

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FOUR

Devotional #16 (Oct. 18)

Do You Pass the TEST?

2 Corinthians 13:5-7

Explore: Imagine that you are sitting at your desk in a classroom at school. All around you fellow students are getting their notebooks out and putting away their book bags. The class clown is busily making funny noises and telling jokes. All in all, you figure it's business as usual for your class. Things are shaping up to be rather normal, but you suddenly notice what none of the other students have seen so far. Your teacher, at her desk, is quietly pulling out stacks of white paper stapled together. Your breath catches in your chest, surely it can't be! You would have remembered! Before you can pull your notes out for a last look, you teacher announces, "Alright class! Put away your notes and books, it's time for...a TEST!"

We all hate tests. They're no fun whatsoever, but they serve a purpose. We take tests so that we know whether or not we've learned something. In school they test our knowledge, but in the Bible we find a different sort of test. The Apostle Paul says that there is a test each of us should take on a regular basis—is Jesus Christ in us?

(Read devotional text.)

Application: Paul encourages us to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are doing the right thing. When we stop and look at our lives and how we are living we should be able to see whether or not we are letting Christ lead us along. How often you take this test is up to you. However, the more we test ourselves, the better Christians we will be. Take a moment and think about the decisions you've made lately. Is it clear that Christ is in you? Do you pass the test?

Discussion for the family: How can we know whether we have true faith? What is the evidence that we can really know whether we're living a genuine Christian life? (Read Galatians 5:16-26.)

Prayer: Father in Heaven, help us to honestly examine ourselves. We are thankful that as we do so, we can trust You will show us in Your word what is displeasing to You. May Jesus Christ truly live in us.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FOUR

Devotional #13 (Oct. 13)

True Courage

Mark 15:42-46

Explore: What is courage? How would you define it? That's right! Courage is standing up for what you believe is right even when you know the danger. Who usually comes to mind when you try to picture courageous people? (Soldiers, policemen, firemen, etc...) All sorts of people have courage, and they show it every day. People show courage in lots of different ways. Today we are going to read about a man who showed tremendous courage in a situation where a lot of people would have backed away. Let's read about Joseph of Arimathea.

(Read devotional text.) How do you think Joseph of Arimathea showed courage in the story we just read? It doesn't seem like a very dangerous situation that Joseph found himself in—but it was. Joseph was a very important member of society. He probably enjoyed a certain status in the community. He was also a follower of Christ. Jesus had just been on trial and crucified. It was not a good time to be a follower of Christ.

Application: Joseph doesn't think about what people will think of him or what will happen to him, but goes before Pilate (the very man who sent Jesus to the cross) and asks for the right to bury Jesus. In doing so, he shows himself to be loyal to Christ. The Bible says that "he gathered up courage" (Mark 15:43 NASB) to go and see Pilate. He knew the danger, he knew what could happen to him, but he did it anyway. That is true courage.

Discussion for the family: What might have happened to Joseph in this situation? (He could have been imprisoned and lost his standing in the community.) What are some ways we can show courage and strength in living our life for God? (Read 1 Corinthians 16:13-14.)

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to take courage by letting others hear and know of Jesus as Savior through our words and actions. May our actions point to You and Your Son.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FOUR

Devotional #14 (Oct. 14)

Holy Conductors

2 Corinthians 1:12

(Said in your best train conductor voice) ALL ABOARD!! Last call for Heaven and Pearly Gates! ALL ABOARD!!

Explore: Think of your life as a train. In your life you have all sorts of people who are passengers. Your parents are riding with you on your train. You have friends that, throughout your life, will get on and off the “You” train. There will be nice people and mean people. There will be people trying to get you to do things you are not supposed to do. There will also be people who are friendly and treat you right. Also on this train, that is your life, is a conductor—YOU. You are the conductor of your life. A conductor’s job is not easy. As the conductor of your life, it is up to you to make decisions on how to handle the passengers. It is also up to you to decide what goes on in your train: The question, is what kind of conductor do you want to be? Who do you want to be operating your train?

Application: Paul writes to the Corinthians and tells them that he has conducted his life in holiness and godly sincerity. He encourages them to do the same; to conduct their train by the grace of God and not by the wisdom of the world (2 Corinthians 1:12). We are conductors of our own lives. It is up to us to decide how we want to run it. The condition of the train when it reaches its destination is also up to us. We have to decide whether or not we want to follow Paul’s advice and conduct our lives in a holy manner. How will you conduct your life?

Discussion for the family: What are some ways we might conduct ourselves in a worldly manner? What are some practical ways we can conduct ourselves in a holy manner? (Read Titus 2:11-12 and 1 John 2:4-6.)

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to conduct our life in a godly manner before Christ and others in wisdom and sincerity.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK FOUR

Devotional #15 (Oct. 17)

Get Up On Your Feet

Luke 5:12-26

(Parents: Tell your children you want to have a race, but you want to change the rules. Tie their feet and legs so that they can’t move. Then have them race around the house, without using their legs. After they are done, bring them back and untie them.)

How hard was it to race without using your legs? What was frustrating about it? Did you get mad or upset? How did you feel when I untied your legs? Can you imagine what it would be like if you could never use your legs?

Explore: Jesus met lots of people who either couldn’t use their legs or couldn’t see or were very sick. One of the most wonderful things about Jesus was his ability to heal all those people. They would come from miles and miles, just to see him and have him touch them and heal them. One man, who couldn’t use his legs had friends who wanted to help him so much that they took him up on the roof of the building where Jesus was teaching and lowered him down through the ceiling! Do you know what Jesus did? He healed him, but that’s not all. Jesus said to that man, “Your sins are forgiven.” Isn’t that amazing? Jesus not only told him to get up and go home, but he forgave him of his sins. Imagine what it would be like to live your whole life not being able to walk, then in one afternoon your legs are healed and your sins are forgiven. Jesus loves us so much, He not only heals us and takes care of us when we are sick, but he also forgives us when we sin. What this man needed most was forgiveness, just like you and just like your friends.

Discussion for the family: What characteristics did these guys display when trying to get their friend to Jesus? Do you have friends you care about? What can we do to “open” Jesus up to those who need Him?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to bring others we care about into the healing presence of Jesus. May we never forget what is most important and what every one of us needs to hear Jesus say: “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”