. Adam Winkle was the first to be hung. Some years later, the citizens of Oregon decided to change the law and Winkle's descendants said, "No fair! If you can change the law after he died, why couldn't you change it before he died?" If God could have ignored, done away with, or changed His Law, don't you suppose He would have chosen an alternative to the death of Jesus?

6. How did Jesus summarize the commandments in Matthew 22:37-40, Did He eliminate all but these two?

Jesus summarized the first four commandments as love for God, and the last six as love for man, concluding, "On these two, hang all the law." If I say, "On my two arms hang all my ten fingers," have I eliminated my fingers by describing what supports them.

Lesson 1 made the point that we are saved by faith without the deeds of the law (See Romans 3:20 & 28). Does this mean obeying God is not important? Romans 6:14 says we "are not under the law, but under grace." Does grace do away with the law, or the need to obey it?

7. Does grace *increase* or *lessen* our responsibility to obey God?

- Romans 6:15
- Romans 6:1-2

Suppose the Governor visits an inmate on death row and asks what he'd do if he were pardoned. If the inmate replies, "Kill the judge who put me here," do you think it likely he will be given pardon (grace)? Imagine he is pardoned, but returns to a life of crime, and winds up before the judge again. What might the judge say if the man, after being asked why he went back to crime, answered, "I thought if you were saved by grace you didn't have to keep the law anymore."?

8. Apparently God's law is still in effect. If we can't produce obedience what purpose does the law serve?

- Romans 3:20
- Romans 7:7
- Galatians 3:24

"Schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:23) is translated from the Greek word paidagogos, (pahee-dag-o-gos'); a name given to a person whose job it was to take children to school. Like a truant officer, such a person got the children where they needed to be in order to learn, but did not actually do the teaching. Part of the good news of the Sabbath is that not only will Jesus free you from the guilt of sin—He will free you from its power as well!

9. A thermometer does not cure a sick person, but it does show him that he is not well. Once he knows he is actually sick, he can go to a Doctor for the help and prescription he needs to become healthy. How could God's Law be like a thermometer? Who is the Doctor and what is His prescription?

10. Is obeying God's commandments something we do in order to prove we love Him, or something that results from loving Him? Based on what you have learned about Jesus and how He works in your life, is obedience a requirement or a response? Could it be both? Which is the cause and which is the effect?

- John 14:15
- John 14:21-24
- John 15:10
- 1 John 5:3

As you get to know Jesus better, you will love Him more. As you love Him more, you will find it natural to obey Him. His Law does not change, but KNOWING JESUS changes you and enables you to meet His requirements.

In pre-Civil War days, Joe, a tall slave with a physique like Hercules, was being sold at auction. With a sneer on his face and rebellion in his eyes, he kept loudly insisting that he would never work for any man! Finally the gavel came down and Joe was sold to a man who'd bid an astronomical price. As he was escorted in chains to the wagon, and on the subsequent journey home, Joe kept angrily repeating that he would never work. At last the wagon pulled up to a tidy cottage in a picturesque clearing beside a tumbling brook. The man who bought him led him inside and removed his chains. "This is your home Joe," he said. Joe looked around in wonder at the lovely home—beautifully decorated and fully furnished. For a moment he stood speechless, then suddenly shaking his head, he said, "Whether you beat or bribe me, its all the same, I will never work!" In a voice filled with

compassion and love, the man who had bought him said, "That's O.K., Joe, this is still your home! I didn't buy you to make you work, I bought you to set you free." Again Joe was silent as he tried to grasp the meaning of those words. Then suddenly he fell weeping at the feet of the man who had paid so much and said brokenly, "Master, I will serve you forever!"

Daily Bites

In Ezekiel 36:25-27 God says, “I will cleanse you from all your impurities ... I will give you a new heart ... And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” God will do for you what you are not able to do for yourself—produce obedience! As you spend time with Jesus through these passages you will get to know Him better, you will love Him more, and you will want to obey Him—it all depends on knowing Him!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 20:24-31
- John 21:1-14
- John 21:15-23
- John 21:24-25
- 1 John 1:1-4
- 1 John 1:5-10
- 1 John 2:1-2

Restoration!

From where He stood He could see the sleeping city below. The empty streets and shops would soon be filled with people. He longed to teach them what His Father was really like but His time was short and their hearts seemed dulled to understanding. He sat down on a rock and put His face in His hands. His mind drifted back over the past. Back through the struggle in the wilderness and His baptism, all the way an event that had occurred when He was just a boy...

He had finished breakfast and gone to draw water from the well for His mother. Though not quite eleven, He was big for his age, and the work he did for His father in the carpentry shop had greatly strengthened Him.

He was not far from the well when he came upon a small group of boys, teasing a young girl. The girl came from a home that was ostracized because her father was a tax collector for the Romans. He had heard her being teased about it before.

She must have come for water also, because her jar lay broken a short distance away from where she stood. The boys surrounded her to prevent escape, taunting her mercilessly.

“Your daddy’s a Roman!” shouted one.

“Traitor!” screamed another.

Then one of them grabbed her shawl. She cried out, trying in vain to get it back. They tossed it back and forth among themselves, letting it fall in the dirt. Suddenly, while chasing one of them, she tripped on her skirt and fell to the ground. The boys laughed and jeered as tears welled up in her eyes, and streaked her face.

He quickly set His jar down, and began running to her rescue. He had almost reached her when an adult voice rang out.

“Jonathan, get back over here this instant! Hurry up with that water!” A heavysset woman was walking down the path. Red-faced and winded, she grabbed one of the boys by the ear, and dragged him after her. The rest of the group scattered to avoid similar punishment at the hands of their mothers.

He went over to where the girl’s shawl was and picked it up. He brushed off the weeds, then walked over to her and held out His hand to help her up. Her black hair was matted, and she looked up at Him through muddy brown eyes, as though expecting Him to laugh or throw the shawl in her face. All she saw in His eyes, however, was compassion.

She took His hand, and He pulled her up and handed her the shawl. “Thank You,” she whispered as she turned away from Him and started home.

“Wait!” He called. “Here, take My jar. But let Me fill it with water for you first.” He turned to the well and

swiftly drew up the water. After He placed the jar in her arms, He helped arrange the shawl about her shoulders. He watched her turn and make her way back up the path to her home before returning to His own. His parents had understood about the missing jar...

Footsteps on the path brought Him back to reality. Morning had come.

“Master?” came a whisper.

It was John. Jesus looked up and smiled. “Good morning, John,” He said as He stood up and grasped the other’s hand. John smiled back.

Jesus turned to look at the rising sun, and His face reflected its glory. Breathing one last prayer for strength, He pivoted and headed back toward the city. He made His way to the Temple and began teaching the crowd that formed around Him there.

While He was teaching, some Pharisees and scribes approached Him. They had a woman with them. The group of men threw her at His feet. “Teacher,” one of them said, “this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. Moses said in the Law that such should be stoned to death. What do you say?”

Jesus knew she wasn’t the one on trial. He was. She was merely a pawn in their scheme to trap Him. His heart filled with pity. Sighing, He knelt in the dirt beside her and began writing in the dust with His finger. The men grew impatient with His apparent delay and demanded an answer, so Jesus straightened and met them with a challenge. “Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone.”

He bent and continued writing in the dirt. One by one they peered over His shoulder then drifted away without looking back.

Finally, Jesus was alone with the woman. As she raised her head and looked into His face, a flood of memories washed across His mind. The black hair, the brown eyes, the tear-streaked face...

“Woman, where are your accusers?” He asked, “Is there no one here to condemn you?”

Timidly, she looked around before replying, “No one, Lord.” She whispered it again, unbelievably, “No one.”

Restoration!

“I don’t accuse you, either,” He said as He helped her to her feet, “Go and sin no more.”

She gazed into His face, her eyes brimming with thankfulness. The earthen jar He had given her in

childhood could not compare with what He gave her now. She whispered her gratitude, then slowly walked away—transformed!

Bible Texts

Exodus 20:3-17 - Due to space, this passage has not been included.

Deuteronomy 5:7-21 - Due to space, this passage has not been included.

Exodus 19:7-8 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

Jeremiah 13:23* Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

Romans 8:7* The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Ecclesiastics 12:13* Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Matthew 19:17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Romans 2:13* For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Matthew 5:17-18* Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Revelation 14:12^ Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

Matthew 22:37-40 This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

Romans 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Romans 3:20* Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 7:7* What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

Galatians 3:24** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

John 8:46* Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?

John 14:15* If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:21^ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

John 14:23-24* Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

John 15:10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

1 John 5:3^ For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

***King James Version*

**New International Version*

^New Revised Standard Version

Credits

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More About Jesus

Is the Sabbath Important?

or

Time With Your Friend!

I was in love with a beautiful girl, and I thought she liked me too. But I had a problem. The only opportunity for us to spend any special time together was once a week. The first time we made arrangements for this special occasion, I told her I would arrive at her house just as the sun was setting, and the sky was beautiful, purple and romantic. When the prearranged time arrived, I came up the front steps, anxious to see her, and I knocked on the door.

Her little brother came to the door. “Where’s your sister?” I asked.

“Oh,” he said, “I think she’s in the shower. But you can come in and wait if you want to.”

So I waited. After a while she came through the house headed toward the kitchen. Her hair was all wet and up in curlers. As she went past me she said a quick hello, then disappeared into the kitchen.

This was rather disappointing. She seemed to be doing something out there in the kitchen with an iron and ironing board, preparing something for the next day I guess. I also heard some pots and pans rattling as the oven door opened and shut.

I began to wonder just how anxious she really was to see me, but I continued waiting. After a while some of the other members of her family came in. She came out of the kitchen, introduced us, and said, “Maybe we can sit down and get acquainted.”

But her little brother said, “When are we going to eat?” After a bit of discussion they decided we would eat first, so we went to the table and sat down.

After supper someone said, “Why don’t we go into the family room and get acquainted with our guest.”

Her brother said, “Do we have to?”

I didn’t feel too good about that, but we went into the family room anyway and began to talk. I noticed that several of them were terribly sleepy, including the young woman I had come to see. She kept nodding and

yawning. Finally, her little brother went to sleep while we were talking.

My weekend with this young woman’s family was off to a poor start. She apologized however, and said, “Listen, I had an awful lot to do this week, and I’m sorry I wasn’t ready for your coming, but things will be better tomorrow. We’ve made some special plans.” My heart began to pick up, and I felt better.

I went to bed and dreamed of going to some quiet place where we could really communicate and get to know each other better.

The next day I discovered she had invited a group of friends to get together to go out in nature. At first I looked forward to it, but then I found out that all of her friends were bringing their motorcycles. We went out in nature all right-but I couldn’t even talk above the roar of the engines. Finally noontime came, and we sat down for a picnic lunch. She seemed to be very tired, and after we’d eaten, she and her friends spread their blankets out under the trees for a siesta. We couldn’t talk then. I ended up spending most of the afternoon walking alone in the woods.

When I returned to the group, they were awake. As I approached I could hear them talking. I overheard my friend saying she could hardly wait until I left, because she had exciting plans for that evening-after I was gone. I left that weekend, sad and disappointed!

It would be terrible to love someone who really doesn’t want to spend time with you. Did you know that Jesus likes you so much that He has set aside some special time each week for you and He to spend together? You could think of it as a date with God ...

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]” Matthew 11:28 (The Amplified Bible)

Is the Sabbath Important?

A young boy put a lot of time into carving and painting a model boat. While he was testing it in a river, the current caught it and swept it away. Several weeks later he saw it displayed in a shop window. When he told the shopkeeper that it was his boat, the man said he had purchased it and would not let it go without getting his money back. Weeks passed and the boy returned with hard-earned money to redeem his boat. As he left the store with it, the shopkeeper heard him say, “Now you’re twice mine. Once, because I made you, and twice because I bought you back.”

Sabbath gives us a beautiful picture of a God who loves us so much that He has set aside special time each week to spend with us! This time reminds us of who He is, of the special relationship we have together, and of where He wants to take us!!

1. Who is the Creator of all things?
 - Genesis 1:1
 - John 1:3 & 10
 - Hebrews 1:1-2
2. What is the Creator’s relationship to the Sabbath?
 - Genesis 2:1-3
 - Exodus 20:8-11
 - Matthew 12:8

Spending special Sabbath time with our Friend, Jesus, each week reminds us that He made this world and everything in it (including us—and the Sabbath). It is sort of like a weekly birthday celebration. Sabbath helps us acknowledge and appreciate the power and majesty of our Friend!

3. What additional reason does Deuteronomy 5:12-15 give us to remember this special Sabbath time (notice especially vs.15—this passage is a repeat of the command given in Exodus 20 with this important addition).
4. Are the Israelites the only ones who need freedom from slavery?
 - John 8:34-36
 - Romans 3:23-24
 - Romans 5:6-8
 - Romans 8:2

Some have said that the Sabbath was for the Israelites (Jews), but God made it at creation, 2,500 years before Abraham (the first Jew) was even born. Man has needed freedom from the slavery of sin since Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lies and chose not to trust their Friend, Jesus. From the beginning until now, Sabbath has been a reminder that Jesus is both our Creator and Savior!! As illustrated by the story of the boy and his sailboat, the Sabbath is a message from Jesus saying to us, “ Now you’re twice mine...”

5. If Jesus had nothing more to say to us through a special Sabbath time than what we have already discovered, it would be great news—but it gets even better! What problem is common to all of us as people?

- Job 14:4
- Isaiah 64:6
- Jeremiah 13:23

Suppose I were to offer you a brand new Mercedes or Ferrari for no money down. Would you be interested? Probably! If I told you that your payments would be \$1,000 a month for the rest of your life, would you still be interested? Probably not! Being offered salvation as a free gift is great. But if after that, you have to work for the rest of your life trying hard to “behave the way a Christian is supposed to,” chances are, you’d lose interest in the free gift.

6. How does this problem relate to the Sabbath?

- Exodus 31:13
- Ezekiel 20:12

7. Webster defines the word sanctify as “to make holy, to purify.” Is a Christ-like life your responsibility or His?

- Philippians 1:6
- Philippians 2:13
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
- Hebrews 12:2

Part of the good news of the Sabbath is that not only will Jesus free you from the guilt of sin—He will free you from its power as well! Jesus not only offers you a “car for no money down,” He promises to “make the payments” for you!! Sabbath is a reminder that our Friend, Jesus, is our Sanctifier.

8. What does Jesus promise you in Matthew 11:28

Many passages in Scripture which refer to the Sabbath mention rest. Jesus is the Rest-giver. Sabbath is a symbol of depending on Him. When we “remember the Sabbath day” we remember the power and majesty of our Friend, the Creator; we remember the love of our Friend, the Savior; we remember the strength of our Friend, the Sanctifier. Sabbath reminds us that we can truly rest because our hope is not in ourselves, but in the Lord of the Sabbath!!

Daily Bites

A college girl found the study of a particular book on literature to be quite boring. Then she met and fell in love with the one who had written it. Once she knew the author, she became fascinated by his book. The more you come to know Jesus, the more you will look forward to spending daily time with Him and special time with Him each Sabbath! Continue to look for Jesus as you study these passages this week!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- 1 John 2:3-6
- 1 John 2:7-11
- 1 John 2:12-14
- 1 John 2:15-17
- 1 John 2:18-27
- 1 John 2:28-3:10
- 1 John 3:11-24

Restoration!

You ask what Sabbath means to me? In a word, restoration, but there is a story behind that word. Though you'd never know from looking at me now, I spent two-thirds of my life paralyzed.

My age? Well, I'll be sixty-three next month. That's right, I was crippled nearly forty years! An accident? Not exactly. I wish the cause of my paralysis had been something so honorable. The truth is, I was diagnosed with syphilis when I was twenty and could no longer walk by twenty-two. It shames me to speak of it now. It was entirely my own fault that I spent all those years as a burden to others and an embarrassment to myself.

I'm sure glad Jesus didn't hold my past against me! *He* is why I'm walking now, you know! I was lying on a mat beside the Pool of Bethesda-the mineral springs, down near the Sheep Gate. Many folks believe that occasionally an angel stirs the water there and that the first person to enter the pool afterward will be healed of whatever ails him. That's where Jesus found me, near death, at the water's edge, --hoping to see the ripples and be the first.

It was a Sabbath (three years ago this week, in fact). Crowds of people were moving along the street which passes directly by the Pool of Bethesda. It's the street that leads through the Sheep Gate entrance to the temple Court of the Gentiles. Anyway, the noise of the street spoke to me of multitudes who could move *without* being carried, --while I lay completely dependent upon the kindness or pity of others for all my needs. Thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years of absolute helplessness and despair!

Suddenly *He* was there, leaning over, looking down at me. Though He didn't say anything at first, the compassion on His face spoke volumes and I felt as though He understood my sorrow. His eyes misted over, then He turned His face toward the sky and I saw tears spill down His cheeks.

After a moment, He looked back into my eyes and I'll never forget His words! "Would you like to be well?" He asked, and suddenly, unexplainably, hope surged in my heart.

Then reality tumbled back into my mind and, discouraged once more, I said, "I have no one, Sir, to help me into the pool when the water is stirred."

He appeared not to notice my reply. With a look that seemed to penetrate my soul, He said slowly, deliberately, and with authority, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk out of here!" At that same moment, my whole body tingled (like your foot or leg sometimes does after it has fallen asleep). With the tingling I felt new life and strength surging through every limb. Almost reflexively, and without stopping to consider the impossible, I found myself doing what He had commanded. I was WELL!! After thirty-eight years, I could move on my own! Ecstatic, I stooped and rolled up my mat, as He had said to. When I stood again and turned to thank Him, He was gone. I didn't even know His name!

If you've ever seen a colt let out to pasture after being confined in a stable, then you may have some idea how I responded to this gift of healing. Leaping high into the air, arms outstretched, I landed with a spring in my step and broke into a run. I was laughing and shouting and crying, one after the other. People stepped out of my way and stared as I raced up Sheep Street toward the temple, praising God.

Some Jewish leaders met me in the temple courtyard, and with lowered brows asked me why I was carrying my bed-roll on the Sabbath. When I laughingly told them, "Because the One who just healed me said to," they angrily demanded to know His name. I told them I hadn't a clue, though I would very much like to know! Later that day, I met Him again and this time learned His name, --Jesus! It's a *good name*! Did you know it means Savior? He *sure* saved me!! Ever since then, Sabbaths have been special for me-you know what I mean?

As I mentioned earlier, that all happened just three years ago. Here it is Passover Week again. Did you see Jesus today, as he rode into Jerusalem while the whole city cheered? I heard that some of our leaders asked Him to quiet the crowd, but He refused. Even though they are jealous of His popularity, I think at last they will have to accept Him. After all, nearly everyone in Jerusalem wants to make Him a king!!! I have a feeling this is going to be a Sabbath that will be remembered for years to come!

Sabbath Addendum

A Study Regarding the Biblical Sabbath Day

Creation

1. Who is the Creator of all things? Ephesians 3:9
2. When and by whom was the Sabbath made? Genesis 2:1-3
3. For whom did Christ say the Sabbath was made? Mark 2:27
4. What did God do in the beginning on the seventh day? Genesis 2:2-3
5. When did God bless and sanctify the seventh day? Genesis 2:2-3
6. Who made the Sabbath day holy? Exodus 20:11

Existence Prior to Sinai

7. How did God prove Israel in the wilderness? Exodus 16:14
8. On which day was a double portion of manna gathered? Exodus 16:22
9. What did Moses say to the rulers? Exodus 16:23
10. What did some people do on the seventh day? Exodus 16:27
11. How did God reprove their disobedience? Exodus 16:28
12. Why was twice as much manna given on the sixth day? Exodus 16:29
13. How did God begin the 4th commandment as spoken to Israel? Exodus 16:29

What Day Is The Sabbath?

14. What day immediately precedes the first day of the week? Matthew 28:1
15. What day of the week is the Sabbath, "according to the commandment"? Exodus 16:22

Continued Relevance to Believers

16. Did Christ, while on the earth, keep the Sabbath? Luke 4:16
17. In what instruction to His disciples did Christ recognize the existence of the Sabbath long after His ascension? Matthew 24:20 (October, A.D. 66)
18. Did Christ's followers keep the Sabbath after His death? Luke 23:56
19. On what day did Paul and Barnabas preach at Antioch? Acts 13:14
20. When did the Gentiles ask Paul to repeat his sermon? Acts 13:42
21. On what day did Paul preach to the women at Philippi? Acts 16:13
22. On what day did Paul preach to the Jews at Thessalonica? Acts 17:1-2
23. How often will the redeemed congregate to worship the Lord? Isaiah 66:22-23

What Day Is The Lord's Day?

24. On what day was John in the Spirit? Revelation 1:10
25. Who is Lord of the Sabbath? Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28
26. What through Isaiah, does the Lord call the Sabbath? Isaiah 58:13
27. What day does the commandment say is the Lord's? Exodus 20:10
28. What does Isaiah, speaking for God, call the seventh-day Sabbath? Isaiah 58:13

Law

Sabbath Addendum

29. Of what is the Sabbath commandment a part? Exodus 20:8-11
30. In His most famous sermon, what did Christ say of the law? Matthew 5:17
31. How enduring did He say the law is? Matthew 5:18
32. What did Christ say of worship based on tradition? Matthew 15:9
33. In all matters of religion, whose commands should we obey? Acts 5:29

Bible Texts

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

John 1:3 & 10 “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”

Hebrews 1:1-2* “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”

Genesis 2:1-3* “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Matthew 12:8 “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

John 8:34-36 “Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

Romans 3:23-24 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”

Romans 5:6-8 “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 8:2 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Job 14:4 “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!”

Isaiah 64:6* “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”

Jeremiah 13:23* “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”

Exodus 31:13 “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.’”

Ezekiel 20:12 “Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.”

Philippians 1:6* “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 2:13* “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24* “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

Hebrews 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Matthew 11:28* “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

Sabbath Addendum Bible Texts

1. **Ephesians 3:9** and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;
2. **Genesis 2:1-3** Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. (2) And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. (3) Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.
3. **Mark 2:27** And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.
- 4 & 5. Please see #2 above
6. **Exodus 20:11** For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
7. **Exodus 16:4** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.
- 8 & 9. **Exodus 16:22-23** And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. (23) Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'"
- 10-12. **Exodus 16:27-29** Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. (28) And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? (29) "See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."
13. **Exodus 20:8** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
14. **Matthew 28:1** After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb
15. **Exodus 20:10** The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.
16. **Luke 4:16** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.
17. **Matthew 24:20** "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.
18. **Luke 23:56** Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.
19. **Acts 13:14** When they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, & went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day & sat down
20. **Acts 13:42** When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath
21. **Acts 16:13** And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.
22. **Acts 17:1-2** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. (2) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,
23. **Isaiah 66:22-23** "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. (23) And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.
24. **Revelation 1:10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

25. **Matthew 12:8** For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. Mark 2:28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.
26. **Isaiah 58:13** "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, & call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, & shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words
27. Please see # 15 above
28. Please see # 26 above
29. **Exodus 20:8-11** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. (11) For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
30. **Matthew 5:17** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (18) For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.
31. Please see # 30 above
32. **Matthew 15:9** And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."
33. **Acts 5:29** But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Credits

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More About Jesus

Baptism?

or

Saying “I Do” to Your Friend!

I graduated from college early in August-I got married on August 25 of the same year. Two weeks later my wife and I moved to Salt Lake City where I took up my duties as the new Youth Pastor. My wedding signaled an important change for me-in the space of an hour, my wife and I had gone from needing to be chaperoned to being qualified to chaperon others!!.

As I look back on my life as a teenager, and especially my dating relationships, I'm glad to be finished with that phase of my life. Sure, some of it was exciting-but mostly I was uncomfortable and insecure.

Since my wedding (actually since I met and fell in love with the person who is now my wife) I have found much greater fulfillment and security. Why? Because now I share my life with someone who loves me and helps look out for me-I'm not on my own any longer!

Through the years (I have now been married for 22 years) I have noticed several things about marriage-some of them are listed below.

- The ingredients for a good marriage are the same as for a good courtship-communication, trust, time spent together, love, etc.
 - Most good marriages follow a good courtship-a time when two people spend a lot of time developing a friendship.
 - The wedding ceremony does not change how people feel about each other-if love, trust, and communication is not there before the marriage the ceremony will not create it.
 - While it is true that the wedding ceremony does not change one's heart, it sure does change one's status in society.
 - A wedding ceremony is a public statement of two people's commitment to love and support each other-most people choose to have a wedding rather than to elope because they want their friends to know!
 - There is nothing magical about a signed and sealed marriage license. It
- is just an official acknowledgment of the relationship and commitment.
 - One purpose of marriage is to provide two people long lasting *companionship* and *security*-how many happily married couples would want to go back to the insecurity and trauma of their dating days?!
 - Another purpose of marriage is to “preserve the human race”-in other words, have kids. Marriage is not intended to be just two people selfishly looking out for themselves, but two people joined together with God working for the good of others!
 - In the beginning, God set up marriage as a permanent, eternal arrangement-it was modified to “till death do us part” because of sin.
 - While marriage is intended to be permanent, it is possible to get a divorce and bring the relationship to an end-this event always brings damage and hurt.

“So,” I hear you saying, “I thought this was supposed to be a study of baptism, not marriage-what's your point?”

Jesus often used the things we are familiar with to help us understand our spiritual life-our life with Him. He used marriage many times as an illustration of the special, intimate relationship He wants to have with us, His people. Baptism is to Christian life what the wedding ceremony is to a marriage.

As you go through this study, you may wish to look back at the points made about marriage and the wedding ceremony and reflect on what they mean to your life and friendship with Jesus.

“Are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by the baptism unto death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious [power] of the Father, so we too might [habitually] live and behave in newness of life. For if we have become one with Him by sharing a death like His, we shall also be [one with Him in sharing] His resurrection [by a new life lived for God]”
Romans 6:3-5 (The Amplified Bible)

Baptism

“He who believes [who adheres to and trusts in and relies on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth] and is baptized will be saved [from the penalty of eternal death]; but he who does not believe [who does not adhere to and trust in and rely on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth] will be condemned.” Mark 16:16 (the Amplified Bible)

A woman, talking to a pastor about spiritual things, made the following comment: “Don’t talk to me about baptism! I have been baptized three times, and not one of them took.” Just like a wedding, baptism will not “take” unless a meaningful relationship has preceded the ceremony.

1. What preparation for baptism can you find in Matthew 28:19-20?

Notice that spiritual understanding (In the KJV, Jesus said “teach;” in the NIV He says, “make disciples”) is to precede baptism. In other words, you need to become acquainted with Jesus. This happens as you spend time with Him each day.

2. What preparation for baptism can you find in Mark 16:16? In addition to your own study Bible, check out the Amplified Bible (printed at the bottom of the introduction page).

The Amplified Bible expands “believe” to “trusting in and depending on” Jesus. The way you grow to trust someone who is completely trustworthy is to get to know him. As you spend time getting to know Jesus, you will trust Him more!

By the way, please notice that the text does NOT say, “He who does not believe AND IS NOT BAPTIZED will be condemned.” Eternal life is not based upon baptism! It is the result of having a personal relationship with Jesus. Baptism, like a wedding, is a public declaration of that relationship.

3. What additional preparation for baptism is mentioned in the following texts?

- Mark 1:4
- Acts 2:38

4. Where does repentance come from?

- Acts 5:31
- Romans 2:4
- 2 Corinthians 7:9

Repentance is not something we do—it is something Jesus gives us as we remain focused on Him! When we see His love for us, when we realize the contrast between what we are like and what Jesus is like, and when we understand that our failures break the heart of Jesus, not only will we be sorry, we will want to quit sinning. That is repentance!

5. What symbolism does Paul give to baptism in Romans 6:4-6?

What a beautiful picture of Jesus becoming real in our lives. Baptism is like being buried with Jesus in death (death to our old way of living) and being raised up, or resurrected to a new life in Jesus!

6. According to the New Testament, how is baptism accomplished?

- Matthew 3:16
- Matthew 28:19
- John 1:26
- Acts 8:38-39

If you consult a Bible Dictionary you will discover the word “baptize” comes from the Greek word “baptizo”, which means to “immerse, dip, or submerge.” This is important because it provides a physical demonstration of the symbolism Paul used in Romans 6 (see question 5).

7. To those who knew Jesus, baptism was important because it told the world that they belonged to Him. Note some of those who also participated in this ceremony.

- John 3:22
- John 4:1-2
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 8:12
- Acts 19:4-5

8. What happens when, by baptism, you take a stand for Jesus?

- John 1:31
- Galatians 3:27
- Matthew 10:32

Baptism is a way of saying publicly that you commit yourself to an eternal friendship with Jesus, that you accept His offer of forgiveness, cleansing and new life. It is a formal pledge to spend time becoming better friends with Him each day. In a way, it is like voting a huge YES! for Jesus, realizing that He is voting a huge YES! for you.

Daily Bites

Have you ever watched two young people in love? They often can't seem to spend enough time together. They are always thinking of each other, thinking of ways to show their love to each other-we call that romance. Have you noticed that sometimes these same two people, after they have gotten married, begin to take each other for granted? At all stages of love and marriage communication is essential-more so as a couple matures and face greater challenges in life (raising children, juggling jobs, etc.). The same is true in our friendship with Jesus. Our need to spend time with Him, getting to know Him, learning to trust Him, grows instead of lessens as we go along.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: "Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together..."
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- 1 John 4:1-6
- 1 John 4:7-12
- 1 John 4:13-18
- 1 John 4:19-21
- 1 John 5:1-5
- 1 John 5:6-13
- 1 John 5:14-21

Eye Witnessed

Standing in the Jordan river, I watched the azure dome crack and glory come streaming through. At first I was so blinded I turned away, but a voice bade me look again, and as I did I felt a strange burning sensation, as though a cover or lens had fallen from my eyes. In that same instant I was aware that distance no longer affected the clarity of my vision.

I looked through a corridor in the heavens, that appeared to be lined on either side by planets, stars, and galaxies. Light flowed like a river down the passageway. Light so pure, so complete, that it seemed to have substance and form. It was clear and yet opaque—radiant, shining, rising, falling, expanding, moving like vapor on a winter's morn.

As I looked further along this luminescent pathway through the stars, I saw with wonder, the Source from whence it flowed. Strangely, the farther I gazed, the clearer I saw. There, in brilliant detail, at the end of the corridor (or was it the beginning?) was a city.

Its walls were made of light—luminous as burnished gold in the sun. Its foundations were 12 colors of the rainbow, so rich, so pure, so brilliant, that I wondered whether they might be the source or fountainhead of color. But my eyes were drawn upward, above this city of light and color, and there, blazing in glory beyond description, was a throne.

He who sat upon it shone with the unborrowed magnificence of ten thousand suns. The glory that came from Him was divided into colors as a prism separates light; but unlike a prism's colors, these were not refracted. They began with Him. Colors, as smoke, mingled and blended about the throne. Letters of fire were engraved upon it, blazing the words: HOLINESS, JUSTICE, TRUTH, LOVE, PURITY, ALPHA, OMEGA.

And the river of light, streaming down the corridor, burst into music as the voice of many waters, singing, "Glory, Glory, Glory." And I saw and knew that the river, and the stars, and the universe, and the earth, and all things bright or beautiful had their source in Him! I dropped to my knees and worshipped.

Then, from amongst the light about the throne, I saw the form of a Dove take shape. Its wings were like the city—luminous as burnished gold. Its eyes were flames so

pure, so bright, that the path of light dimmed before their brilliance. It circled the throne three times, and then with a rushing of wings and a scattering of light, it flew swiftly towards me. The music of the river struck a note higher as the Dove's wings fanned the air above it.

As it drew closer, another thing happened. Light began shining from the face of the Man before me. Like the glory round the throne, that which shone from Him was not reflected. He was the source. And the light streaming from His eyes was by far more brilliant than the sun. While He stood, gazing upward, the Dove lit in dazzling splendor upon His head.

And a voice was heard, like the sound of many waters. The heavens trembled and the earth shook. The sound seemed to come from everywhere yet nowhere. It echoed and rumbled across creation, and the words spoken were these: "*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!*"

Then suddenly, as though heaven and earth had inhaled ... all was still. In the same instant it was dark. I thought my eyes had failed me, but as I grew accustomed to the darkness, I saw dim shapes of people here and there.

I looked up once again and saw, flickering dimly like a candle in a cavern, the sun. I wondered how it had grown so feeble, and I realized then that it had not been changed except by the glory my eyes had seen.

I turned my gaze earthward, searching for the One I had just baptized. He was kneeling upon the riverbank, where a subdued but holy light still shone about Him.

I looked around at the people gathered about and read the expressions on their faces. Only a few seemed entranced, but all were gazing at Him, though many seemed full of idle curiosity. Others appeared puzzled or looked confused. All were silent—wondering.

But I saw, and now bare record, that this was the Son of God!

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Mark 1:9-10 (NKJV).

Bible Texts

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”

Mark 16:16 “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 1:4* “And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 2:38* “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 5:31 “Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

Romans 2:4* “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?”

2 Corinthians 7:9* “yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.”

Romans 6:4-6* “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”

Matthew 3:16 “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.”

Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

John 1:26 “John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know.””

Acts 8:38-39 “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.”

John 3:22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.”

John 4:1-2* “Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples),”

Acts 2:38* “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”

Acts 19:4-5 “Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

John 1:31* “I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

Galatians 3:27* “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Matthew 10:32* “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*

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