

Devotions – November 7-13, 2021

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Devotions Based on John 8:31-37

Sunday November 7, 2021

Text: John 8:31

“Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples;’”

Discipleship is that process of commitment to follow Jesus. As believers in salvation by grace through faith, we should want to further our walk with Jesus through discipleship. By God’s grace, discipleship is a choice we get to make, but it is also a choice we get to walk away from.

What daily practices do you utilize to continue in Jesus’ word? [I have to admit that sometimes I forget to floss my teeth.]



Monday November 8, 2021

Text: John 8:32

“and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Truth, it seems, is knowledge or understanding that is acquired by continuing in Jesus’s word. So, discipleship is the path of finding Christian freedom. I once declared aloud, to nobody in particular, “I want to know what truth is,” and the answer did arrive in my head, but not right away. Truth is Jesus. Truth is consistent. Truth is solid. I’m still not sure how free that has made me. But I think faith flows like a river and, like a river, it changes course over time. My faith has been more like a fluid with room for expansion and discovery. Am I there yet?

What form does your faith seem to take?



Tuesday November 9, 2021

Text: John 8:33

“They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”

“They” refers to the Jewish audience who had believed in Jesus. As Jews, they identified as “descendants of Abraham,” an ancestral identity. First of all, they have a huge problem. They claim to never have been slaves to anyone, but how did they forget about bondage in Egypt and enslavement during the Pharaoh years? In fact, they were slaves for a significant chunk of Old Testament history! Why would they question Jesus on what it means to be free? They seem to imply they are made free without him.

We live in the United States and, of course, we know what it is to be free. Freedom is synonymous with independence. Americans value independence and self-determination, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. So, what could Jesus ever teach us about being made free? He’s on our side already, right? [Does anyone know where to find in the Bible the verse about God helps those who help themselves? I can’t seem to find it either.]



Wednesday November 10, 2021

Text: John 8:34

“Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”

We are all addicted to sin and cannot free ourselves. Jesus is the truth that will set you free from the sin that enslaves you. Jesus offers us quite a different definition of freedom. Freedom, by Jesus’ definition is not the equivalent of independence, self-reliance, or self-sufficiency. Freedom comes from a relational dependence on Jesus Christ.

There is therefore a distinction between patriotic freedom versus Christian freedom because they are not the same thing. Often, the two terms are conflated, or combined, to support the idea of justification of one's political views with their belief in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. I hate when that happens. If you merge the two types of freedom, it does conveniently support one's political self-righteousness. But this is not the meaning of truth that Jesus urges his followers to seek.

Have you found distinctions in your life between patriotism and Christian discipleship?



Thursday November 11, 2021

Text: John 8:35

"The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever."

We need not feel the permanence of our dirty household. Sin is our human condition, tied into our earthly existence, but it is not permanent. It is transitory until death do us part. In the meantime, truth be told, there are good housekeeping practices like forgiveness of sins that cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The Son is eternally available through discipleship and continuing in his word.

How you ever felt cleansed of guilt, shame, or grief? How would you describe that enslavement?



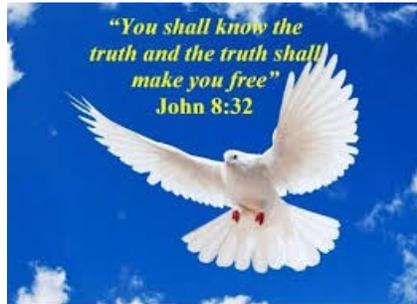
Friday November 12, 2021

Text: John 8:36

"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

This is such good news! If Jesus worked on Madison Avenue as an advertising executive, I think he would have created this as his motto. It's catchy. It includes a key benefit. It differentiates the brand. It imparts positive feelings. In America we like to get swayed by the advertising which drives our addictions. Wouldn't it make more sense to think about this instead?

If you were an independent brand and had to pen a slogan for yourself, what would it be?



Saturday November 13, 2021

Text: John 8:37

"I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word."

Oops! He's got our number! Jesus knows whether or not we brushed our teeth. He knows what we're really thinking and doing. Jesus knew that his audience was comprised of Jews who had believed in him, but who no longer had faith in him. They had fallen away from his word, from the truth. Perhaps the truth was inconvenient. One's sense of self-righteousness can so easily overtake God's righteousness when we are traveling by our own brand of independence. How different would it be if they had continued in his word?

Jesus, by grace, offers us opportunity to know him through his word. It is a lifelong epic journey not a quick read. If you want to have a good set of teeth for your entire lifetime, listen to your dentist, and remember to floss on a daily basis.

