

## NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FIVE

### Devotional #20 (Oct. 25)

#### A Very Big IF

##### Colossians 1:21-23

**Explore:** What is the biggest IF you've ever heard? Before you answer, let me explain what I mean. You can have that bicycle IF you clean your room, wash the car, and mow the lawn. You can get a new gaming system IF you rub my feet, do the dishes and cook supper. Better yet, what about, you can have a new computer and anything else you can imagine IF you fly to the moon on your own power. Pretty ridiculous, huh? So what is the biggest IF you've ever heard? (Give them some time to think of a few.)

One of the biggest "IFs" in the Bible is found in Paul's letter to the Colossians. (Read Colossians 1:21-23) Paul lays out the first part of his big IF proposal. He says that even though each of us are sinners, Jesus will present us before God as people who have done no wrong. Jesus will wash our sins away, causing us to be holy and pure. That is the reward. That is what we will receive IF. If what?

**Application:** (Read Colossians 1:23) IF we can continue in our faith, IF we can keep ourselves in God's hands, IF we can live our lives in a Christian manner, Jesus will present us before God. Those are all very big IFs. But we are more than up to it, aren't we? Living a Christian life isn't easy, but with Heaven waiting for us on the other side, it's well worth the effort. When we have stuck by God and remained faithful to His word, we will be at home with Him in Heaven.

**Prayer:** Dear Father in Heaven, help me to appreciate what you have done for us through Jesus Christ. Help us to remain faithful to You and to keep the hope of Heaven always before us so we will live in perfectly harmony with You.

## NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FIVE

### Devotional #17 (Oct. 20)

#### A Little Leaven

##### Galatians 5:9

Items you'll need: One jar of yeast, One loaf of bread

**Explore:** (Parents: Set the loaf of bread in front of your kids, hold up the jar of yeast.) I'm holding in my hand a jar of yeast, one of the ingredients that is used to make this loaf of bread. Can anyone tell me what this ingredient does for this loaf? That's right! It makes it rise! It gives the loaf of bread its size! Now, how much yeast do you think it takes to make a loaf of bread this size? (Parents: Measure out a tsp. and put it into the palm of your hand.) It takes about this much. Can you believe it? I want you to know the Bible, teaches us this same lesson, only it applies the meaning to the people in our lives. Paul says, in our devotional text today, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough." (Galatians 5:9) He says that to make a point to the church, be on the lookout for those who would seek to divide us.

**Application:** God wants all of us to love each other, care for one another, and be a church that works together. But sometimes people don't act that way. Sometimes people act grouchy, ugly, and can say mean things, even at church. God wants us to know that grouchy attitudes affect the whole church just like a little bit of yeast can affect the whole loaf of bread. We should always be careful to act the way Jesus would want us to, by loving our neighbor (Galatians 5:14), and by treating others the way we would want to be treated. (Luke 6:31)

**Discussion for the family:** What should our attitude be to those who are grouchy? (We should love them. Luke 6:28) Can we, by our good attitudes, affect those around us? (Sure we can! We must! Matthew 5:13-16) How can we be a good example to others?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help me to make a difference in other people's lives. Let us be the leaven, that pervasive influence transforming the world around us.

## NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FIVE

### Devotional #18 (Oct. 21)

#### Deny Self

**Luke 9:23-24**

**Explore:** Jesus described to his disciples how He would die. (Luke 9:21-22) He then explained to his disciples, what it meant to be a true follower of His. He said in verse 23, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” What did Jesus mean when He said, “deny himself?” He simply meant that we must give up anything that stands in the way of following Him. Many of our frustrations in life come from our failure to do what these verses say. A failure to deny ourselves for Him. To say “no” to our own will and “yes” to God’s.

**Application:** To live like Jesus wants us to live, we must say no to ourselves, and yes to God. That’s hard to do sometimes, especially when it involves giving up something we really love. But remember, the cross you take up is not the cross of Jesus—it’s your cross! It WILL be hard to do sometimes, especially when Satan is right behind you, telling you to put it down and pick it up tomorrow. God never promised us that following Him would be easy. He does promise us His strength and guidance, just as He promised Jacob many years ago. “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

**Discussion for the family:** *What does it mean to be selfish? How does God want us to act? What are some things that we must give up in order to follow God?*

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to deny myself today; to lay down my own desires and focus on Your will for me. Help me to trust You, remembering that You are always working. I need Your help to do this. Please enable me today.

## NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FIVE

### Devotional #19 (Oct. 24)

#### You Are What You Eat!

**Philippians 4:8**

**Explore:** You’ve heard your parents say it plenty of times, “You are what you eat.” What do they mean by that? Do they mean if you eat candy bars for breakfast that you will be one big candy bar by lunch? Noooooo. They’re saying, “If you eat things that are unhealthy, then you won’t be healthy!” In the same sense, “You are what you think.” If we think about ugly things, then we will tend to act ugly. If we think about good things, then we will tend to do good. So what do you think about? Is it important to pay attention to those things that we see and hear, so that we can control what we think? Sure it is! Listen to the words of Paul as we read our devotional text for today.

**Application:** (Read devotional text) Paul gives us a list of things to think about. These are the things that ought to be on a Christian’s mind. What’s your mind on? Is it that which is true, just, pure, lovely, and of good report?

“For as he thinks within himself, so he is.” (Proverbs 23:7)

**Discussion for the family:** How can we keep our minds on good things and off of bad things? (Read our Bibles, pray, attend church, fill up our minds with godly things)

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us to examine carefully the things that we fill our minds with. Help us to see and focus on good and glorious things in our lives.