

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #28 (Nov. 8)

Feeding a Horde

John 6:1-4

Explore: (Read devotional text.) Many have heard the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. It is one of the most well known and famous stories in the Bible, told often in Sunday morning Bible class, children's Bible hour, and Vacation Bible School. The feeding of the five thousand is a great illustration of how miraculous it was for Jesus to feed so many people with so little food and how compassionate He was for His people.

There are times when the feeding of the five thousand will be used to talk about selflessness. How a boy gave all he had to feed others. There is, however, a different lesson that we ought to think about. That young boy didn't have much to offer. He wasn't brilliant, he wasn't a public speaker, and he didn't have the strength of Samson. He was just a little boy with a little bit of food. However, that food in the hands of Christ was able to feed a horde.

Application: You and I have a little bit of food. What is it? What do we have that could feed our friends, our relatives, and our neighbors? Jesus Christ died for our sins, and He offers us the precious gift of salvation. That is the barley, bread and fish that can feed the world. We may not think we have much to offer, but when we put our gifts and faith in Jesus, He can take it and make it into more than we could possibly imagine. If we would just use the food we have, Jesus will bless it and we too can feed, not just five thousand, but a whole horde of people.

Discussion for the family: What are some examples you can think of in the Bible where little becomes much when in the hands of God? What are some ways we can serve others for Jesus, even in the most insignificant of ways, but God can use to bless us and others?

Prayer: Father, please help us to remember that every moment of every day is important to You, and that You desire to fill our days with Your abundance. Help us to give all we have into Your hands, for in so doing, we will minister to You and bless others also.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #25 (Nov. 3)

Taking a Stand!

Luke 22:54-62

Explore: Put yourself in Peter's shoes for a moment. The temple guard, armed with swords and clubs, has just arrested the one man you felt safe with—Jesus. Tired, confused, and scared, you follow them at a distance to see what they will do with Him. "How can this be," you say to yourself, "Why doesn't He save Himself?" Your mind is racing with a million different scenarios. Fear begins to overwhelm you. What will they do with Jesus? What will happen to me? Suddenly, out of nowhere, a servant girl approaches you and identifies you as being with Jesus. Fear takes over. "I don't know what you are talking about!" you say as you move away quickly. Your heart is pumping! Again, you are approached and again, you deny ever knowing Jesus. A third time you are approached and recognized as a follower of Jesus. You are furious! "Why won't these people leave me alone," you think to yourself. A third time, you deny ever knowing Jesus. Immediately, you hear a sound that pierces your heart. A numbness sets in as Jesus turns to look at you, and you remember His words: "Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times." (Luke 22:61) Ashamed at what you have done, you run away and weep bitterly.

Discussion for the family: Did Peter love Jesus? (Yes.) Why do you think Peter denied Jesus? (He was scared.) Standing up for what we believe in is not always easy. What are some reasons we are afraid to take a stand for Christ? (Physical harm? Being made fun of? Being different?) Read Romans 8:31. How does this passage help us to find the strength to take a stand for Christ?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us not to betray Jesus Christ in the heat of the moment and at crucial times in our lives. Allow Christ to strengthen us to persevere in our faith, so that we might proclaim His name in all things at all times.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #26 (Nov. 4)

Power in the Christian Life!

Titus 2:1-10

Explore: How do we treat each other when we're grouchy, cranky, moody, and just having a bad day? Do we show love? Do we speak to one another with a pleasant tone of voice? If you're thinking like me, then your answer is 'NO.' Shame on us! I think you and I have a lot to learn from the book of Titus. Paul teaches us through his letter to Titus that there is true power in wonderful Christian lives. Older men and women, younger men and women, parents, children, and slaves are challenged to live and treat each other in such a way that those who would oppose God and His church will have nothing bad to say. (vs. 8) In other words, when our opponents see us treating others nicely even if we don't like it, they will have nothing to say about God and His church.

Application: Paul even uses the example of slaves to teach this point. He says that slaves should be obedient, diligent, and faithful so your lives will "adorn" the faith which you practice. Makes sense, doesn't it? No matter what situation we find ourselves in, whether we've just been teased by some bullies, lost a favorite toy, failed an exam or lost a job, we can teach something about God to those around us by the way we handle those situations. And maybe, just maybe, they'll think, "If that's what being a Christian is all about, then I want to be a part of it!" There is power in the Christian life!

Discussion for the family: How can we act Godly even when times are bad?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us by the way we react to bad things that come into our life, to always live in a way that makes the gospel attractive to others who don't know Jesus.

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE: WEEK SEVEN

Devotional #27 (Nov. 7)

A Prize the WORLD Will Never Know

Hebrews 6:14-15

Explore: How many licks does it take to get to the Tootsie Roll center of a Tootsie Pop? If you have never been asked this question, let me explain. This was a question on a Tootsie Pop commercial that ran for many years in the late 70's and early 80's. A little boy would say to Mr. Owl, "Mr. Owl, how many licks does it take to get to the Tootsie Roll center of a Tootsie Pop?" The Owl would snatch the Tootsie Pop from his hand and say, "Let's find out. ONE – TWO – THREE – ((CRUNCH)) Three." Handing an empty stick back to the boy, the announcer would repeat the question and say, "The world may never know." I often tried to figure out how many licks it would take. But no matter how hard I tried, I never made it past 100. I would lose count, grow tired or become bored with the idea. Whatever the reason, the temptation was too great and I would always bite straight to the center!

Sometimes we reach our goals like Mr. Owl. We bite straight to the center for an early reward. Unfortunately, we miss out on our ultimate goal. The Bible, in all its wisdom, teaches us to have patience. (Read devotional text.) In our devotional text today, we get a glimpse of Abraham and the promise that was made to him. He would receive God's blessing and his children would be great (Genesis 22:17)! How did Abraham obtain that promise? That's right! He was patient!

Application: God has given us a promise. The promise of eternal riches. But we too, like Abraham, must be patient. We must not grow tired, bored or try and take an early prize. We must remain diligent (Hebrews 6:11), keeping our eye on our ultimate prize. A prize the world will never know.

Discussion for the family: How can we set good examples for those who are older than us? (By being respectful. By listening. By treating others with kindness.)

Prayer: Father, help us to be patient and diligent and not cheat ourselves out of the reward of eternal life you have promised to us. Keep our faith, trust and hope firmly in Jesus.