

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #29 (Nov. 10)

Open Your Eyes

John 9

Explore: In John chapter nine, Jesus met a man who had been blind from birth. Unfortunately, because of this man's physical limitations, he was an outcast, forced to beg on the street. Others treated him differently. Most assumed that because he was blind, he had done something wrong, that his blindness was caused by his or his parents' sin. But the day he met Jesus, all that changed. Placing clay on the blind man's eyes, Jesus told him to, "wash in the pool of Siloam." Just for a moment, put yourself in this man's shoes. You have been blind from birth, and Jesus, a man who has been known to perform great miracles, just put clay in your eyes and told you to go and wash. Are you going to go? Of course you are! You rush to the pool as fast as you can and dip down to wash. A burst of light floods your senses as you remove the clay. You have sight! "Is that a tree? Are those donkeys?" you ask yourself. Unclear of what you are seeing around you, there is one thing you do see clearly – Jesus is from God.

Application: The blind in our story, saw this clearly. When asked if he believed, without a moment's hesitation he said, "Lord, I believe." (John 9:38) This man had felt the power of God. Not only had his eyes been opened to the world around him, but they were opened to who the true Son of God was. Satan wants more than anything to blind you, so you don't see the truth of God's Word. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Don't let that happen. Open your eyes daily to the truth of God's Holy Word.

Discussion for Family: Share one way that you are convinced that Jesus is God's Son? What are some things that Jesus has done for you? What are some things that we might allow to get in the way of relationship to Jesus?

Prayer: Father, help us to fix our eyes squarely upon Jesus. Make our hearts pliable and open to your truth. Help us to move from merely understanding your will to obeying it with joy and expectation.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #30 (Nov. 11)

A Book and its Cover

James 2:1-4

Explore: (Parents: Prepare beforehand two books—a favorite and a boring book, Switch the covers of the two books to make their favorite book look boring and the boring book more appealing. Now, hold up the two books in front of your children.) Say this: We are going to do something a little different tonight. Before we do our devotional I want to read to you, but I can't decide which book. Which one of these two books do you want me to read? (Parents: When they pick the appealing book, open and read it until they stop you, telling you it's the wrong one.) But this is the book you picked! I thought you wanted to read this one! Why did you pick it if you didn't want me to read it? Oh, because the other one didn't LOOK like a good book, I see. So you judged these two books based on their covers didn't you?

Just looking at these books doesn't give you a clue as to what is on the inside. Did you know that people are the same way? Some people might look scruffy and dirty and weird, but on the inside they are good and holy people. Just like there are some people who dress very nicely and always seems to be polite, but on the inside are evil and dangerous. (Read devotional text)

James understood that there are some people who have good hearts, but don't appear to look that way. He also understand that sometimes we as Christians tend to judge others before we even know who they are. In our devotional text he points out that when people come to worship and dress nicely they are often treated better than people who come in poor and dirty clothes. James encourages us to look beyond somebody's appearance and treat them all as God's children.

Discussion for Family: How often do we judge people by how they look on the outside? How might this affect our attitude towards them? What does this passage reveal about our own behavior towards others?

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, help us to see others through your eyes. To be able to see their hearts rather than focusing on the outward. Help us to welcome and love people from all walks of life and backgrounds that might be different from us.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #31 (Nov. 14)

Jesus is Betrayed

John 18:1-11

Explore: Growing up with two older brothers can teach you a lot about life. One of the most important lessons life with two brothers taught me is that if they do something wrong – DON'T TELL. Somehow if my brothers did something wrong, it was a worse crime for me to tell our parents about it. If I did accidentally let their crime slip I would have been labeled as a "tattle tale." This was a name to be avoided at all costs. NO ONE wanted to be known as a "tattle tale."

Judas, one of Jesus Christ's twelve disciples was a "tattle tale." He told on Jesus. The interesting thing is, Jesus didn't do anything wrong! Judas led Jesus' enemies right to Him! Judas was one of Jesus' close friends, someone He trusted. How did Judas repay that friendship and trust? By betraying Jesus. Throughout Jesus' ministry, Judas was there witnessing all the miracles and listening to all of Jesus' teachings and yet he still betrayed Jesus to the authorities.

Application: Can you imagine how Jesus felt? How would you feel if one of your closest friends betrayed you like Judas betrayed Christ? I would feel hurt and let down. We don't know why Judas betrayed Christ, only that he did. Because of his betrayal, Christ was captured and led to the cross. Eventually, the Bible tells us, Judas felt remorse for what he had done, but it was too late.

Discussion for the Family: Do you think people can still betray Christ today? If so, how? How can we avoid betraying Christ?

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, help us overcome the temptations and opportunities to betray Jesus in our life. Give us strength and courage to remain faithful and true to Jesus in all we say and do.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #32 (Nov. 15)

Dogs and Pigs

2 Peter 2

Explore: We are often grossed out by animal behavior, aren't we? What are some gross things that animals do? Two gross things that the Bible mentions about animals are dogs eating their own vomit and pigs wallowing in the mire. Now, we could come up with all kinds of reasons why dogs and pigs behave this way. Some say that dogs eat their own vomit because they don't want their prey to know that they are in the area. Others say pig wallow in the mud to protect them from the sun and mosquitoes. But none of these reasons make them any less gross, do they? All I can think about is, "Once the nastiness is out of them and off of them, why do they want it back in them and on them?" Now, this reasoning may not make much sense for dogs and pigs, but it makes perfect sense to us.

(Read devotional text) Peter explains that once a person has become a child of God, it's important to stay that way! To remain faithful! To remember God's holy word! (2 Peter 3:1-2) He says those that know what it's like to know God and then turn away from Him are like dogs that eat their own vomit and pigs that jump back in the mud after they have been made clean. It makes no sense. Go back and read those Christians ingredients Peter talked about from chapter one. He says to apply all diligence in these things (2 Peter 1:5). That means we should be Godly people everyday, even when we are tempted to act like a god or pig.

Discussion for the Family: Living for God everyday can at times be easy and other times be very hard. How can we live for God even during the hard times? (Be reading our Bibles, praying to God, sharing with our family and friends).

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, help us to see the absolutely disgusting nature of turning away from You in our sin. Help us never to fall back into the lifestyle out of which we were saved. Thank for washing us. You have washed us. We ask you by your strength and grace, to help us now stay clean.