



Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the **law of the LORD!**

Blessed are those who keep **his testimonies**,
who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong,
but walk in **his ways!**

You have commanded **your precepts** to be kept diligently.

Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping **your statutes!**

Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all **your commandments.**

I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn **your righteous rules.**

I will keep **your statutes**; do not utterly forsake me!

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to **your word.**

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from **your commandments!**

I have stored up **your word** in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me **your statutes!**

With my lips I declare all **the rules of your mouth.**

In the way of **your testimonies** I delight as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on **your precepts** and fix my eyes on **your ways.**

I will delight in **your statutes**; I will not forget **your word.**

(Psalm 119:1-16 ESV)

The Hope & Prayer

The hope of this devotion book is to provide the opportunity for students and adults to spend time with God in His Word and through prayer. There are many great devotion books available to us and we are thankful you have chosen to journey through God's Word with this particular one. We hope and pray that students and adults take this opportunity to walk with God in Word and Prayer seriously and become intentional in the time they devote to Him each day. We believe if this happens our walk with Him will strengthen.

Another great hope and prayer is that families will journey through this devotion guide together. Imagine if each family were having conversations based on what they were reading each day from God's Word? There is great possibility and great promise for the family that is centered around God and His Word.

The Plan

The plan will be to take 5 days each week to work through the devotions. These will be set up to be done Monday through Friday. Saturday will be used for reflection or catch up. We will provide a blank page for you to possibly reflect on the week in general, what stood out, what needs reminding, what steps were taken. Sunday will be a day of rest and worship.

In some cases we will provide a theme for each week or maybe a single topic for each day. These themes and topics will come directly from Scripture. This devo will be ground in **the Word of God**. Scripture alone is our guide and help. The plan is to allow you the opportunity to open Scripture and see for yourself. We invite you to "taste and see that the Lord is good!" For this reason we will simply reference Scripture rather than typing it out for you. Our culture is lazy when it comes to picking up a book. It's fine to look on a kindle, or some smart device, but nothing beats feeling that leather on your fingers as you flip through Scripture. We must get past this laziness and convenience and we pray this devotion book helps in this regard.

The devotions in the book are coming from different angles. Some are from previous camps while some are from sermons. Some thoughts and themes will carry over for 2 weeks while some may only work through a single day or week. Some will be two pages others will be one. But through this variation we hope to cover a variety of topics and thoughts from Scripture ultimately leading you to growing & passionate walk with Christ.

The Point & Challenge

Each day the devotion will offer a point and challenge. These will help gather our hearts and minds around one solid truth from Scripture and then give us a point of action or application. We must not be hearers only but doers. So these will help us accomplish this as we look to God and His Word each day.

3 things to exercise and work out as you read through Scripture

These are things you'll hear throughout the devotions and things that appear often within our student ministry.

You'll hear them, work through them and hopefully they eventually become a regular part of how you handle Scripture.

1. **Observe** – (What does it say?) What is there? What questions come up?
How does it repeat? What stands out?
Any shifts in the story or section of verses?
2. **Interpret** – (What does it mean?) What is the Bible saying about what stood out?
3. **Apply** – (What do I do?)
What is the intended response of the folks who would have read this first? What were they called or ask to do?
What do we take away from what we read?

5 questions to ask when reading Scripture?

Rather than reading try and be a student of the Word. These questions help us with this as well as get the point of Scripture and what God desires for us to hear and do. So again, work through the struggle and watch as God blesses this time.

1. What Does This Text Teach Me About God?
2. What Does This Text Teach Me About Man?
3. How Does This Text Point to Christ?
4. What do I need to know in light of this teaching?
5. What do I need to do in light of this teaching?

5 tips for a faithful, daily devotion

1. **Make it a priority** – stop making excuses and simply do what you know needs to be done in your walk with God. Enough is enough.
2. **Pray for guidance** – ask the Spirit to help you as you begin this time or if you've been doing this for years.
3. **Remove distractions** – you know how mad you get when someone interrupts your favorite song, show, book, game? Be that way with your time with the Lord.
4. **Plan for the Plan** - set aside a time and place but understand you don't have to be restricted with these. The important thing is doing it!
5. **Make it a Community Thing** – Get accountability! Bring your friends or family into it. If you go alone you'll not go far!

monday – november 3

John 17:17-19

the idea of Simple or Simplicity

Simplicity is an inward reality

that results in an outward life-style

Both the inward and outward are essential to life

Truth be known there are entirely too many so called believers walking around with an inward reality without the outward life-style.

What does this mean? It means many are not living what they believe or not believing what they live.

Simple is all about us **knowing God and making Him known**. But what happens when you have one without the other? You have religion. God is most concerned about God but He desires for us to know Him and then to make Him known. We must be sure that we allow the inward reality to motivate and push us to an outward lifestyle.

Mark 12 is a huge help for this point:

Read Mark 12: 28-34

What does Jesus teach as the 2 most important things in life?

You wrote it out but these 2 things Jesus mentioned involved what we've been teaching all year through **SIMPLE**. Knowing God & Making Him Known.

We know about Him and then we make Him known through our actions. Jesus didn't stop with 1 huge goal because He knew you couldn't have one without the other. The Simple life happens when the inward results in the outward life.

How do we accomplish this?

How do we get to a place where we are living the simple life?

John 3:30- read it – write out below what you think this says.

Today we want to concentrate on the total package; both inward and outward recognition that God is greater than all. It's more than believing...it's walking....it's knowing Him and making Him Known.

What does this look like? How do I decrease?

Read **Matthew 6:33** and then write it out below *(great verse to memorize)*

There is no greater peace in this life than to know that you are pleasing and seeking God daily. We do this by decreasing. Making us less by making more of Him.

Recently we looked at Ephesians. It's within this letter we see the perfect landscape to the **Simple** Life

Read Ephesians 3:20-4:1 - it's here we see Paul going from one aspect to the next. What are the aspects?

Ch's 1-3 encourage us to KNOW Him through Christ

Ch's 4-6 teach us how to make Him KNOWN through Christ.

We make this life way too difficult. Life is **Simple**. Know and Make Known the greatness and fame of God. WE CAN – Through Jesus

It's because of Him – for Him – through Him – and to Him.

We were dead, at war, unrighteous...but now through Him we are ALIVE

Embrace and Live that... "that" being the Gospel.

READ IT

Jeremiah 9:23-24 & 1 Peter 2:9

The Point: What's the point to all of this? Why is it important?

The point is you can't have one without the other. You can't have an inward change without an outward expression of that change. You also can't have an outward expression without an inward change.

Miss one and all you have is religion. *(See Mark 10:17-22 for an example)*

God is not interested in religion. He desires relationship.

There is no plan B...

John 14:3 says Jesus is the only way for this to happen. It had to be and is Him. Through Christ we can know God and then make Him Known.

It's really that **Simple. This is what you live.**

The Challenge: Love God and Love People. In Mark 12:32-34 a scribe approached Jesus and confirmed this great commandment...Jesus answered Him by saying this scribe was not far from the kingdom of God. What do you think Jesus was saying? What was the missing piece?

How are you following Jesus with your heart and life? Spend some time praying that God would expose to you how you are "religious."

End by reading through Ps. 119:9-16

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

tuesday – november 4

psalm 46:10 - 1 Samuel 3: 19-21

KNOW GOD – it's **Who You Live**

Truth be known many people never fully “know” that He is God. Knowing God is crucial to the SIMPLE lifestyle. Knowing God is the inward reality. The idea is that once we truly Know Him the rest is history.

It's Worship – a response – it's coming face to face with the living God
46:10-11

Read Psalm

Notice a couple of things this verse teaches us about Knowing God:

Be still –

how often do you take the time to stop?

We move so fast, so often that we really don't give the time to notice there is something bigger than ourselves.

Not sure if you remember our Refuel retreat where we spent a session discussing this and the need for us to STOP and concentrate on the Lord.

How will you ever truly KNOW someone until you truly STOP and LISTEN?

We've got to sharpen the discipline of stillness.

What are some way you can “sit before the Lord?” Write them out.

And Know –

“Know” here carries the meaning of

Admitting or Recognizing or Acknowledging.

Once you're still before a holy God you simply acknowledge the fact that He is God and you, we, are not. You have nothing to bring to the table that He hasn't mastered. You are His creation – Knowledge and Truth are founded and built around Him. Be Still – Know this.

That I Am God –

There's Truth

I AM > I AM NOT (never forget who God is)

Here is the key to life. In all things, at all times, He is God.

Know Him – Follow Him – Be Still before Him – Soak it UP!

Have you ever been in the presence of greatness?

Maybe a singer, an athlete, an actor, president, youth pastor, or whatever? The air seems different when someone famous is in the room.

Without realizing it you begin to change. Oh you try to be normal and act like you normally do. But then that crazy thing happens and you start screaming like an 11 yr. old girl at a Justin the Beaver concert.

Well let's be honest. When was the last time God took your breath away?

I can tell you this...if you haven't lost your breath and been blown away by God it's not because He is not worthy, able or speaking to you.

How does God speak to us? How do we KNOW HIM?

Check out 1 Samuel 3:19-21 : Here's the background

This is Samuel as a boy. Some of you may remember this story. It's Samuel and Eli and Samuel is kind of working under Eli. Verse one in 1 Samuel 3 says, "The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. And in those days the Word of the Lord was rare. There were not many visions." And visions literally means revelations. God was not revealing Himself. The people were not listening. God is always revealing himself through creation, but the people were not listening. And "the Word of the Lord was rare."

Samuel responds to God's call. And look at verse 21. I want you to pay attention very closely to this verse. The Bible says "The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh and there he revealed himself to Samuel through" His what? "Word". God reveals himself through his Word. That's how his revelation works.

The greatest way we could possibly KNOW GOD is through His Word.

What God does is He reveals Himself as the Word and through the Word. All throughout the New Testament we see God working through his Word.

Hebrews 11:3 says God created by his Word.

Mark 4:39 Jesus speaks the word and the seas are calmed.

Mark 1: 25 Jesus speaks the word and demons are cast out.

Mark 2:10 Jesus speaks and sins are forgiven.

Luke 18:42 Jesus speaks and somebody who is blind can now see.

Luke 7:14 Jesus speaks and a dead guy comes to life.

Romans 10:17 tells us that when we place our faith in God for salvation that's a result of hearing the Word of God. God works through his Word.

There is power in the Word. If it's raising dead guys to life and giving blind guys sight, and it's casting out demons, and it's calming seas that are raging, I think maybe it's something we should pay attention to within our lives.

His Word is life changing. We should hunger for His Word!

The Point: You want to please God? Then Know Him. You want to Know Him? Read His Word. It's the greatest way you can Know Him. It's Simple!

The Challenge: Be a person of the Word. Know Him. Develop a hunger for the Word of God. Commit to read His Word daily. Make no excuses, clear a time and dig in. He will give you strength and wisdom. How has it gone since you've been doing these devotions? It's a good start you're reading this one but plug away, keep advancing!

Who will be the person that holds you accountable?

Read Psalm 119:9-16 and listen to the need, desire and passion David had for God's Word

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

wednesday – November 5

1 Peter 2:9 - Phil. 1:18-30

making Him Known - **it's What you live.**

Truth be known as we Know God we are driven to a life of Worship. How can one know Him and his life not be changed? As we were walking through Ephesians I mentioned this quote:

The reality of your faith will be seen in the obedience of your walk.

If we know Him we will follow Him. It's that simple. Now life gets tough but in this and through this Christ is made known through your life - if you follow Him. Romans 8 shows us that neither life or death can separate from the love of God through Jesus Christ. With this in mind why would anything ever keep us from serving Him with ALL we had. Despite circumstance.

Read Phil. 1:18-30

In this text we see the famous battle cry of Paul as he proclaimed that to him "to live is Christ and to die is gain."

What does Paul mean by this?

What was Paul's motivation for staying or going? dying or living?

Answer: to either know God in full or make Him known on this earth. Paul's rally cry was not just his situation....it should be ours as well.

Honestly this is, or should be, the natural response for a follower of Christ. (take a look at Romans 12:1)

Why would we want anything less than this?

SIMPLE – know God and make God known

We are alive for one purpose – for the glory of God.

If we are to be in a healthy relationship with God and others

We must know Truth – Theology

We Shine brightest when we know and are connected to the source of our strength – making known is fueled by knowing Him.

One of my favorite stories from Scripture – and by story I mean an actual event rather than fiction - would be the woman at the well from John 4.

Read John 4:1-30 (you need to see the whole story)

One reason this is one of my favorite stories from Scripture is the transparency of the lady...and then the willingness of the lady.

Answer these questions:

1. Was the lady schooled in doctrine?
2. Was the lady saved for a long period of time?
3. Was the lady properly disciplined?
4. Was the lady told what she should do after her life was changed?

The answer to all of them is NO.

It was a response...true Worship. She met Jesus and a fruit of knowing Jesus was making Him known. There was no other option to her.

Look again at the results of a changed life – read w. 25-30.

Another captivating thing is this – she left her waterpot. The one reason she was there...this valuable property...she simply left. Why?

Write down your thoughts on the purpose of life:

- Matthew 28:19-20
- Acts 1:8
- Matthew 5:16
- Colossians 1:10

The Point

We are alive for one purpose – God’s glory. It is the reason you were created. Once you are awakened to God through Jesus your life is to be spent making Him known. The neat thing is this – the more you know Him the better equipped you are to make Him known. But really, just as the lady at the well. Once you meet Him you are as ready as you’ll ever be to make Him known. The rest is spiritual gravy.

The Challenge

The challenge is simple. Make Him Known. Live life in the fullness of God. How can you do better? What is the missing piece for you?

What must change in your life? What is the one glaring obstacle?

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

thursday – november 6

Childlike Faith

Bro. Stephen

(Find and read Mark 10:14b-15)

It seems that many believers are perplexed over how and when to approach children with the Gospel. Even when small children are seeking answers about the Lord many adults are afraid to respond to them. It is amazing how many parents will teach their children about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, but experience fear and trembling when talking to their children or grandchildren about Jesus. Many of you may have younger brothers or sisters....and YOU can be a witness to them!

It is very important to introduce small children to who Jesus is and what He wants to do in their life at a very early age. None of us can decide when a particular child is ready to experience salvation by committing his life to Jesus. The age of accountability is when they understand they are a sinner and stand in need of a Savior. Every child is different and every child will respond at a different age. Some have received Jesus as early as five and six years of age; others have shown little interest and response until they approach their teenage years. We don't have the answer as to when an individual child should receive Christ, but Jesus made it very clear that we are never to discourage them at any age from responding to Him.

From the teachings of our Lord I am convinced that we should introduce our children to Jesus at the earliest possible age. There are several reasons for this.

- **They do know what they are doing.** It is child like faith that brings salvation, forgiveness and eternal life. Surely a child that can comprehend the teachings given to them in the early years of school can comprehend the simplicity of the Gospel and respond to it.

* **They don't have preconceived theological ideas.** When we talk to an adult about Christ, we often have to wade through some preformed theological problems. This is not true with the simple mind of a child.

- * **They don't hold grudges.** Many adults come to this decision time with so much emotional baggage it is very difficult to deal with them. With a child, however, they are still tender in their emotional response.
- * **They have their whole life to give.** When returning from a meeting, D.L. Moody was asked, "Did you have any conversions?" His response was 2-1/2. They said "Oh, you had two adults and one child." The great preacher said, "No, two children and one adult." **A child has his whole life to give to Christ.**

Even an adult must come with child like faith. You must lay your sophistication, culture, and intellectualism in the dust when you come to Jesus. He is looking for pure, simple, and child like faith.

The Point and Challenge

Don't limit yourself when witnessing to children. Just be obedient, share the gospel in simplistic fashion, and leave the results up to the Holy Spirit.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

Missions Point:

Today, pray for Jay Wettstone and his family who is now serving in Afghanistan. This new assignment holds many challenges for the Wettstone family. They needs our prayers!

friday – november 7

A New DNA

Bro. Stephen

Find and read (II Corinthians 5:17)

II Corinthians 5 is one of the most powerful chapters in the Bible. We should memorize the entire chapter and not just one verse. Paul is presenting some of the most glorious truths of the Christian life. He tells us that because of the resurrection, we will someday be clothed with a new body and He has given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of that glory to come. (Verses 1-8)

In light of this truth, we are to live our lives to be well pleasing to Him because we will someday stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ to receive reward, and loss of reward, for everything done in the body whether good or bad (Verses 9-11). Paul comes to the very essence and heart of the Christian life when he deals with the results of our reconciliation with Christ. Because of all this, we have become a **new creation**, literally a **new kind of species**; indeed, old things have passed away and all things have become new. As I remember my personal experience of salvation, I reflect on a time when I began to hate the things I once loved, and I began to love the things I had once hated.

When we are born again, the Holy Spirit begins to work His new creation in us and there will come a time when there is nothing remaining of the old life. Our old gloomy outlook disappears, as does our old attitude toward things and “all things are of God” (Verse 18). It is certainly possible for the child of God to be attracted to the world’s system and to be tempted to sin. The difference is before we come to Christ we **leaped** into sin and **loved** it. Now, the child of God **lapses** into sin and **loathes** it.

I have been challenged by a skeptic who said, “You are one of those that believe in eternal security. That means that you believe that once you are saved you can sin all you want to and still go to heaven.” Even though that did not sound right at first, the more I thought about it, the more I knew he was exactly right. I responded, “Yes, indeed, I do sin all I **want to**, but when God saved me **He changed my want to.**” One of your birthmarks as a Child of God is the evidence in your lifestyle that old things have passed away and all things have become new. Religion never accomplishes that, but a relationship with Jesus always does.

The Point and Challenge

This may be a good time to examine your life in the spiritual mirror of the Word of God (II Corinthians 13:5), (II Peter 1:10). What understanding do you have of the salvation of you soul? The work of salvation means that in your real life things are dramatically changed. You no longer look at things in the same way. Your desires are new and the old things have lost their power to attract you. One of the tests for determining if the work of salvation in your life is genuine is - ***has God changed the things that really matter to you?***

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

Missions Point:

Today pray for Katie Holley, who used to teach school here at Carrollton High School. She was called to the mission field and obediently followed the Lord's lead. This single young lady serves our Lord in Burma, sowing the seeds of the Gospel amongst Buddhists. Pray for many to come to know the True and Living Christ!

saturday – november 8

Reflection

Think a little more on what we've seen or read throughout the week. A good way to do this is by asking some questions:

1. What sticks out from my week in the Word?
2. What are some things I need to continue to dwell on?
3. What did I learn about God this week?
4. What did I learn about myself this week?
5. What is something I need to work on in the future?
6. What would make my time in the Word better?
7. How consistent was I in my prayer life?
8. How did staying in God's Word affect my week?
9. How did NOT staying in God's Word affect my week?

If you desire to read something new we'd encourage you to read through Psalm 119

Sunday is a day of rest so enjoy the day of worship

monday – november 10

The Tragic Bondage of the Spirit of Fear

Bro. Stephen

Find and read (II Timothy 1:7)

The Scripture instructs us to **fear God**. In fact, we are told that this is the beginning of wisdom for the child of God. Now we are told that God has not given us a **spirit of fear**, but of **power**, and of **love**, and of a **sound mind**. It is tragic that many believers are in bondage to a spirit of fear. Consider three things a spirit of fear will do in your life:

1. **Fear will affect your memory.** It was fear that caused Timothy to forget. Look how verses 6 and 7 are connected. The idea is that fear had caused him to forget his spiritual gifts and abilities. If you are afraid today, it is because you have forgotten who God is and what He has done for you.
2. **Fear will limit your service.** In verse 8 we learn that Timothy had failed to share Christ and failed to stand up for the apostle Paul. It may have been because Paul was in prison and Timothy was afraid of what might happen to him. Fear had shut his mouth and paralyzed him. Many believers are paralyzed because they have listened to that sinister minister of fear, the devil, rather than listening to God. I heard about a man who was robbing a bank.. This was his first robbery and he was very afraid. He shoved his gun to the teller, took the money bag and pointed it at her and said, “Don’t stick with me. This is a mess up.” Fear will do that do you.
3. **Fear affects you medically.** Fear can literally weaken our bodies physically. I Timothy 5:23 lets us know that Timothy was not well physically. Was Timothy afraid because he was sick, or was he sick because he was afraid? I believe it is a fearful disposition that literally made him sick. People who are carrying a load of fear may actually have heart failure. Jesus told us that one of the signs of the last times would be, “that men’s hearts would be failing them because of fear.”

The Point and Challenge

Here, Paul gives us three things that will enable us to be free from the bondage of fear: **God has endued us with power.** “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”

God enriches us with love. I John 4:18 tells us that perfect love casts out fear. At first, I misunderstood that verse because I knew I couldn't love perfectly, but I am glad to tell you that the verse means that God loves me perfectly. Listen to it paraphrased...“We have no fear from someone who loves us perfectly. His perfect love for us eliminates all dread of what He might do to us...” (I John 4:18)

God enlightens us with a sound mind. The words “sound mind” literally means God has given us discipline or self-control or a discerning spirit. With a clear mind focused on the Word of God, we will look beyond what might happen to us at the immediate moment and realize that God is ultimately victorious.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

Missions Point:

Today pray for Faithful Servants Primary Christian School in Jinja, Uganda which is in Africa. Many children are being exposed to the Gospel through this ministry of missionaries Tommy and Theresa Harris. Pray that many children and faculty will come to know Jesus and be discipled in Him.

tuesday – november 11

Get Moving!!!

Bro. Stephen

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”(II Peter 1:5-7)

Peter has triumphantly declared to us that we have become “partakers of the divine nature.” (II Peter 1:4-5) Now, it says that we are to “add” some things to our lives. **Add** means that we have to do something. Sometimes we forget that we cannot do what God does, and that God will not do what we can do.

We cannot save or sanctify ourselves - God does that, but God will not give us good habits or character, and He will not force us to walk correctly before Him. We have to do all that ourselves in our own choosing.

Add means that we must get into the habit of doing things and, in the initial stages, that is difficult. To take the initiative is to make a beginning - to instruct yourself in the way you must go. The Christian life is not always a mountaintop experience. There are times that seem monotonous and our duties seem to be drudgery. There are no flashes of light and no apparent glow in the life, and we experience nothing but the daily routine with its common, everyday task. It is a difficult time to add some of the things Peter mentions here. We say we do not expect God to take us to Heaven on flowery beds of ease, and yet we act as if we do. Regardless of the circumstances around us, we are to **add** these vital traits to our lives.

We begin with faith, and to that must be added things like virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, Godliness, and kindness. The end result is genuine love which is the greatest virtue of all. Love is an indefinite thing to most of us. We do not know what we mean when we talk about love. Love is the loftiest preference of one person for another and, spiritually, Jesus demands that this sovereign preference be for Himself. Love means that there are no visible habits - that your habits are so immersed in the Lord that you practice them without realizing them. If you are consciously aware of your own Godly holiness, you place limitations on yourself from doing certain things - things God is not restricting you from at all.

This means there is a missing factor that needs to be added to your life.

When you totally are immersed with Jesus, then you are at home with Him at all times.

The Point

So begin today to add these things to your life that can result with a complete love for Him, and for those around you in the Body of Christ. Allow God to work through whatever the circumstances are until you increase in Him, adding His qualities to your own life. Unconditional love is **spontaneous and of the Lord**, however, it has to be maintained through **discipline**. Now you know what you must do, so **get moving!**

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

Mission Point:

Today we need to intercede for Darryl and Kathy Parsons. Mrs. Kathy is the missions director at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church and is involved in many mission activities both here and abroad. Ask the Lord to bless their efforts as well as all mission endeavors!

wednesday – november 12

How to Live Till Jesus Comes

Bro. Stephen

Find and read I Thessalonians 4:10-11

The early church greeted each other with “Maranatha”, indicating their belief that Jesus was coming soon. Our lifestyle should now reflect that Jesus **is indeed** returning soon. It is clearly evident that Paul’s mind is on the Second Coming of Jesus as he wrote this letter. In this section, he is dealing with Christian behavior on a daily basis. The latter part of this chapter is probably the clearest presentation of the return of Jesus in the Bible. It is interesting that every one of the five chapters of this book closes with a reference to the Second Coming.

One of the criticisms when we emphasize the Second Coming is when people say we are so “heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good.” They say we are interested in the *Sweet By & By* and have no concern for the Nasty Now & Now. This was true to a certain extent at the church at Thessalonica. So Paul makes it clear to them that an understanding of the Second Coming **ought to motivate holy and effective living until He comes.**

The Second Coming is a powerful incentive to **right living** (I John 3:3, II Peter 3:11).

Paul mentions three things that should characterize the life of the believer until Jesus comes again. One of those he mentions is in verse 9. He uses the term **brotherly love**. It is the word *philadelphos*. Paul tells us it is a natural thing, and is always there when the person knows the Lord. The world will never find real love unless they find it among the people of God. In our memory verse, the word **aspire** means to “ make it your **ambition**.” As a believer, we must make that our purpose in your life...to reveal brotherly love!

When it says to be **quiet**, it carries the idea of tranquility, of being at rest. It is the opposite of restlessness, or being upset. It means just being quietly faithful. Paul then says, “Until Jesus comes, keep your nose out of other people’s business.” Paul would often name not only the problem, but the people that created the problem. In his second letter to the church, he called them “busybodies” (II Thessalonians 3:10-11). The word “busybody”

means “a body who minds someone else’s business.” It labels those folks who look around for someone else every time the preacher preaches. They know about everyone else’s business, problems, and faults. They spend very little time, however, cleaning up their own lives. So, we are to M.Y.O.B. - mind our own business and stay focused on our need to forever be growing in the Lord!

He then exhorts the believer to “work with your own hands.” There were many working people in the church at Thessalonica. They were slaves, artisans, and ship workers. Every child of God should be engaged in a noble profession. There is nothing disgraceful about any job if it is honest and honorable. Honest work is not a sin!

The Point and Challenge

So, as Paul prepares to introduce us to the subject of the rapture, he wants us to know that our lifestyle must be changed, holy, and committed to Him in preparation for His coming. In the early part of the chapter, Paul exhorts them regarding purity in the area of sexual activity. As you walk honestly and circumspectly in the world, those who are without Christ will see how God has blessed and met every need of your life.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

Mission Point:

Today, please pray for 415 Hope Center. This is a ministry that houses homeless men who are in need of being shown the love of Christ. Pray for the men that are clients of the center to get back on their feet by obtaining a job, getting a home of their own, and most importantly, knowing and serving Jesus!

thursday – november 13

The Secret of Disciple Making

Bro. Stephen

Find and read (II Timothy 2:2)

Do you desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? You cannot be a disciple unless you become a disciple maker. That is the truth set forth in II Timothy 2:2. It is also the essence of church building and worldwide evangelism. The entire concept of world missions and effective evangelism is based on II Timothy 2:2. In this one verse, we see four generations of believers.

Paul was discipled by the church and faithful believers following his conversion.

Paul instructed Timothy in the truth of the Gospel.

Timothy was to commit these teachings to faithful men.

These faithful men were to teach other also.

So here we have four generations of disciples. If today's church followed that same strategy and system, we would effectively touch our world for Jesus Christ. It is probably important here to consider what a disciple is. Paul gives us three examples of a disciple, and uses three different vocations to do it.

He tells us in verse 3 that a disciple is a good soldier of Jesus Christ. A good soldier is one who is well trained, thoroughly prepared, and willing to endure hardship. He is brave and willing to lead the way in facing the enemy. He refuses to entangle himself in the affairs of this life, so he may please his commander in chief. A disciple is a soldier who is totally committed to the task God has given him, and desires only to please his Commander in Chief, the Lord Jesus.

The **athlete** is an illustration that Paul often used. It seems like he really enjoyed sports, and enjoyed using the analogy of the athlete. On one occasion, Paul talked about the boxer who refused to just beat the air, but kept his body under discipline and subjection. He spoke often of the runner, running faithfully toward the finish line. This time, Paul reminds us that the athlete must compete according to the rules. The baseball player is out when he swings and misses for a third strike; the football player cannot count the touchdown if he steps out of bounds; the basketball player must dribble the ball as he moves down the court.

These players have to compete by the rules. A Child of God cannot live a haphazard life based on the rules of this culture. (carelessly)

If we are going to compete for God, we must do so according to the rules. The Bible is a rule book, and that is where we receive our instruction.

Then Paul tells us about the hard-working **farmer**. The Christian life and the challenges we face, do not call for a Sunday afternoon nap. They call for hard work. Sometimes you spell love WORK. If we desire a harvest, then we must work. A harvest requires planting, tilling the soil, often irrigating the soil, and then harvesting the fruit. The effective farmer is a hard-working person, and the effective disciple is a hard-working believer.

The Point and Challenge

Decide today to be a good soldier, an obedient athlete, and a hard-working farmer. Dare to be a disciple. It will cost you something, but the rewards are phenomenal! Then, pour your life into the life of another, making more disciples!

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

Mission Point:

Pray today for Gerardo Nolasko, a native pastor in La Esperanza, Honduras. Gerardo not only pastors a church in San Marcos, but he also leads multiple home Bible study groups throughout the week as well. Needless to say...he is busy! Pray for the Lord's blessings upon him!

Also – This is who we partner with when we go to La Mesitas and Delicias.

friday – november 14

Romans 6:20-23

The Bad News Makes the Good News Even Better

SOMEWHERE AMONG the people around you are those who picture God as a cosmic boogeyman just waiting for them to do something wrong so He can stomp on them. They figure God's biggest goal is to trap them, trick them, or rip on them.

But that's not the God you know. The core of the Bible's message is that God is love. He's not scheming to make us miserable.

Read Jeremiah 29:11 and consider what He's really up to in this life.

If you want to persuade your non-Christian friends to trust Christ, you first have to assure them that God actually loves them and wants to fill their lives with good things.

But there's a problem - something standing between your friends and God's love. It's called sin. Sin is the condition we're all in before we trust Christ.

Find and **read Romans 6:23** –

What is the penalty for sin?

Find and **read Romans 3:23** –

Who in this life would be considered sinners?

Find and **read Romans 5:7-8** –

Who is our only hope of being forgiven?

To ever hope to see Christ and His life, death, and resurrection as good news we must first understand the bad news.

Sin is an attitude of independence from God. It doesn't matter if you, or your friends, are violently anti-God or just indifferent toward him. Self-sufficient attitudes and actions keep us from knowing God and experiencing His awesome love.

The righteous, loving God of the universe can't stand to be around sin (**see Psalm 5:4**), so sin separates sinners from Him. But wait - it gets worse.

Since your unbelieving friends are cut off from the God who made them and loves them, their lives are totally controlled by themselves and their circumstances. They might think that makes them independent, but it doesn't.

They're in a serious mess, slaves to their own sinful nature. This may be you too! **(see John 8:34; Romans 6:16)**. Ultimately, they/we/you face the consequence of eternal separation from God *(see Romans 6:23 again)*.

To try to soothe the emptiness they feel, unbelieving friends might do really good things-like saving the environment or doing charity work. Or they might get into really bad things-like taking drugs or breaking the law. But they are powerless to bridge the gap **(see Romans 5:6)**.

Unless they realize the serious weight of their sin, they won't get why Christ died on the cross. And minus an understanding of Christ's death and resurrection, they have no reason to trust Him.

So you have both bad news and good news to share with your non-Christian friends. The bad news is utterly bad-that their sin separates them from a loving God. But the good news is utterly fantastic-that Christ died and rose again to deal with the sin that cuts them off from their loving Creator.

And sadly enough we allow for students we know to walk around with misconceptions about God.

The Point

There is "good news" but in realizing the good we must understand the bad. We must first come to grips with it and then take this great hope to the world, including those we share lunch with everyday.

The Challenge

Share the Gospel! With your life and with your mouth. Live the Gospel, Speak the Gospel, Share the Gospel.

How can you do this today? tomorrow? with your career? in your relationships? in your homes? at your work? "WHEREVER?"

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

saturday – november 15

Reflection

Think a little more on what we've seen or read throughout the week. A good way to do this is by asking some questions:

1. What sticks out from my week in the Word?
2. What are some things I need to continue to dwell on?
3. What did I learn about God this week?
4. What did I learn about myself this week?
5. What is something I need to work on in the future?
6. What would make my time in the Word better?
7. How consistent was I in my prayer life?
8. How did staying in God's Word affect my week?
9. How did NOT staying in God's Word affect my week?

If you desire to read something new we'd encourage you to read through Psalm 119

Sunday is a day of rest so enjoy the day of worship

monday - november 17

Isaiah 40:3-5

The Wilderness

Now that you are filled with hope from last weeks time in the Word I give you Isaiah 40:3. Isaiah too is filled with great verses of hope and comfort but today we see a challenge.

Have you ever been engaged in a learning moment only to have the teacher or mentor or parent give instructions to try what you just learned?

Sometimes it's fun:

You learn about blowing things up and then you get to....

Sometimes it's scary:

You just built a hot air balloon and now you must try it.....

In both of these things you must have faith right?
Well the same is true for our walk with God.

There are many times where we just soak up knowledge and wisdom and then comes the moment where God calls us out.

In **Isaiah 40:3** we see one of those moments. **READ IT.**

I heard this years ago but a guy made a statement from this passage that said: **to be this** (the voice) **you must be in this** (wilderness).

To understand this statement we must understand what the wilderness is. You've been there but you just maybe don't realize it.

The wilderness is a season, a moment, a time where things seem tough. It's a season in life that offers no hope other than the only True One who can ultimately bring hope.

There's an old saying that says you don't pray for patience. Why? Because God will place you in situations that allow you to work on patience.

We all want, desire to be the VOICE crying out. We like that part. We don't really care to be the one in the WILDERNESS though.

The sad truth is this: You really can't have the one without the other.

So we must truly depend on Romans 8:28 (turn and read, or remember). We must cling to Is. 40:5 and find comfort in the fact that THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT COULD HAPPEN IS HAPPENING....even in the midst of me being in the wilderness.

In fact – me being in the wilderness ushered in such a time as this. God is not blind, He is not stupid, He is not dumb.

God is in control and allows for us to be in the wilderness in order to make His Name known in a greater way.

I've often heard that God will never put more on you than you can handle. That is false.

If you can handle it what glory does He receive?

If not for God I would be _____?
Good sentence for us to finish.

You see for many people they get stumped with this sentence because in the end everything they need in this life they can provide.

For those people the glory of God is not foremost....they are.

Do you see the wilderness as a hopeless situation or a situation in which you will declare His goodness knowing that He has allowed such a time for this to be a situation to ultimately allow Him to prove that He is God.

The Point

God is in control and the greatest time for His glory to be made known is during the rain rather than the sun.

The Challenge

Know God is in control. Is there a situation you're now in that seems hopeless? Trust God in the midst of this and watch as He proves Himself again and again.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

The Prayer

Pray for eyes to see situation for what they are.

Search life and your walk. Are there situations you are controlling? Are there things you need to "let go of" so that God can act as only He can?

Pray this week for eyes to see how we often control rather than trust God.

tuesday – november 18

Isaiah 40:6-8

The Contents of the Cry

There is a challenge for us all to “CRY” on behalf of God. We are to cry in all situations life brings. When it’s raining, cry! When it’s sunny, cry! When a hurricane is beating on the door of our house, cry! CRY OUT!

But what do we cry?
Good question.

Read Isaiah 40:6-8 - What’s the answer?

The answer is we declare the Word of God.
What does this mean?

It means we search for it’s message and then we declare it to the world.
Our world.

Let me ask you a question. What is considered your world?
List out some things, places we are to take the Word of God.

-

-

-

-

Now, how good are we doing at this?

God has equipped you, called you, given you the perfect place to do this... how are you doing in this call? with this task?

Now...there are many excuses for not declaring the Word of God.

- we don’t know enough
- we’re not a people person
- we don’t have that kind of personality
- we’re just not (_____)

But get this – check out 1 Thess. 5:24 (who will do this work?)

Consider this practical example: I heard David Platt make this comparison and as I listened to him I was convicted and I was encouraged.

The Grandparent: Many of you know/have grandparents. But consider what happens in the life of the grandparent when they first become grandparents.

What do they do? Who do they brag on non-stop? What is their life consumed with? The grandchild right? Do they ever stop talking about the kid?

Couple of questions:

1. did they go to a grandparenting class?
2. did they do some research online about how to brag?
3. did they go to a weekly group meeting to discuss g-parents strategies?

NO! They simply shared what they knew, experienced, felt. They knew what happened and shared what they knew.

The Point

The contents of our cry is the word of God. In order for our cry to be the Word of God we must know It, read It, and attempt to understand it. But at the end of the day we share what we know as we keep growing.

The Challenge

Share the Word. Share hope. Share Christ. In whatever season you are in be excited that Christ is there with you. We are not telling of a prophecy that is to come we are sharing about something that HAS happened. Share it with confidence and hope that you are right.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

wednesday – november 19

Isaiah 40:28-31

This is our God!

There has been a challenge to cry out and now the prophet Isaiah is informing Who it is that we are to declare.

Through this we gain confidence and assurance that this message we are sharing and this God we are declaring is higher than All.

it would be helpful to read a bit of Isaiah's word in Isaiah 40

take some time and read the following verses:

w. 12-15, w. 18-19, w. 21-23, w. 25-26

It is at this point that God, through the prophet Isaiah reminds them about who HE is.

Now Read w. 28-31.

Consider some things that describe God's nature to us:
How is God described? What is He like?

If you looked first you cheated but here are some things that stick out to me as I read it:

Creator, Everlasting, Unsearchable, Giving, A Renewer of Strength.

Now, consider what we are called to do. **CRY OUT IN THE WILDNERNESS.**
Does that sound easy? **NO....It's a challenge, a calling. It's tough.**

Now revisit your list of things that stood out to you and the things I listed. Is the way God is described here an encouragement to you?

Consider being in the wilderness? Would these words comfort you? Consider the nation of Israel who this was written to...where had they been?

They had been in the wilderness.

They could associate.

But are we really that much different. Don't we need to be reassured often of all that God is considering all that He calls us to do?

The Point

The point is this. Your God, the one who has called you out of darkness in order to shine bright, is able to keep you! He places you in the wilderness to declare His glory. You are unable but again, He is able.

He is the Creator – don't you think He can sustain you?

He is everlasting – He has not changed and will not change.

He is Unsearchable – meaning you can't out think or out wit Him

He is giving – He gives all we need to honor Him

He renews strength – think Red Bull only the holy, never ending version.

The Challenge

I say this a lot through this devotion as a challenge but I'll say it again.

Trust in this God who we've just read about. How could we not?

Maybe that's the challenging. What is holding you back from trusting in Him completely?

What are potential snags in this faith?

Are the things you're thinking about the same things you thought about the last time we brought it up?

It's time to get serious in this war against sin and in this mission of declaring God's glory. Don't put it off. Trust in and Walk in Him today!

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

thursday – november 20

Isaiah 41

I WILL

Have you ever been scared of anything before as a kid?
Think about it for a minute.

There's a situation in life to where you were scared half to death but then the presence of one person, really any person helped that incredibly.

You went from "there's not a chance of me doing that!" to
"yeah man let's get after it!"

What changed? What changed was the fact that someone was going in with you. Just the mere presence of one other person helped.

I can think back to horrific things that unless my dad was there with me I would be no where near.

Some of you are still that way....I know I am.

Pull over at a cemetery at night and dare a friend to walk to the other side and back....I bet they say no....until you volunteer to go with them.

Do the same thing in the middle of the day and the cemetery won't be the scary thing...the fact that they don't trust you to be there when they get back will be.

What's the point of the story. We're often scared to do what God has called us to do. But when the reality of this hope sets in we are encouraged to lay aside the fear and move with Him.

That's what's happening here in Isaiah 41. The bottom line of the entire chapter is that God is saying "Fear not! I'm with you."

Not only is He with us but He is for us.
Not only that, He is working on our behalf.

I get this picture of me going into the dark woods alone versus me going into the well lit woods behind my dad who's got the biggest flashlight you've ever seen. I've got confidence. Why? Not because of me...but because dad is there.

This is the message for Israel. It's the same message for us, through Christ.

Flip through Isaiah 41 real quick and notice all the "I WILL" statements. Take some time now and speed read through chapter 41, stopping at the I will statements.

I quickly noticed 11 statements that stood out. They can seem a bit weird to us because situations have changed.

But we can't get held up or confused by God declaring He will "open rivers on the bare heights." What does that even mean?

That's a different day and devotion but here's the Point:

The Point

God is with you. Fighting with you and for you. So Fear Not! The point is that the nation of Israel needed to return to the Lord....Isaiah was the prophet declaring this Word and God was the one who was fighting on their behalf.

Every situation that had come up was in relation to their walk with Him. God was steering them back to Him and now He was calling them to return and declare. Through this chapter He was saying....Don't be afraid....I WILL do this work in you....

The Challenge

Do you get scared easy? Is Faith a difficult thing for you? Do you read God's Word and then immediately throw yourself back into the cares of this world without remembering what you just read?

Don't Forget This Word! HE IS FOR YOU.

maybe you should return to Romans 8:28-31 real quick.

Be encouraged but don't be lazy!

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

friday – november 21

Isaiah 43:1-2

You are Mine!

Let me take you back to many years ago, or possibly even yesterday, when you were on the playground or in the gym.

For years now you have been used to this situation. You sit and you wait. Your legs become a bit dead as they're beginning to go to sleep. You see where this is going, again. You're used to it. You get out your gold fish crackers you now keep in your bag because you know the process takes a while...but you accept. Plus you've got a new bag of the little sea creatures so who cares.

But then something strange happens. You hear a name that sounds just like you. You look around to chalk it up as a mistake because there are 15 more people left to pick for this dodgeball game....it was a mistake.

You hear your name again, only louder. You look up, cracker crumbs on your chin "yea" you reply....thinking they just want a handful of my tiny orange bits of happiness. "I got you!" he replies. "babe, I got you babe" is the next thing that comes from your mouth because you, still thinking this is a mistake, think he is singing and wants you to join in.

But then reality sets in....he really did pick me! I'm not last...I'm like half way last now! Your mind goes back to yesterdays dodgeball game. Did I rule or dominate the game or something? No, you were the first one out every time. You're always first one out....that's not the reason he chose you. I must have done some ninja move to almost not get hit? No, you looked like a ninja when the ball hit your face and you fell on your back and rolled off the court. Then why did he pick me?

He just did. Now quick question. You, in your happiness, thankfulness, allegiance to this guy who picked you....are you going to play a little harder today? Are you going to give a little more effort? You may but then you realize this is the kids first day of school and he has no clue you are horrible.

Tragic!

But listen....well, just read **Isaiah 43:1-2**

Now listen – God knows you! He created you. He's not new on the scene. He made you to be exactly how you are. He loves you in spite of your dodgeball skills and in spite of all your incapability's. Again we hear the words, Fear Not!

Now it gets personal:
I have called you by name.....You are mine!

Those words....how personal, how matter of fact, how reassuring.
In light of all we've seen and heard from Isaiah I have this overwhelming YES in my head because of those three words:

You Are Mine

I know from **Romans 8** that there is nothing that can separate me from this love that He has for me in Christ Jesus.

Is. 43:2 proclaims that though I feel like I'm drowning; HE IS THERE
though I feel overwhelmed; HE IS THERE
though I feel like any minute I will be consumed: HE IS THERE

This is my God
This is the ONE who has said to me: YOU ARE MINE.

The Point

Regardless of your skill and the reality of not being chosen for many things here on this earth know this. The only opinion that truly matters is the one God has towards you. People make fun of you? Let them poke. People won't accept you? Let them turn away. Because at the end of the day I must fully rely on the acceptance of God.

The Challenge

It still hurts. Not being chosen for dodgeball, for prom, for the party, for the (_____.) it still hurts and we must daily be consumed with the fact and the promise of these 3 words. YOU ARE MINE.

Today's culture is hard too! Instagram, Facebook and the likes are all daily, up to date reminders that you have not been chosen as the #bae, #bff, And when you finally get rated because you "liked" something your number is very low. Please....but I know...it's reality for you and I can only sit here and say to you "Please see your value in the eyes of your Creator!"

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

saturday – november 22

Reflection

Think a little more on what we've seen or read throughout the week. A good way to do this is by asking some questions:

1. What sticks out from my week in the Word?
2. What are some things I need to continue to dwell on?
3. What did I learn about God this week?
4. What did I learn about myself this week?
5. What is something I need to work on in the future?
6. What would make my time in the Word better?
7. How consistent was I in my prayer life?
8. How did staying in God's Word affect my week?
9. How did NOT staying in God's Word affect my week?

If you desire to read something new we'd encourage you to read through Psalm 119

Sunday is a day of rest so enjoy the day of worship

monday – november 24

2 Cor. 1:8-10

Our Greatest Hope

This may seem odd but the greatest hope you and I have comes from something outside of either of us.

We trust in many things.

We hope for many things.

We set aside many things hoping for one thing.

What is your greatest hope?

We've asked this question before but isn't it a question we need in front of it a lot?

So what is your greatest hope?

Now answer again, this time consider these things:

- **what** are you constantly thinking about?
- **what** are you constantly pursuing?
- **where** does the majority of your time go?
- **where** is the majority of your money spent?
- **where** does your dream find you finishing?

These questions can lead us to an answer that is not very pleasing.

Hear this: **We are not perfect.**

But in this imperfection know this....there is a perfect One.

His name is Jesus and He desires you....your life.....all of it.

I know what you're thinking.....I've gotta move to the mountains and wear a hat, grow my own food, ride around in a horse and buggy....right?

But that's not it. God gives us freedom to pursue things in this life but here's the kicker....for the ultimate purpose of reflecting Him.

As we do this He then becomes our greatest hope.

What is your only hope in life and in death?

Here's a great, Biblical response: That I am not my own but I belong to God.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-10

At the end of the day we must rely on something other than ourselves.

We must set our hope on something else.

This week we hope to begin shifting our focus to Christmas, the first Advent, and settle our hearts around the theme of HOPE.

It's because of Jesus we have an opportunity to hope.

Because of Jesus we can have this great hope in life and in death.

This fall within the student ministry we have looked at The Apostles Creed. We have attempted to strengthen our faith.

By Faith we mean Right Thinking.

We've heard all fall that our thinking will influence our actions, our living.

Sometimes we learn the right belief before we ever act it out.

We need to be prepared with right thinking in order to respond correctly, Biblically.

In my life I didn't experience death of any kind until I was out of high school.

It was a fairly close relative and this was truly the first death that really hurt, the first one that truly rocked my thoughts,

I had to deal with death for the first time.

My beliefs were challenged and little did I know my beliefs would influence my actions.

Our desire at The Rock is to help you wrestle with these things and we desire to lead you to "right thinking."

Here's the truth: One day there will be hardship...something that shakes you to the core. What you believe to be true about life, God, man, this world will determine how you handle that situation.

For many of you this day could have already come...you know it won't be the last earth shaking moment. So this question; **"What is your only hope in life or death?"** is a question we need an answer for.....and much more than an answer...we need confidence that this is true.

We need a Rock to stand on when it seems the earth is made of sand.

How is your "Faith?" Your thinking?

The Point

Jesus brings hope and in Him we have hope in life or in death. In sunshine or in rain.

The Challenge

Seek Him in all things. Seek to learn more of Him to correct bad thinking and begin seeking wisdom.

The Prayer

Consider the persecuted Christian. Don't you think they trust in verses such as the one we read today? Let's pray for them each week. Look for their stories but know this: millions are persecuted this hour while we stroll through our own version of persecution. Remember them in prayer.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

tuesday – november 25

Romans 14:7-8

We are not our Own.

The Apostle Paul is in a scuffle of sorts. He's giving wisdom to some folks who are struggling in the judgment area. People are judging others for doing things that they themselves wouldn't do. Kind of like how some of your church friends may believe in a way that gives them permission to do things your church, our church, do not promote.

So Paul ends with this text, **verse 7-8**.

Paul points out to them that the standard is wrong. They are judging each other when really their standard is wrong. Paul says look, it doesn't matter what you do, live or die, whatever, but you are not your own. You are God's, you belong to Him.

We've done a lot of reading on **Romans 8** and through Isaiah and we should be very hopeful people.

Yesterday we said that we need to have an answer for this question:
What is your only hope in life or death?

Paul's response would have been this:

You are not your own. whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

This is Hope. I love **verse 9** (read it).

This is the reason Christ died...to be Lord over all.

We, the followers, belong to Him.

If we are not our own and we indeed do belong to Him. Things must change.
But what?

What changes due to the fact that I, a follow of Christ, belong to Him?

1. **Our plans change** – Look at Proverbs 16:3 – this is a great verse for some more pressure relief. You belong to Him, commit your works to Him. He'll lead, guide, direct. So if we belong to Him our entire plans change. He gives desire and you stick with that but at the end of the day your end goal, plan changes. Now rather than you doing (fill in the blank) because you want to (fill in the blank), now you do (fill in the blank) for (His honor and glory.)
2. **How we exert ourselves changes?** Huh? We exert a lot of energy on a lot of stuff each day. When we understand that we are not ourselves but God's it should change what we pursue, what we place energy on. What matters to the old us will not be as crucial anymore: drama, hobbies, etc. In other words, they shouldn't drag us down. We pursue them differently, handle things differently.

3. **Our Source Changes** – Gal. 2:20 says that Christ lives in the believer. We trust in Him, follow Him and He works through us. We are not our own. He is for us, working in us. For us the Spirit of God is the source that empowers us.

The Point

Understanding we are not our own changes how we live. It sets the very foundation of what life is all about for us. It adds a comma to everything we are about. In life, and in death understand you belong to God. It changes everything!

The Challenge

Add the comma in more ways that grammatically. What?

Don't just say you're doing something for the glory of God. Let it be evident. Let it show in how you handle hardships and celebrate the greatest victory.

How can you add the comma to your life?

How can you honestly do all you do for the Lord?

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

wednesday – november 26

Philippians 1:21-25

What's the worst that could happen?

Ever asked this question?

I have. The Winter of 1984. Your parents were teenagers probably. That's funny. But it had snowed in Meadow Green subdivision and my and the gang were out doing some sledding, with real sleds.

It was nighttime, there was no school the next day, we were free.

We had some options

1. Continue sledding and having fun.
2. Step it up a notch.

I was game for both but a little scared. You see in this gang was me (12) and two other friends who were my age and then 3 guys who were 15. They were a little more advanced than we were...one even smoked. (I thought he was like a rebel or something!) Don't make eye contact with the smoker....he'll kill you!

They voted to pursue option 2. I was scared.

Then the comment came; "What's the worst that could happen?"

Ever seen the movie Hook? Remember the guy Ralphie (I think that's his name). He challenged to take Peter Pans position. He was a rough, scary dude. That's what I thought of this guy.

He asked the question and we surveyed the scene.

We, the 12 yr olds, opted out of pursuing choice 2. Thankfully we did 30 minutes later we, the 12 yr olds, are in the neighborhood clubhouse and we here sirens. Ralphie took out a mailbox during option 2 and then pulled a knife on homeowner of the now broken mailbox. Ralphie went to Juvie.

What's the point?

The point is this....sometimes we take risks that are calculated and protected. But is that really a risk? Isn't having faith a risk?

Sometimes you survey the scene and options and you recognize that option #2 is not good at all. Like us during the winter of '84. My spirit wasn't agreeing with that option.

In life we often ask that question; What's the worst that could happen? In our own Huck Finn impression.

Spiritually, we take risks. We consider the options and at the end of day we use wisdom given from God. The world sometimes looks at us like we're crazy. Missionaries go across the world, to dangerous places. Pastors take dead churches, football players stand up in the middle of an unbelieving locker room, nerdy students take stands in the faces of the popular, unbelieving crowd.

How?

We've surveyed the scene – our “thinking” is right.

We know what Romans 14 says and our hope in life or death is this:
That we belong to God.

Read Phil. 1:21-25

Paul considered the cost and understood who he belonged to in this life.

His hope was that he belonged to God.

The Point

We belong to God and because of this we can stand in the face of a seemingly impossible task, unbearable mission and say, what's the worst that could happen?

The Challenge

Take risks for the sake of the Gospel. Go places you've not gone, even if that means the other side of the locker room. It may not be Iraq for you but it could be. It may be the neighbors house. What's the worse that could happen? Rejection? If you are following Christ and following wisdom that God has given....there is not wrong answer....there is no horrible thing that will happen. Why?

Because you belong to God. Take heart in this....take risks for the sake of the Gospel.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?

What is the next step I should take after reading this?

thursday – november 27

Philippians 1:3-6

Thank God for you

Happy Thanksgiving!

Today is a short one but also a potential day for you to go back and dig deeper on some devotions in between turkey sandwiches and all those desserts.

Today among all the things I'm thankful for stands you.
I am thankful for you and maybe in ways you never thought about.

I'm proud of you, for your stance for His sake.
Don't feel you're there yet.....neither do I?

But I press on and encourage you to do so too.

But read Phil. 1:3-6.
Here is my biggest thanks when I think of you:
your partnership in the gospel.

I thank God that He has saved you and together we can press toward the goal of letting everyone in this world know about Him.

Let's keep pressing forward together!

What about you?
What are you thankful for?

I'm sure your dad or grandfather shared about thanksgiving and maybe even made everyone say something you're thankful for.....what did you say and what, after thinking about it, should you have said?

Consider sharing with those you are thankful for in life.
Those who have made impact on your life.

You'll never know how much it will mean to them to hear "Thank You."

Ultimately we should be most thankful for God. He has made all of this possible.
It is to Him we belong and from Him all blessings flow..

**What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?**

friday – november 28

Psalm 118:6

The Lord is with me

It's still Thanksgiving Break and I'm sure you're still busy. So we'll keep it short again. But we've been leaning into Advent a bit as we prepare to shift our devos to shorter reflections pointing to Christmas.

So we've been looking at Hope.

The big question has been this: What is my hope in life and death?
the response: I am not my own, I belong to God.

Can we just chew on that a bit?
What does this mean for us?

I love our passage in Psalm 118:6, Read it.
As a guy I often "grit my teeth."

Gritting ones teeth means you roll your sleeves up and get the job done.
This often comes because you've been challenged, you are fired up.

Ps. 118:6 does this for me.
It gives fuel to this hope in life or death.

God is a big God and He is for me.
He has provided and has asked me to leverage all I have for His name, His good.

In the process there will be fear, confusion, risk to take.
In the end I am challenged to simple ask:
"What can man do to me? The Lord is with me!

The Point

It's simple, The Lord is with us. Go for it.

The Challenge

Get up and walk it out.

What did the Word teach me about God, Jesus, Man (me)?
What is the next step I should take after reading this?

saturday – november 29

Reflection

Think a little more on what we've seen or read throughout the week. A good way to do this is by asking some questions:

1. What sticks out from my week in the Word?
2. What are some things I need to continue to dwell on?
3. What did I learn about God this week?
4. What did I learn about myself this week?
5. What is something I need to work on in the future?
6. What would make my time in the Word better?
7. How consistent was I in my prayer life?
8. How did staying in God's Word affect my week?
9. How did NOT staying in God's Word affect my week?

If you desire to read something new we'd encourage you to read through Psalm 119

Sunday is a day of rest so enjoy the day of worship



What's Next?

Make sure you pick up another devotion book at The Rock. This devotion will begin on Monday December 1st and be ready for pick-up on Wednesday November 19th

Keep in mind: All devotions are available on our website, therocksm.me or therocksm.org. Just look for the “daily devotion” tab on the top of the page.