



BOYS CAMP DEVOTIONS

**PIONEER CAMP ONTARIO
JUNE 2020**

INTRODUCTION

Hi friends!

We're sad that camp won't be happening this summer. We're going to miss having you around Boys Camp playing wide games with us, doing activities, eating meals in the dining hall, and more. One of the biggest things that we're going to miss is talking about God with you and studying the Bible with you. God is the reason we do camp - we think He's incredible and He can change your life. So that being said, we wanted to make sure that we could still find ways to connect with you about the Bible and God.

So, we've taken some time to put together a devotional book for you for the coming weeks. There will be different versions coming out for the next few months (one for June, one for July, and one for August), so stay tuned. Some of the devotions are written by familiar faces from Boys Camp, whereas some are collected from other resources that we really like. Either way, we're sure that these devotions are going to allow you to grow closer to God and to learn more about His Word!

Here's the breakdown for the month of June:

June 1-11: Knowing God (Boys Camp Devotional - 2017)

These are the devotions that we used at camp in the summer of 2017. That summer, we were looking at different ways that we could know God. There are many ways that we can not only know more *about* God, but there are many ways that we can know God in a real, personal, way. We hope this plan helps you do just that!

June 12-25: Book Of Philippians (He Reads Truth)

These devotions come from a website called "He Reads Truth". They're really fantastic, and they breakdown the book of Philippians for you to study in a really simple, and understandable way. Philippians is a book that teaches us that no matter what circumstances we face, we can have joy in knowing the Saviour - Jesus.

June 26-30: The Story Of The Bible (Boys Camp Devotional - 2019a)

These devotions are one of the sets that we used last summer when we studied the story of the Bible. We wanted to look at who Jesus is - not only in the New Testament when He lived and walked on the earth, but all throughout the Bible when different stories pointed towards Him! We hope that this plan shows you the presence of Jesus throughout the Bible and in your own life.

JUNE 1 - CREATION (NORMANDY)



Hey Boys Camp! We can encounter and know God more through the natural world. I would like to share with you guys a time when I encountered God through His Creation.

This past spring, I had the opportunity to visit the Hawaiian Islands, way out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. There I saw so much of what God has made, and it was awesome! But the cool part was that, when I left home, my intention was not to seek God in Creation. I didn't go looking to encounter God, but rather He met me as I stood in the middle of all that He made.

In case you forgot, the story of Creation is found in Genesis 1, right at the front of the Bible. As God began to meet me in His Creation, I opened my Bible to this chapter and saw an abundance of connections between what I had experienced in Hawaii and what is written in Genesis.

Genesis 1:9 says that God gathered the waters together into seas and let dry land appear in the midst of it. Hawaii is the most isolated land in the entire world; for thousands of miles in every direction is nothing but the big, blue Pacific Ocean. So as I was standing on the island, a dry, solid rock, I thought to myself how incredible it is that God has moved the water in such a way that I can stand in the midst of it and yet be safe on dry land.

But this is just the beginning. Next, He commanded the dry land to grow plants and trees and all sorts of vegetation. I got to see this miraculous transformation of barren land into rich forests with my own eyes. Volcanoes that rose from the depths of the oceans when God commanded it erupted, creating the Hawaiian Islands. In some places, the bare, volcanic rock is covered with lush vegetation. But in others, God is still very much at work in His Creation. Parts of the islands are just beginning to sprout bushes and small trees, even to the point that there is still only rock!

But the best is still yet to come because then God said, "let the waters teem with living creatures, and that they be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas." Now, I have seen fish in the lake here at camp a few times, but never so much as to say that they fill the water. For this reason, when I went snorkelling in Hawaii, I had no idea what God had in store for me. On my first dive into the water, there were literally thousands of fish, in all different shapes, sizes and colours! As I swam through the reef, all that I could think about is how incredible God is!

Boys' Camp, no matter where we are, we can encounter God in His Creation. When you're going somewhere this week, pause and take a moment to just marvel in all the God has made.

Reflection Questions

- Have you ever encountered God in Creation? Read Genesis 1, and while you do, think about times that you were surrounded by all God has made.
- When you are surrounded by Creation, how does it make you feel?

JUNE 2 - CHURCH (LEVIATHAN)



Hey there, Boys Camp! Leviathan here.

This week we're talking about ways we can connect with God. My greatest hope is that whatever connection you may have established or grown with God this session will not fade away as you head back home. Possibly the best way to avoid this is to get involved in a church community. Now, you should note that I did not just write, "Go to church," and I did that for a reason. It's easy to think that what makes a church special is something about the building itself, as if being in one for an hourlong sermon every Sunday somehow makes us right with God.

However, I believe that the building itself is nowhere near as important as the community (also called the Church) that meets inside of it.

I can tell you from experience that the difference is an important one. My whole childhood and early teen years, my family and I moved around from church to church every few years. We had some incredible pastors who delivered brilliant messages, but we never truly felt at home at any of them. Then, when I was 16, I did the Leader in Training program here at OPC (which you should do, too), I was invited to a youth group at a church called The Meeting House. I had never been to a youth group before because I wasn't very social, and frankly I didn't want to go to church any more than I had to. But thankfully I went anyway, and started connecting with other youth and had some incredible leaders speak into and shape my life. Pretty soon my family and I started going there on Sundays as well, and I eventually started playing in the worship bands and helping out with the teardown team. Now I truly feel at home and connected to God when I'm at church. The point here is that my relationship with God didn't grow because I went into some fancy cathedral to hear a sermon (my church is actually in a Cineplex movie theatre... weird right?), it was because I actually made an effort to involve myself in the community instead of being a passive congregant.

This idea can be found in scripture as well. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 and 16, Paul writes: "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" and "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and the God's Spirit lives in you?" Paul here is arguing to the Corinthians that relationships with Jesus and each other are far more important than bricks and mortar. Furthermore, the ultimate expression of this truth came when Jesus gave his life for us on the cross. In that moment, as it is written in Matthew 27:50-51, "when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split." You can further discuss with your friends or family why you think this was so symbolically important, but in short it was Jesus' way of saying that he was breaking down the formalities of religion and inviting us into intimate relationship with God. My prayer today is that you would choose to enter into that relationship.

Reflection Questions

- Are you involved in a church or youth group community, and if so, how much? What are some ways you could get more involved?
- Read the verses from Matthew a few more times, and then discuss with others why the author would have bothered to include this detail.

JUNE 3 - SCRIPTURE (GAP)



One of the biggest things that I've learned in the past 2 years is how to cling on to the Bible in seasons of suffering and disappointment. An example of this was December 2015 when my grandfather passed away. He had been sick for some time but his death was very sudden and came as I was about to enter an incredibly busy time of exams at school. This was a time of tremendous stress with all of the emotions of my grandfather's death. My head was spinning. I needed to spend time with my family and grieve properly. But that was made worse with the stress of Christmas and the weight of finishing school. It felt like every moment I was second guessing if I was doing the right thing:

- Should I be comforting my grandma?
- How do I find time to follow through with my school responsibilities?
- Could I be doing more to be helping my family?
- Am I even okay?

These were some of the questions in my head constantly. As a man who loved Jesus, my grandfather loved Scripture and would often read it at family dinners like Thanksgiving or Christmas. When I was your age, I would moan and groan because I thought it was boring and that it didn't do too much for me. But, my grandfather showed me how to live with the Bible as a foundation that could be the foundation in every season of life— good or bad. In the final months before his death, I'm confident that God's Word brought him comfort and peace as he approached the end of his life. So, while I was struggling with my grandfather's death I began to learn how to rely on God's Word (the Bible) for comfort. One of his favourite passages was Psalm 91:

"Those who live in the shelter of the most High, will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety, he is my God, and I trust him" Psalm 91:1-2

I vividly remember reading these words and just crying out of much pain and also incredible joy. These words cut right into the pain that I was feeling at the moment. I needed rest. I needed safety in a shelter that could withstand pain and suffering. There was nothing else that I could have gone to. Because of the Bible, I was encouraged to persevere because of the shelter that God was providing for me. This allowed me to continue on with life and come out of those months with more joy and confidence that God's Word is really the way that God has revealed himself to me! The place to seek refuge when life downright sucks is God's Word. Keep reading the rest of Psalm 91 in your bible to get the bigger picture. So boys, I encourage you to come to the Bible when you are hurting, stressed, lonely, disappointed, or angry. It will be a source of comfort for you in these times, as well as any other season of life.

Reflection Questions

- What is something in your life that you would like rest/safety from?
- What are some common places people go to for rest when they are stressed?
- Where have you been going for that rest/safety?
- Read the rest of Psalm 91 and think about what it means to live in God's shelter?

JUNE 4 - REST (DUKE)



Hey guys! Duke here.

Something that I struggle with is knowing how to rest. This past year I decided that I wanted to be more invested in life. I wanted to spend more time building friendships, involved with school events and sports, getting good grades, being involved with various ministries, working some photography jobs, and so much more. I figured that if I did all of these things, I would impress others around me, myself, and God. I figured that if I did enough for Jesus, I'd know Him better. That I'd be a better Christian. I got really caught up in doing. But soon enough, I ran

out of energy, and I felt like I was going nowhere with any of the things I was working at.

Luke 10:38-42 talks about when Jesus goes to the home of Mary and Martha. When Martha gets mad at Mary for, as Jesus calls it, choosing the good portion – sitting at His feet. Listening. Spending time with Him. Even though Martha was doing good work, making a meal for Jesus, it was still more important that she just sit with Him. Reading that story, I realized that I was like Martha. I wasn't good at resting.

Rest is actually a common theme throughout the Bible. In Exodus 31:13, God tells the Israelites that they should take a Sabbath day, a day of rest, to be sanctified by Him. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says that in Him we can find rest. He actually encourages us to find rest in Him. Psalm 127:1-2 says that unless we're doing our work and our activities for God, then we're working in vain; that He's actually the only one who can provide rest. If you want to serve God, be involved, be busy, and do lots of good work, go for it. Work hard for God and use the gifts He's given you. Building strong relationships, investing in people, serving, these are all good things. But don't expect that these things will give you the energy you need to keep going. You need to take time to rest. To sit, and to experience God in the quiet. In taking a break from your regular routine.

Reflection Questions

- Are you like Martha, or me, not good at resting?
- What makes you feel rested?
- What is the benefit of rest?
- How could you find the space to spend more time with God in rest?

This week, try to spend a half an hour, ten minutes, whatever time you can spare – to rest. Read your Bible, pray, read a book, do a puzzle, have a good conversation with a friend – find what gives you rest, and invest in it. When you go home, try to schedule in activities throughout your week that allow you to connect with God through rest.

JUNE 5 - EXPERIENCE (LUCKY)



“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)

As we go about our lives we learn many things through our experiences. We grow in our athletic ability as we continue to play sports. We become better readers and writers as we progress through the grades in school. We become closer with the people who spend the most time around us. These are all things that each of us know without even thinking about it, “of course I’m going to be a better hockey player the more

time I spend on the ice.” This is a concept that’s applicable to more than just friendships, sports, and school, it can teach us a lot about how we come to know God and love Him more.

For each of the types of experience discussed above we need to give something up and commit our time and energy to growth and learning. In each case we are able to recognize the value in giving ourselves over to something in order to improve ourselves, but what does that say about our priorities when we don’t give the same sort of dedication to our relationship with God. When we pick our activities and interests over the ultimate purpose for our lives we sell ourselves short. As we commit ourselves to God he will grow more and more appealing to us as His amazing characteristics and teachings show us the way to live.

This type of sacrifice is spoken about by Paul in the verse from Philippians above. Paul is a man who has decided to wholeheartedly follow Jesus. As he walked faithfully through many difficult experiences (because of his commitment to serving God) his affection for the Lord only grew. As Paul walked through life facing circumstances that led him to places where he could not rely on himself and could only rely on God, he found that the fountain of pleasure that he found in God grew into an ocean. Paul’s experiences led him to know God deeply as he relied on Him to provide for and protect him in all his struggles. The better that Paul knew God the more delight he took in getting to know God better, even to the point where he counted everything else “as loss.” This bold statement is a testament to us who are trying to follow in Paul’s faithful footsteps. It tells us not to be tentative with committing time and energy to serving and knowing God, because the payoff is so much more than we could imagine; it’s worth is so much that we’d be willing to discard all our other interests if we had to, just so that we can know Christ.

JUNE 6 - JESUS (CARRELL)



In John 1:18 we read, “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”

In my journey of walking with God a key aspect in my life and in the life of all Christians is the central role of Jesus. God is sometimes seen as an unknowable, all-powerful, impersonal being. However, we see that through Jesus we can come to know God as a personal all-loving God through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. As a result, In Jesus’s death and resurrection, we can most clearly see, know and experience God through Jesus. I personally had a hard

time experiencing this to be true. For the longest time I knew that Jesus loved me, died for me, and that he forgives me of my sin but it wasn’t something that I actually believed and felt in my heart. The gospel message became something that was dedicated to my headspace, not my heartspace. Only when I experienced the transformational power of Jesus’s love in my heart, mind and soul, did I begin to know God personally. One personal example of this gap between my head and my heart has developed during my studies where I have had the great opportunity to study philosophy and develop my critical thinking abilities. Unfortunately, I’ve been bringing a lot of what I have been learning home. When it came to discussing topics at home I would always critique or attempt to help my family in their thinking. Being able to do this made me feel smarter and superior to my sisters and parents but it was actually very hurtful. Thankfully, my Dad, in his infinite wisdom pointed out the fact that, “You cannot let being right stop you from being kind.” In other words, just because I think I know something to be true doesn’t mean that I can force it on people and be mean about it. In addition, just because I know something to be true and morally right doesn’t mean that I will act in the best way possible. As a result, there can sometimes be a big gap between what we think is true and to what we actually live out and believe to be true in our hearts. Just because I think I’m right doesn’t mean that I will actually live it out and apply it in the best way possible. When it comes to my relationship with Jesus there was a big gap between my mind and my heart. Yet, through Jesus’ love, grace, and patience I accepted him not only into my thoughts and beliefs but also into my heart. When I asked Jesus into my heart, Jesus greatly changed how I acted, treated, spoke, thought, and loved people.

Romans 8:1-4 says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” We see that through Jesus we can find forgiveness and acceptance so that we can know God personally. In stepping out in faith and allowing God’s love to enter in our hearts through Jesus, when can then experience and communally know God. This is because God loves you so much that he gave his son Jesus for you and through Jesus we can come to know the love of God. Therefore, if we know Jesus we can know God (who is love) through being rooted in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Reflection Questions

- What might be something holding you back from accepting God’s love?
- Where are some places that God might be asking you to step out in faith and trust him?

JUNE 7 - THE POOR (RISCO)



Hey Boys Camp! Today, we are focusing on the idea of knowing God through the poor. I wanted to add to the discussion with a couple of passages from the Bible and an experience from my own life.

When I was younger, I had the opportunity to travel to a very poor community in the Dominican Republic. The trip was organized through my school and we went down to do a variety of service projects in the community including building, running an afternoon kid's program and helping in a school.

What I didn't know going into the trip is that instead of me serving the people I met in the community, they would give me much more than I was able to give them. I don't mean this in a physical sense, these people had very little in the way of possessions, or even food. However, these people that I met were very up front about their faith. They were eager to discuss God with me and challenge me in ways that I could grow my own faith, even though we barely knew each other. I came home from the trip with a completely different view of what it meant to know God.

I was blown away by how the people in this community were so full of joy and love of God. The idea that someone who had so little could have such a full life was very surprising to me. Not only were these people content and thankful for what little they had, but they wholeheartedly desired to live for God and to share their faith to those around them.

Grab a Bible and turn to Mark 10:17-31. In this story, Jesus is trying to get the rich man to give God every area of his life, including his riches. The flip side is that sometimes people without a lot of worldly possessions are a lot more connected to God and since they don't have a choice but to trust that he will provide for them.

Additionally, while I was in the Dominican Republic building houses for these people, I got to learn a little bit about what it means to serve. Jesus said he came to be the servant of all, and calls us to do the same. I can't pretend that a couple of weeks of hard labour comes even close to the amount that God serves us, but it was definitely a useful experience to learn about service from.

So the point is not that you need to travel to some far-away place to find people who know more about God than you. But I do think that Jesus has a real heart for the poor, and I think that a lot of times people who are on the fringes of society have a lot of lessons that they can teach us about God. At the same time, there is also lots of value in answering Jesus' call to servant-hood by serving the poor.

Reflection Questions

- Read more in the Bible about what Jesus had to say about a poor woman: Mark 12:41-44
- Read more about what Jesus said about serving: Mark 20:25-28
- What people in your community are poor in some way? How might you serve them and know God better though them?

JUNE 8 - WORSHIP (KNOX)



"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." (Daniel 6:10)

What does it mean to worship God? When we talk about worship, many of us think of singing in the lodge before bible study. Others think of poetry, others think of dance, and yet others think of prayer. In truth, all these forms of artistic and emotional expression can be acts of worship, so long as God is

the focus.

In the passage we just read, Daniel learns that a royal decree has been ordered, which bans any citizen from worshipping or praying to God. Despite potential consequences for breaking the decree, Daniel opens his windows and prays for the whole city to see. But he doesn't sing a song and he doesn't write Psalms like David does; he simply focuses his words on God. God doesn't care what we do to worship him, so long as our actions, our minds, and our spirits align to give Him praise. In John 4:23-24, Jesus says, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." Jesus is speaking about worshipping God the Father through the Holy Spirit, which is what we do every time we praise God with Him and His Word as the focus. At the same time, God wants our worship to be genuine and to come from a place of knowing Him. In Isaiah 29:13, God says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught." Here, God reveals that worshipping Him should not be a mechanical process, like following an instruction manual. God wants our genuine, Spirit-laden worship, not merely an external display of praise.

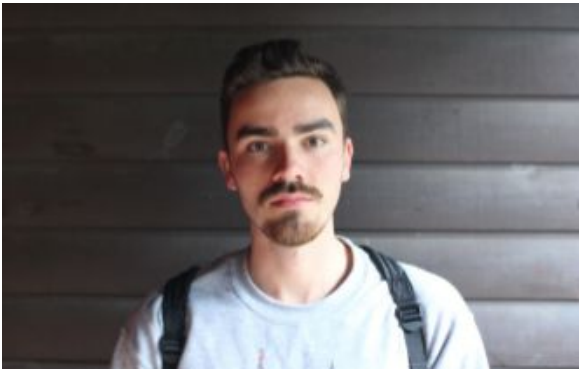
So, what does it mean to worship God? Can serving others be worship? Can resting be worship? Can tying our shoes be worship?

We can look to Paul's letter to the Romans for a hint. In Romans 12:1 Paul writes, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." It seems, then, that God would will us to offer ourselves up to His service so that we may worship Him jointly in mind, body, and Spirit. We've seen that worshipping God can take many forms, from singing songs, to praying, to offering our lives and bodies to Him. God wants us to worship Him, but He wants us to worship in everything we do, even in the mundanity of getting dressed for school. During the rest of the session, you can meditate on Romans 12:2 and Psalm 100 and think about what worship looks like in your life.

Reflection Questions

- How has God been leading you to worship Him this week?
- How have you felt God's Spirit during a significant time of worship?
- Why do you think God wants us to worship Him?

JUNE 9 - PRAYER (CABRA)



Read Luke 10:38-42.

I have a friend who describes his mind in times of stress as ‘the Tokyo subway’. I’ve always liked that image. Tokyo is a really densely populated city, and has crowded subways. You may have seen Youtube videos of its rush-hour conductors whose job is to pack people into subway cars like sardines in a can. My friend’s mind is like that car: it’s jammed with thoughts and worries that eventually exit, only to be replaced by new ones. We’ve all had a ‘Tokyo subway’ moment at one point or another. Some of us feel swamped by the busyness of school,

while others become weighed down when relationships with family members or friends aren’t at their best.

In the passage of scripture you read above, Martha is having her own ‘Tokyo subway’ moment. A very important guest shows up at her house, and she feels very anxious about hosting Him. This makes sense; Martha wants to be a good host and impress Jesus. However, Martha gets so stressed that she snaps at Jesus and demands that her sister Mary help set the meal up. But Jesus responds: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted about many things; there is need for only one thing.” Jesus reminds Martha that Mary is in fact doing what is right by sitting at his feet and listening to Him. Martha was trying to make herself useful, but was missing out on a chance to hear from the Son of God! This story is relevant to our lives. Although we want to do what’s right a lot of the time, we can get overwhelmed by the stress and pain that life brings. Jesus wants us to listen to Him before we act, like Mary did, so that He can give us His wisdom and peace. Let me teach you a really simple prayer for times of stress and worry. The “Jesus Prayer” is ancient, but it was made famous in a book about a Russian pilgrim from the 1800s. The book’s main character wandered from village to village on foot, living off other people’s kindness. His spiritual mission was to figure out how to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The pilgrim’s goal might seem absurd to you. How can someone pray without stopping? Don’t we have to eat, drink, work, sleep, and use the Ky every once in awhile? But one day, the pilgrim met a wise monk who taught him the “Jesus Prayer.” This is how it goes:

Breathe In

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God”

Breathe Out

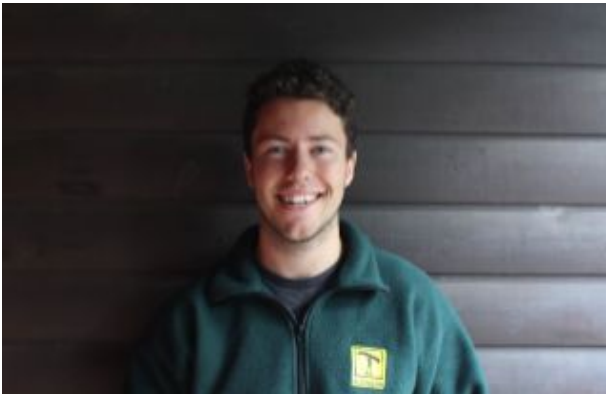
“Have Mercy on Me”

“The Jesus Prayer” is simple, but powerful. The pilgrim from the book said it over and over again for days and days. Eventually, he was saying its lines in the back of his mind every time he took a new breath; the prayer became automatic for him. I’m not asking you to turn up to pilgrim-level and spend the rest of the week saying “The Jesus Prayer”, but you should try saying it during this Personal Devos time. Just close your eyes, and start breathing. Focus on your breath. After a few breaths, inhale and say the first line in your head. Then, exhale and say the second line in your head. Repeat these steps a few times. I love this prayer. It’s short but powerful. It reminds me that even though I struggle God wants to offer me His peace, wisdom, and love.

Reflection Questions

- What do you think might have motivated Martha to choose to be busy, rather than to be with Jesus?
- What are some situations in your life that cause you to become distracted, and how do you regain focus?
- Why does Jesus want Martha to act like Mary instead of being busy?

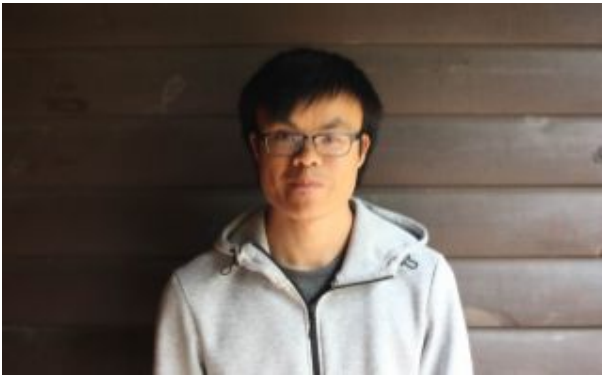
JUNE 10 - MIND (WHEELBARROW)



Today at Bible Study we talked about knowing God using our minds. This is something I've been thinking about quite a bit this year and it led me to learn about a topic quite foreign to me – science. Now boys, I'm no scientist. Chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, and all the rest of them, they're a little over my head. Pursuing scientific discoveries is not my calling and I'm ok with that. Using our minds is one of the ways in which God calls us to know Him so I tried to deepen my understanding of Jesus by exploring how science and God might relate to one another. Comprehending God is no simple task. In scripture, God Himself says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my

ways" (Isaiah 55:8). We're trying to understand a being that has completely different ways of thinking and acting than we do – how do we even do that? Well, I ended up in a course at school called Christianity & Science: Disputed Questions which I thought might be a good starting point. And it was. I didn't end up learning that science could prove or disprove the existence of God... because it can't do either. What I did end up learning was about how the two aren't opponents but rather two different ways of explaining our world. Before I took this course I'm sure many of you were in the same boat I was in. I thought that science and God were at opposite ends of some continuum. I wouldn't have said this but I had a general understanding that you had to be a believer in one or the other. You could be a follower of Jesus and have faith or be a follower of scientific understanding and use logic. I assumed the two areas would never blend. I think a lot of us might think like this. There's this idea out there that Christians are foolish because they believe in God, that they have blind faith with no evidence. Following Jesus does require faith but it doesn't mean ditching our brains. In fact, in the Bible we learn that wisdom and knowledge are to be cherished. Proverbs 2:6 says "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." God doesn't want us to be mindless beings but ones that have a deep understanding of Him and the world He created. Science is one of the ways humans can expand their knowledge of the world which is both filled with God's love (see Psalm 33:5) and glory (see Isaiah 6:3). Through science we have the ability learn more about the intricacies of creation and the complexities of the Creator – God. As much as I think science and Christianity can work together, I do think Christianity surpasses science in some significant ways. Science is great but it is limited. It can tell us the answers to many questions. Because of science we know what earth is made of and how it orbits the sun but not why it exists. This goes for every scientific finding, it may tell us a 'what' and a 'how' but never why. Why do we exist? Why does everything around us exist? Why do we have conscious minds? Science often does a fantastic job of explaining what and how things happen but when it comes to these bigger 'why' questions it often falls short. This is where Christianity goes beyond. In the book of Ephesians we learn that the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19). Science is only able to tell us so much about our existence but that's where God comes in. He tells us that He created us to be his people, the sheep of his pasture (Psalm 100:3). Science is an incredible pursuit but it does not offer all that a life of God can offer. Because of this, so many great thinkers throughout history have not been satisfied with science alone. From Isaac Newton to William Paley history is littered with great scientific minds that sought to understand both the 'whats' and the 'hows' but also the whys and this led them to faith in God. Now there isn't enough space on these pages to launch into every aspect of how God and science enlighten one another. Creation, miracles, death and resurrection, evolution, and many others are all topics that have been debated between theologians and scientists. Now I'm no expert on these topics but if you're curious to know a little more I'd love to talk with you and maybe we can learn together. But I want to leave you with this: If you're a follower of Christ and suspicious of what science has to say or skeptical of God and would rather stick with the scientific, continue to ask questions! God wants us to know Him deeper so that we may know more about his deep love for us. Asking questions, challenging what you know, and seeking answers from the Bible are all great places to start. Anyways, boys, that's enough from me. Peace!

JUNE 11 - HOLY SPIRIT (MCFLY)



What comes to mind when you hear the words the “Holy Spirit”? Some of us might think about Casper the friendly ghost. Or we think of the Force from Star Wars, the “spiritual, impersonal, force” which surrounds us. Christians believe in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit isn’t an afterthought or third wheel in a relationship. We believe that the Holy Spirit is God as well, and is the way in which Jesus is with us, and how he lives and dwells within us. Think about the Holy Spirit as a personal being, the advocate, or helper which empowers you to do God’s work (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is also that conscience convicting you when you are misbehaving or calling you to love others.

Think about how important He must be for us in our lives!

When Jesus sent out his twelve disciples in Luke 9, he gave them power and authority to do what he was already doing, driving out demons, curing diseases and proclaiming that God was King over the world. He gave them explicit instructions, “Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.” Two summers ago after I graduated seminary, I had this gig working as a chaplain, or minister at Sibbald Point, north of Toronto. I lived in a trailer in the national park all summer doing an outreach ministry. Sometimes I would do what I call “cold” visitations, walking onto strangers campsites, introducing myself as a minister and getting to know people. Being a quiet guy, this was pretty scary and often daunting, I would constantly be praying to God, trusting and hoping that the Holy Spirit would use me to meet others.

One time, I walked on a site with a trailer close to where I lived, and knocked on the door. This shirtless white guy came to the door, turning off his television, and I introduced myself as the park chaplain. As soon as I said I was the chaplain, his eyes lit up, and he slipped on a shirt and came outside to talk. Bill the Hillbilly, we’ll call him, couldn’t believe that a young Chinese guy, like myself, would come to talk to him about Christianity (he thought most Chinese were Buddhist). We ended up having a long conversation about his life. He had moved around quite a bit, doing construction in different places; he would live in parks as he traveled during the summer. He started talking about religion, how he didn’t know much about God, and how he had a failed marriage. He said didn’t know much about God, but Bill the Hillbilly had prayed to God recently, and here a minister shows up at his door. I told him that maybe this wasn’t an accident, but that God might have brought us together. I listened to him and asked questions, and showed my concern and love. As I left, he told me, “You can tell everyone, that you met the biggest Hillbilly in Canada here!”

Jesus tells us to go out with little to nothing, and enter into people’s homes, and let others be the host, and we be the guest. When we share our faith with others, we have to trust the Spirit’s guidance when we step into the unknown. Because we have the Spirit, Jesus gives us the power and authority that he had when he was on earth--isn’t that something? Often the Spirit will call us to talk with others, give words of encouragement, or tell people about Jesus.

Reflection Questions

- What is the Holy Spirit telling you this week?
- What is He calling you to be or do?

JUNE 12 - PAUL'S OPENING WORDS

Read Philippians 1:1-2.

As I write this, the current price of a U.S. postage stamp is fifty-five cents. That means, essentially, if I give my mail carrier two quarters and a nickel, he'll make sure a letter I've written gets to my friend on the other side of the country. Even to Alaska. Even to a house in a remote part of the state. Even if the house is on the tippy-top of a very tall mountain. Even during a snowstorm. That makes sending a letter one of the greatest bargains going today. It's not just the small cost that makes sending or receiving a letter wonderful. A handwritten letter communicates something that an email or an Instagram DM or a phone call cannot. (Remember phone calls?) A letter is personal, not just because of the words written, but because of how they're written: in the sender's unique handwriting. A letter also takes time and more effort than other, more modern forms of sending a message, and that says something in and of itself. Just think about the last time you received an honest-to-goodness letter in the mail—not a bill or a package from Amazon or an account statement, but an actual letter from a friend. Didn't it feel, well, special? Much more valuable than two quarters and a nickel, anyway.

Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi was special, the nearest thing to being there in person. He couldn't be there, of course, because he was in prison. But he wanted to impart something to his faithful friends, those who had become partners in the gospel (Philippians 1:5). Philippians is essentially a thank-you note for financial support. The theme is joy, and the tone is one of gratitude—to the recipients but also to God. In fact, if Paul had decided not to mention his current imprisonment in the letter itself, it would be hard for us as modern readers to deduce that reality on our own. This is simply not the sort of letter one would think emanated from the heart of an innocent man living under the weight of suffering. But here it is, all the same.

Philippians is powerful, because it is an artifact of something nearly too good to be true. In the kingdom of God, the meek inherit the earth, the poor are blessed beyond measure, and those in prison find reason to sing. So, when Paul writes "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2), it's not merely a formality. He knows the reality of God's amazing grace, and he knows it's available to his friends in Philippi. And he also knows what it's like to experience the peace that "surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7); it is his heartfelt desire that his brothers and sisters in Christ be wrapped up in it too.

This simple verse is a beautiful picture of the kingdom. In earthly terms, Paul is the one in need. He's in prison. He should be asking for help. But he sees the world through the lens of heaven, so he is content, and his desire is for his friends to receive the gifts—namely the grace and peace of God.

Devotional by John Greco (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 13 - THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

Read Philippians 1:3-11.

In my life there have been people who have loved me, and there have been people who have loved me so well that they actually changed my life. I think of my sister, who gave me a place to stay when I had nowhere else to go. I think of a certain college professor whose teaching made the scriptures come alive for me in a way they simply hadn't before. I think of friends who have given words to feelings for which I lacked the vocabulary. And I think of my wife, Laurin, whose tenderness in the midst of my sometimes misguided determination keeps me sane and holds our family together.

So, I have a sense of what Paul meant when he wrote, "I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you" (Philippians 1:3). The Philippians had loved Paul well. They had shared their lives with him and given him a base of operations in Macedonia for his evangelistic work (Acts 16:15). They had supported him financially in good times and in bad (Philippians 4:14-16). And they had been partners in his mission to preach the gospel near and far (Philippians 1:5). Even in his imprisonment, their friendship had been an encouragement, bringing him joy in what was surely a time of suffering and loss.

Paul's gratitude is directed toward the Philippians, but it is also pointed at heaven, to the "God from whom all blessings flow," as the Doxology says, echoing Jesus's half-brother James: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). And Paul acknowledges this truth in his thanksgiving. He knows that the gifts he has received from his friends in Philippi—as well as the Philippians themselves—have been given to him from the hand of the Father.

I thank God for bringing certain people into my life. Their impact has been so great that my mind can't bear the thought that we crossed paths by accident. My story is being written by the Author of life itself, and these chapters were meant to be written. I didn't see them coming. I didn't plan them. In many cases, I didn't even know I needed them. But God did. So I am thankful, each and every time I remember one of these who has loved me so well.

Devotional by John Greco (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 14 - TO LIVE IS CHRIST

Read Philippians 1:12-26.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Teacher (most likely King Solomon) wrote, “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, since that is the end of all mankind, and the living should take it to heart” (Ecclesiastes 7:2). Except for the generation still alive when Christ returns, every person’s journey will end at the same place: death. The color will pass from our cheeks, and our limbs will make their final movements. The synapses that fire in our brains will ignite no longer, and our hearts will cease their steady rhythm. This life will be over.

Since the moment when our first parents sinned in the garden, death has been our common enemy. He stalks each of us, no matter where we go. He’s unrelenting, never growing tired, never losing his pace. He is coming, and we cannot escape him. But in the book of Philippians, death is no longer fearsome. He doesn’t even look scary. Paul talks about dying as if it were just a change of location, no different than moving across town: “Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don’t know which one I should choose. I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake” (Philippians 1:22–24). You can almost hear him weighing the difference between life and death the way one considers items on a dinner menu.

The gospel has freed Paul from the tyranny of death’s pursuit. The apostle is no longer running. Death has lost its power over him. He knows where he will go when his heart stops beating. He will find himself in the presence of the Lord, where there is abundant joy (2 Corinthians 5:8; Psalm 16:11). In the same way that the gospel has transformed the meaning of death, it has also transformed the meaning of life. Our time in this world can no longer be about mere pleasure or self-preservation. Against the backdrop of eternity, it is instead an opportunity to allow Christ to live in and through us, to worship Him and to serve others in His name.

Death is still our great enemy. It’s still appropriate to mourn when a loved one dies. We should still fight for life in every arena. And it is still a tragedy when an innocent life is cut short. Nothing in the gospel would deny any of that. But death is coming undone, and we who know Christ have no need to fear it.

Devotional by John Greco (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 15 - CHRISTIAN HUMILITY

Read Philippians 1:27-30.

A few years ago, when I was working for a different organization, a colleague asked me for the email of a vendor we'd been working with. At the time, I'd been having difficulty getting said vendor to respond to my own messages, so in my return message to my colleague, I said something to effect of: "Good luck with getting in touch with him. He takes forever to respond." I hit send and went about my business. A few minutes later, the color drained from my face when I got a response to my email—not from my colleague but from the vendor I'd been talking about. It seems that in my search for the vendor's email address, I'd inadvertently sent my message to him instead of the colleague I'd meant to share it with. Of course, I profusely apologized to the vendor for my mistake, and thankfully, he was understanding, perhaps because what I'd said about his response time wasn't untrue. Needless to say, this was a humbling moment for me professionally; I'd made a mistake which could have cost me a relationship. I also learned a valuable lesson about patience and proofreading emails before sending.

It's no surprise that the word humble comes from the same Latin root, *humilitas*, which means "to be brought to a low place." This can be done one of two ways: either voluntarily through our own actions and disposition, or through circumstances we experience. Humility is mentioned repeatedly throughout Scripture. The apostle Paul reminds us to be "humble and gentle" (Ephesians 4:2), while James says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you" (James 4:10). And when Jesus visits a Pharisee's house, He tells those proud men a parable about choosing seats at a wedding feast. The moral of the story is this: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

Why is it so important for us to be humble? What's the benefit of lowering ourselves? Christ was the greatest among us, yet He was also the most humble of all (Philippians 2:8). Why is humility the model Jesus set for us to follow? Because when you love others more than yourself, it makes for a better community. Acting selfishly benefits only yourself, but acting selflessly benefits everyone around you (v.3). When you lower yourself, you lift up everyone around you. When we focus more on other people, we also gain a perspective of empathy. Being humble opens our eyes to the needs and cares of those around us. God calls us to live in community with one another and support our fellow man. That's much easier to do when we're not distracted by our own ego. It's been said that "humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less." That statement has been attributed to several different Christian thinkers, including C.S. Lewis. Regardless, I imagine that whoever first said those words wouldn't mind sharing credit—they no doubt understand the point of being humble.

Devotional by Robert Carnes (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 16 - TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS

Read Philippians 2:19-30.

I recently heard a ministry leader share this idea: The first thing pastors lose after entering into the ministry is someone who will pastor them. In other words, you become the shoulder for other people to lean on, while missing out on having someone to lean on yourself. He then went on to mention the spiritual attacks pastors and their families often endure—the enemy’s attempts to knock them down and prevent the gospel message from spreading. As Christians, we all face spiritual struggles, and sometimes isolation, because of our faith. Even Jesus said that we would be hated by the world because we are not of it (John 17:14–16). Our shared calling as believers is one of consistently serving others and sharing their burdens—a burden all its own that is not to be taken lightly, especially for those who are called to teach (James 3:1).

During Paul’s ministry, he traveled across the Mediterranean preaching and then being thrown in prison. But he rarely endured this alone; Paul was constantly in the company of fellow believers who were also doing God’s work, working alongside him to spread the good news about Jesus.

Two of these assistants were Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul mentions these men in a few of his letters, especially when he was sending one or both on a mission to a local church. He likens Epaphroditus to “his brother,” and urges the Philippian church to “welcome him in the Lord with great joy and hold people like him in honor” (Philippians 2:25, 29). He extols Timothy’s likemindedness and his “proven character” as he carries out his mission (Philippians 2:20, 22; 1 Corinthians 16:10). Clearly, Paul wanted those who would receive his brothers in the faith to treat Timothy and Epaphroditus with care and respect. In Paul’s day, the missionaries spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ depended upon local churches for a lot. As they traveled, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus relied on other believers to provide them food and shelter. They existed on God’s charity and the goodwill administered to them through the kindness of other believers. And although Paul could not always be with his brothers on mission, he wanted them to be held in high regard “because of their work” for the kingdom (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

This missional work was difficult, but men like Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus persevered because they were serving a God who loved them and a community of people who supported them. Likewise, each of us needs the Church, the body of Christ and all its parts working together, to carry out the call God has placed on our lives (1 Corinthians 12:12–14). The world has changed a lot since the first century, but the Great Commission hasn’t. So, while our challenges are different than those faced by Paul and his friends, we still need the grace of God—and one another.

Devotional by Robert Carnes (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 17 - GRACE DAY

Read Psalm 133:1.

Use today to pray, rest, and reflect on this week's reading, giving thanks for the grace that is ours in Christ.

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!" (Psalm 133:1)

JUNE 18 - WEEKLY TRUTH

Read Philippians 1:21.

Scripture is God-breathed and true. When we memorize it, we carry the gospel with us wherever we go.

This week we will memorize the key verse for Philippians, Paul's declaration of complete devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

JUNE 19 - KNOWING CHRIST

Read Philippians 3:1-11.

A dear friend recently suffered an enormous loss. His home and all of his family's belongings were lost in a devastating home fire. In just a few hours, the historic home in which his family had invested years of renovation ended up as a pile of cinders and ash. This included all their clothes and family photos—virtually all of their earthly possessions. In the midst of this tragedy, one of the first things I wondered about was the quality of my friend's homeowner's insurance policy. It's not that I was unconcerned about his family's safety and their emotional loss, but as one who is predisposed to finding hope and safety in financial stability, the first thought that jumped to my mind was, Are they completely protected from all this suffering and loss?

I am convinced that many of us wonder about God's faithfulness, goodness, and love toward us, not because He has been unfaithful, but rather because we believe He has not lived up to providing the safe and prosperous outcomes we've imagined for our lives, such as our individual and cultural notions of safety, predictability and peace, pleasure and affluence. I wonder if our forebears from past generations bought into this idea, if they believed that those who follow Christ should expect a life free from insecurity, suffering, and loss.

In Philippians, Paul explains his reorientation from the false securities of his previous life to a new understanding in which he rejects those former notions in order that he "may gain Christ and be found in him" (Philippians 3:8-9). Now, because of Christ, he has suffered the loss of these accomplishments, and he even considers them "as dung" (v.8). This is one of many passages in the Bible that reminds us that God is not necessarily working to bring about our own individual dreams of the good life. If we don't recognize this, we are likely to find ourselves primed for disappointment with God. He is concerned with something of much greater value than helping us achieve everything we want. His desire is for all of creation to experience the redemption and restoration we need.

Paul knows that his former aspirations are nothing compared to gaining a relationship with Christ and being found in Him. As we consider our own privileges and accomplishments in comparison to the incomparable gift of knowing Jesus Christ, we will see the former things as far less important. We can appreciate them even as we count them as loss in comparison to the value of knowing Christ. Is the loss of these identity markers a true loss of identity? No. Our truest identity and a fuller comprehension of His redemptive love are found in our union with Christ. Only through Him are we truly secure.

Devotional by Rob Wheeler (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 20 - REACHING FORWARD TO GOD'S GOAL

Read Philippians 3:12-16.

Marie Kondo. I'll bet you've heard her name, and there's a chance you've read her best-selling book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. Maybe you've even seen her Netflix series, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*. In both, Kondo preaches the gospel of "KonMari"—a system of simplifying and organizing your home by getting rid of physical items that do not "bring joy" into your life. If you've no clue about her name, her book, her TV show, or her system, here's my simplified overview: You stand in front of the clothes in your closet, go hanger by hanger, and ask if that garment brings you joy. If the garment or item does not, then discard it, but only after you've thanked those bell bottoms, for example, for their service.

Call me cynical, but I find that to be a bit extreme. I'm also envious that Kondo has, at last count, four bestselling books on organizing your life her way. Some ideas come along at the right time, and hers have definitely struck a chord with millions of people, helping them to get their ducks, or closets, in a row. But Kondo's idea is not original. See Paul's words to the Philippians:

*"Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead,
I pursue as my goal the prize promised by
God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)*

The apostle Paul's approach to spiritual life is by no means the same as Marie Kondo's approach to your closet. But in some ways, they share the same ballpark, for Paul also advocates for a ruthless elimination of anything in our lives, especially anything in our past, that hinders us from true joy—otherwise known as "knowing Christ Jesus." Discipline and self-control are non-negotiables in this way of living. In fact, Paul invokes imagery of elite athletes such as boxers and runners in training who strive for nothing less than a win. And Paul's training advice to us? "Run in such a way to win the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

Like Kondo, Paul has his critics, those who insist such an approach is too extreme. But Paul remains adamant, stressing that those who practice such devotion and commitment experience nothing short of life-changing transformation, an experience that leads to a crown that will never fade away (1 Corinthians 9:25). If there's anything "behind" us in our lives that does not orient us to the joy of knowing Jesus Christ, then those things are to be forgotten, done away with. This "tidying up," so to speak, allows us to then be free to reach for and live for God's goal that lies ahead. No, this has nothing to do with closets and hangers and bell bottoms, but everything to do with our hearts and minds and souls and strength.

Devotional by John Blase (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 21 - STAND FIRM IN THE LORD

Read Philippians 3:17-21.

Prior to 1929, there was no standard oath to recite when someone became a citizen of the United States. As you might imagine, this reality allowed for the naturalization process to vary from state to state. But in 1929, that reality changed when the U.S. Citizenship Oath took on standardized language. About twenty years later (1952), amendments were made to emphasize service to the country. Those changes included adding language around bearing arms on behalf of the United States when required, and performing noncombatant services in the armed forces when deemed necessary. The time frame (1950s) for all this is of importance. Think about it: this was the onset of the Cold War, and the stakes—both real and perceived—were at a tension-filled high.

The amended form of the Citizenship Oath still stands today, and it begins: “I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen...” Words matter. And if you’re going to be a citizen of the United States, it seems your allegiance does as well. You’ve got to be all in. You’ve got to stand firm. Of course, the “foreign” powers being referenced in the oath are earthly kingdoms and countries. But what if, for example, your truest citizenship is in heaven? (Philippians 3:20).

The New Testament is abundantly clear on this matter. If I have chosen allegiance to the cross of Christ, then my citizenship lies with His kingdom. While I may still be a citizen of this or that country, nation, or even of this world, things have changed. I live for and serve only One, even as I live as a citizen of my earthly country. To be a follower of Jesus means being all in. Sure, I am to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s (Mark 12:17), but I am also to render to God what is God’s—and God demands all of me.

The language the apostle Paul uses indicates that waffling in my allegiance to Christ equates to being a “enemy of the cross.” That’s rather harsh, isn’t it? But you see, far from some war between rival countries, you and I live in enemy territory, in a daily struggle for our hearts and minds. This calls for standing firm in the Lord each day, living acutely aware of “those who cause dissensions, for such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words.”

Words matter. And if we claim to be Christians, those whose citizenship is in heaven, then that should be abundantly clear to anyone paying attention. Everything has changed, and we now live in such a way “that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified.” Our allegiance is to One, and to Him only.

Devotional by John Blase (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 22 - PRACTICAL COUNSEL

Read Philippians 4:2-9.

Depression and anxiety have never been as prevalent in the United States as they are today. These twin burdens often afflict the same people, and they are afflicting more Americans than they ever have before. This is especially true among young people. From the 1990s to the early 2000s, rates of depression and anxiety were pretty stable. That isn't the case anymore. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2012, about 5% of boys and about 12% of girls ages twelve to seventeen had a "major depressive episode" in the preceding year. In 2016, about 7% of boys and about 20% of girls had a major depressive episode—that is one in five American teenage girls having a major depressive episode. We are amidst an epidemic, and there are plenty of purported reasons why, but that's for another place and another time. The point is this: As a culture, we are more anxious and depressed than we have ever been. I have battled with serious feelings of anxiety myself. It can feel like a hole out of which it is impossible to climb. And while I don't imagine the apostle Paul knew about the depression epidemic Americans would face in the 21st century, his words to us in Philippians 4 may serve us well as we fight the realities of our mental health struggles.

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:
Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything,
through prayer and petition with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:4-6)*

Let me be clear in saying this: the depression and anxiety we feel may not be simply solved by reading our Bibles and being encouraged to throw off anxiety and "rejoice!" It can be hard to find joy when the world feels like it's closing in, and in a moment of distress, a few Bible verses may not immediately quell our feelings of helplessness. However, I do think it is important to read Paul's words closely and examine our lives in light of them. I actually find it helpful to read these particular verses in reverse order. For our purposes today, consider this slight rearrangement:

The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything,
but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God...
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:
Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone.

I must confess, there have been times when I've found myself rolling my eyes after reading Paul's instruction to not worry. It feels as though there is no way Paul could understand what is causing my distress, so his charge to not worry feels invalid (though he was well acquainted with having to live life from a cell). But the reasoning he gives for why we should not worry is there alongside his charge to not do so. Why should we not worry? Because the Lord is near! This is a tremendous truth, a more than adequate remedy for whatever worry we may be facing. When we are fighting any variety of anxiety and worry in our lives, we ought to ask ourselves: Do I truly believe Jesus is near? Or do I feel like I'm in a forever-deep hole by myself? Might we find peace even in our anxiety if we realized our Lord is truly by our side at all times and in all places? May He help us to believe what is always true: the Lord is near.

Devotional by Chris Martin (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 23 - ENCOURAGEMENT AND PRAYER

Read Philippians 4:10-23.

When I was a freshman in college, the Lord used a series of events to bring me to my knees before Him. I had been a Christian for a few years at that point, but it's fair to say I hadn't truly made God the true "Lord of my life." What I mean is, I believed in my heart and my head that the work of Christ saved me from my sin into eternal life with God, but this belief hadn't yet changed my affections and motivations. In short, I was pursuing a relationship with a girl, and through one of my attempts to communicate my commitment to that girl, I lost her trust and the relationship of a dear friend in the process. I was not content with the love of Christ; I needed the love and attention of someone else. The Lord showed me my sin. I was searching for contentment in others, but true contentment can only be found in Him. When I came to understand this—really understand it in my heart—I found myself being drawn closer to God.

Throughout his ministry, Paul found himself in much more dire circumstances than losing the attention of a girl he liked. He faced countless acts of persecution and attempted execution. He was shipwrecked. He was bitten by a snake. He was imprisoned. Despite all of that, Paul is able to write: "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself" (Philippians 4:11). Now, it's important to remember that Paul was not given some sort of enhanced version of the Holy Spirit in order to face all the difficult situations he faced in his life. Paul received the same Holy Spirit Christians receive today when they repent and believe that Christ has saved them from their sins. Paul is not some sort of super-Christian, allowing him to be content amidst trials in a way that we cannot match. But Paul does say something curious in verse 12: "In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need."

We may be tempted to think, Uh-huh. See! God has given Paul something "extra." He's told him some "secret" that He hasn't shared with us—that's the real reason he's able to be content in all things. We may be tempted to believe true contentment is impossible, that there's a "secret something" we need to get or earn or do to be at peace. But that's just not the case. In verse 13, Paul lays it out plainly: "I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me." That's it. That's the secret.

The secret to living with true contentment is that we are given the ability to do so by His Spirit. Verse 13 is not a promise from God that we will somehow be able to conquer any mountain or accomplish any task we want just because we are Christians. When we read within the context of the rest of Paul's letter to the Philippians, we see that verse 13 reveals the secret to living a life of contentment no matter what our circumstances are. God wants us to find our contentment in Him because He knows we cannot find true contentment anywhere else.

Devotional by Chris Martin (He Reads Truth)

JUNE 24 - GRACE DAY

Read John 15:9.

Use today to pray, rest, and reflect on this week's reading, giving thanks for the grace that is ours in Christ.

"As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love." (John 15:9)

JUNE 25 - WEEKLY TRUTH

Read Philippians 4:8.

Scripture is God-breathed and true. When we memorize it, we carry the gospel with us wherever we go.

This week we will memorize this verse from Philippians 4, which reminds us to dwell on things of the Spirit.

*"Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things."
(Philippians 4:8)*

JUNE 26 - CREATION (VENTURE)



Hey Boys Camp, Venture here!

What is your favourite part about camp? Is it your activities? Maybe the blob? Maybe all the great people you meet? There are so many great things about camp but among my favourites is the opportunity to spend time in nature, experiencing God's creation!

The first account of creation in the Bible is found right at the beginning; in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1, it lists all that the Lord created, and it tells us that He was pleased with His work. His creation was good, and though it remains His creation, we have made it imperfect through our sinful ways. Still, when I'm at camp, I can't help but to notice the complexity and beauty of this creation. The lake, the trees, and the wildlife were all formed by our creator and we can see Him through all that he has made.

Now, it might seem weird to suggest that we can see God through creation. What does that even mean? In Romans 1: 19-20, Paul writes that what is known about God has been made clear to us. It is written that we can understand His power by what He has made. These verses are a reminder for us that, though we do not see God physically, we can see Him through His creation! For me, one of the greatest examples of God's power in creation can be seen through space. When I look at the stars and consider how big God's creation is, I am reminded of His power which is far greater than anything we could imagine! Even the smallest parts of God's creation like insects and plants display the detail of His work. God didn't need to create all that we see but He did anyway, and he entrusted it to us to care for it (Genesis 2: 15)!

As we've seen, the Bible makes it clear that God is very much present in creation. It tells us that we can see Him through what He has made and that He has created such a complex universe for us to discover and look after! Since Adam and Eve sinned, there are broken or fallen aspects of creation like tsunamis and volcanoes and mosquitoes. But even with the fallenness of creation, we can still see God's goodness in creation.

This week and this summer, I encourage you to observe nature and find God's power in His glorious creation! Go for a walk, go stargazing, or simply take time to look at the creation that surrounds you when you walk somewhere or drive somewhere. Pray that God would help you seek Him and remember that when we seek, we will find!

JUNE 27 - ABRAHAM (TWINKLE)



Hey Boys Camp!

For this devo, we are going to be taking a closer look at the life of Abraham. More specifically how God used Abraham's obedience to establish a nation and be a part of the bigger story of redemption God planned for the world.

Now Abraham was an awesome guy and had super radical faith and obedience to the Lord. When Abraham was 75 years old, God told him to leave his home and take his family to a new place called Canaan. So, Abraham went and did exactly that! In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham to leave his home and says this,

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:2- 3)

Go back to that verse and look for how many times God says, ‘I will’. This isn’t Abraham starting his own nation or doing his own thing. This is God establishing a promise to Abraham and his descendants that he will bless them and take care of them. God knew that Abraham was fully committed and obedient to God and blesses Abraham for this.

I was living in Austria a few years ago attending a bible school and I had a hard choice to make. I could move go back home to Canada and live there where life would be easy or go to another bible school in the United States. I felt like God wanted me to go to the States but I would have to give up my easy life back at home in Canada. In the end, I decided to move to the United States and it was such an amazing experience. I learned what it meant to fully surrender and trust God with my life and to obey God even if it doesn’t make sense at the time.

Abraham could have easily said no to God and stayed at home. But Abraham was a man who trusted in God's plan. What is so wild is that Jesus, the savior of the world, is a descendant of Abraham. Through Abraham's obedience, Jesus came into the world to save us all and fulfilled God's perfect plan. So just take some time right now to be quiet and still before the Lord. Listen to what he might be asking you to do in your own life. Because this is God we are talking about, and he can do anything through us. All we have to do is listen and obey.

JUNE 28 - SAMSON (PLUS)



Can you think of a time when you looked down on someone else or you were happy when they failed? Or maybe a time when you were angry because someone got something that you thought you deserved? Or even a time when you did something good, but only because you wanted other people to see you doing it?

A few months ago, I was nominated for an award at school, that I really wanted to win. When I didn't win, I was pretty upset, because I had worked really hard. I felt I was more deserving than everyone else. As I wrestled with my angry heart, God convicted me. I realized, the pride I had was preventing me from growing closer to Him.

Samson was filled with pride. Once, when he thought he had come up with an impossible riddle, he was so full of pride that he bet people 30 sets of clothing that they would never get it. When they tricked him into giving away the answer, Samson murdered 30 innocent people out of pride to take their clothes to settle the bet. You can read all about it Judges 14:1-20.

In Matthew 23:1-12, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees. During this time, the Pharisees were very important in society. They were the leaders of the temple and teachers of the law. Although they were very significant, they were very prideful. They would take the best seats for themselves, wear very nice clothing, make sure everyone was watching when they prayed and they adored respect from everyone around them. Jesus lived in the opposite way. He was the most selfless person to ever live. He spent his entire life as a servant to others, by putting their needs ahead of his own. He was incredibly humble, and never took credit for the many miracles he performed. He ultimately paid the greatest price, by dying on a cross for each one of us. So that one day we could go to heaven and be with him.

Christians should react with selflessness and not arrogance. When we do things just so that other people notice, we are not doing them for the glory of God, but we are doing them for ourselves. Prideful people (like the Pharisees) are looking for instant gratification from those around them. However, when you act with humility you may not seek an instant reward, because you know you will be rewarded in heaven.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves” Philippians 2:3 NIV

Reflection Questions

- Can you think of a time in your life when you felt prideful or arrogant? How did you respond?
- What are some other bible verses that you could read to learn more about pride (ask a parent or friend!)?

JUNE 29 - KINGDOM (WHEELBARROW)



Hey Boys Camp!

Consider some of the politicians you see on the news. The expectations for leaders of today aren't written down anywhere official but in biblical times there was actually a clear set of expectations that rulers had. The nation of Israel was a group of people chosen by God to be His people. This meant that God asked the Israelites to obey His laws, trust in Him, and to love Him individually and as a group. In return, God made the Israelites His own people, protecting them and leading them to good places. Find Deuteronomy Chapter 17 in a Bible and read verses 14 through 20.

This passage outlines some of the expectations that any future King of Israel (the man who would be the human leader of the nation of Israel) must meet if he is to have a long and fruitful reign. The most important qualification is to follow all the words and decrees of God. Because there is a clear standard in the Bible of what makes a good king or leader, you might think that every king Israel had was good. This is far from the reality.

The Bible provides us with a history of evil kings; King Omri sinned more "than all those before him" (1 Kings 16:25), King Ahaz worshipped Baal instead of God (1 Kings 16:32), and King Ahaz even sacrificed his own son in a fire! (2 Kings 16:3). These leaders of the nation of Israel can be understood as kings who led poorly. Despite the many kings of Israel who were evil, there were also many good Kings. King David, who you may have heard of, followed God all his life and is even called a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). David is often considered the greatest human king who ever lived; he loved God deeply, led his people with humility, and forgave those who even wanted to kill him. David did good things but if we take a closer look at him we see that David too was a man who committed great evil too. Chapter 11 in the book of 2 Samuel tells the story of how David lusted after another man's wife and then had him killed so that he could marry her!

Even the very best of kings and leaders have huge flaws. Think about the leaders of today and compare them to the leaders of biblical times. You might consider some of them good and some of them evil. The truth of it is that every leader, be it King David, Donald Trump, Justin Trudeau, or the Queen of England, is sinful and unable to lead perfectly.

If we place our hope in any human leader then our hopes will be broken. There is only one leader, one king, and one person who we can earnestly place our hope in: Jesus Christ who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is perfect in every way. Jesus measures up to every standard of leadership as every measure of goodness is understood in relation to Him. If we expect a political leader to lead our nation or our world into restoration then we are foolish. The only hope for our world is if every one of us (you, me, as well as our leaders) turn towards King Jesus as He is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). King Jesus is the only leader who does not fail, oppress, or persecute any of His people. He leads with justice, with truth, and with deep love.

JUNE 30 - JESUS (DUKE)



Read Matthew 19:23-30 and Hebrews 12:1-13.

Hey Boys Camp!

All week we've been looking at the stories of people like Adam and Eve, Abraham, Samson, the kings of Israel, and more. Sometimes these people did good things, but most times they did bad things. As much as they tried to be perfect, they couldn't do it on their own. And we can relate, can't we? We want to be good people who always do good things. We want to be kind and happy and loving, but we often mess up. And I don't know about you, but I find that can be tiring and frustrating. These stories, as well as our own mistakes, remind us of our need for Jesus.

Adam and Eve didn't want to obey God, but everything Jesus did was in line with God's plans. Abraham stepped into the unknown and trusted God, but Jesus took it one step further and trusted God by being willing to die on a cross for us. Samson abused and misused the power that God had given him, but Jesus laid down His life for us and showed us that there's power in loving your enemies. The kings of Israel tried to make a name for themselves, but Jesus lived and died to make God's name known.

You may be thinking, "That's great Duke -Jesus can do all this stuff I can't. He's perfect. But what does that mean for me? I'm not perfect, and I mess up a lot." And that's where there's good news! Jesus lived a perfect life, died and rose from the dead, because He knew that none of us could be good on our own. His death and His rising from the dead has the power to pay for all of our bad stuff. If we decide to follow Him and make Him the king of our lives, then He promises to work in and through us and to change the bad habits and thoughts in our lives - and to cover us with forgiveness when we mess up.

There's this passage in Matthew when Jesus is explaining what it takes to follow God, and the disciples are worried, because they don't think they can do it. But Jesus says, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:26). God knows that we can't do this on our own, and He's not asking us to. He's asking us to keep "our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Have you been trying to live a good life in your own strength? Are you tired of trying to do it on your own? Have you let Jesus be the king of your life? Maybe you have in the past, but you made yourself king since then. Maybe it's time to make Him king again. Or maybe you've never made Him king, and it's time to do so. I'd encourage you to pray about it and invite Jesus to be the Lord of your life! Its as easy as A-B-C:

Admit that you have not let Jesus be your king, **Believe** that Jesus loves you and died for your sin, **Choose** to turn to Jesus as your king.