

Faithbuilders Devotional Series

Through the Bible in a Year
A Daily Devotional

October

Pastors Mike Fast & David Curtis

Day 304 - October 31st
John 15:18-17:26 — Hated

“A Christian may esteem it as one evidence of his piety that he is hated by wicked men. Often, most decided evidence is given that a man is the friend of God by the opposition excited against him by the [worldly].”

--Albert Barnes, late 1800's
Bible scholar

It settles a little uneasy to hear that someone hates you. A little confrontation is bad enough, but hatred... and then to hear why... because “Jesus chose us” and because it hates Him. And then, to take it a step further, Jesus told His disciples that they would be persecuted and killed by those who “think they are doing God a service.”

Did all this daunting news scare off the disciples? Did hatred and persecution deter Jesus from the work He set out to do? No, and I'm eternally grateful that it didn't keep Him from His task. Personally, we need this exhortation to press on despite persecution and hatred. Instead of discouraging us, prayerfully, persecution will do just the opposite.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 40 — October 1st-7th
Matthew 5-7; 8:5-13, 23-34; 9:18-26; 11:1-13:52; Mark 2:23-5:43
Luke 6-8; John 5

This week's theme has to do with what Jesus taught. The Beatitudes, the entire Sermon on the Mount, the majority of His parables and a wide variety of other topics are included in what Jesus teaches in these passages. Yet more than just the elements of *what* is taught is the significance of remembering *who* taught. Jesus is the perfect Teacher and therefore His teachings are perfect.

Bible Discussion Guide:

How can we emphatically say that all of Jesus' teachings are perfect?

If everything He says is true, then why are there not more options for us when He claims to be God? In other words, why are we not given the option of just believing He was a good person?

- Reflect on each beatitude and how they relate:
- 1) To believers as an ethical code,
 - 2) To contrasting heavenly and worldly values,
 - 3) To the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Contemplate how well you do at submitting to others. Consider the following areas:

- Forgiving others;
- Surrendering time and resources for others;
- Praying for others;
- Avoiding any kind of gossip or critical speech concerning others;
- Maintaining a soft heart toward others.

List examples of how people lived out their faith. List ways you live out your faith.

Miracles proved the deity of Christ when He walked on earth. Do we need to continue to witness miracles daily to prove He is still alive?

What are the potential dangers of men working miracles today?

Define a teachable spirit. How teachable are you?

Day 303 – October 30th
Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-38; John 13:31-15:17 — Ground Up

Today’s passage in Luke 22 fascinates me. Satan wanted to grind up Peter and the other disciples “like wheat.” Satan wanted them destroyed. Jesus comforts Peter by telling him that his faith would falter, but he would not be destroyed. In fact, his faith would later be recharged and he would “strengthen and build up his brothers.” Peter thought he was ready right then to take on the world and it’s prince of darkness, but unfortunately, Jesus cautioned that he was not ready and would even deny Christ. Jesus then informs the disciples that things would become more dangerous and difficult than it had been up to that point. They wouldn’t go out with the Gospel as unhindered as they had been before. Moreover, they would be considered “rebels” and “transgressors.” They were to face danger and hatred just for following Jesus. But one thing to remember is that the sifting God allowed the men to endure strengthened their faith and truly emboldened them in every difficult situation they faced in the future.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 302 – October 29th

Matthew 26:1-5,14-30; Mark 14:1-2,10-26; Luke 22:1-30; John 13:18-30 — Betrayal

“All our experience with history should teach us, when we look back, how badly human wisdom is betrayed when it relies on itself.”

—Martin Luther

That’s an interesting quote as you reflect on today’s passage. God is betrayed when we rely solely on our human wisdom. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were guilty of this, which, in essence, became a double betrayal. The first betrayal was against the life of Jesus Christ. We learn that the “leading priests and teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and put Him to death.”

The tool they found to accomplish their purpose was a greedy Judas, a follower of Christ. A true betrayal can only come from one close to you.

The second betrayal came in the form of rejecting God. As the religious leaders planned and schemed, they also grew more self-reliant and independent from God. Through experience, the Apostle Paul gave wise counsel, “we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead.” (2 Cor. 1:9)

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 274 – October 1st

Matthew 12:1-21; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11 John 5 — Liar, Lunatic or Lord

After reading passages like today’s, you can picture the Pharisees following Jesus around every minute just looking for some fault. The only accusations they ever had with Him were the result of their own misinterpreted mess of self-justifying rules. In the end, they had to make up lies with false witnesses to try to accuse Jesus of anything.

In John, chapter five, Jesus presents His own legal case to support His claims. He presents fact, testimony, witnesses, etc. His claim was that He was who He said He was. He claimed to be the Son of God, equal with God and honored as God. The Pharisees understood exactly what He was saying and “tried all the more to kill Him.” They were fully aware, as we should be, that there are only two options: either you believe Him and what He claimed, or you accuse Him of blasphemy. Which option have you chosen? Remember, there is not another option as some want to claim (i.e. good person).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 275 – October 2nd

Matthew 5:1-6:4; Mark 3:7-19; Luke 6:12-36 — Searching for Happiness

Would you like to know how to experience hope, joy and happiness? The Beatitudes (Matthew 5 & Luke 6) tell us how. The first thing to note is that we will never get anywhere in our search for true happiness until we give up trying to find it by our own efforts and receive it instead as God’s free gift. God is the source of all spiritual blessings. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father” (James 1:17).

The first effect the Beatitudes have on those who understand them is to turn our minds to God. In fact, each beatitude portrays a picture of Jesus. He displayed each of these attributes for us. According to Him, the way to happiness is found in a poverty of spirit, in a character marked by humility, meekness, purity and mercy, and in a hunger and thirst for righteousness, peace and justice. Jesus lived them and, because He did, we too can find happiness.

My Prayer List:

Write down as many words as you can that come to mind when you hear the phrase “cross of Christ.”

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

How did Peter's denial of Christ strengthen him later?

Can knowing you will be hated by the world help in any way?

Describe the meaning of 1 Peter 2:21.

What are ways you could be guilty of betrayal?

How undeserving are you of God's love? How often do you meditate on your gift from God? How grateful are you for Christ's sacrifice?

How does a lack of gratitude for God's gift reveal itself? (specifically in the life of a believer)

Day 276 – October 3rd

Matthew 6:5-7:29; Luke 6:37-49 — Submitting to Others

Think of what today's passage teaches us about submission: Submit to the Father in prayer; Submit to the words and direction of Jesus; Display submission through forgiveness, fasting, and treating others as you would have them treat you. Often we do well with the first items, but not the last. We may struggle with forgiving others. We may find ourselves guilty of gossiping about someone or criticizing them. D. L. Moody once said, "There are thousands of families that could easily be reached if we had thousands of Christians going to them and entering into sympathy with their sorrows. That is what they want."

How are you submitting your life and surrendering your time and emotions for the families around you? Is there room to improve? Are you truly ready to put the love of Christ into practice and commit yourself to give others time, resources if they need it, a listening ear, a tongue that is tied tight when it comes to saying anything inappropriate, and a heart that is genuinely concerned and always ready to forgive?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 277 – October 4th

Matthew 8:5-13; 11:1-30; Luke 7 — Their Faith

Jesus gives us a short commentary on the faith of three individuals in today’s reading. First we read of the Roman officer who had the faith that Jesus could just “say the word” from wherever He was and his servant would be healed. Jesus said He had not seen faith like that in all of Israel. Second, we meet John the Baptist, who preached the coming of the Messiah and was harshly persecuted and martyred for it. Jesus said John was greater than any who had ever lived. Third, we are introduced to a woman with an immoral past who anointed the feet of Jesus with a very valuable jar of perfume. She continuously kissed His feet and wiped His feet with her hair as her tears fell. Jesus said she understood more about salvation, forgiveness and gratitude than the self-righteous Pharisees sitting with Him.

The lesson for us today reminds us that faith is something we live out and display in what we do. What would Jesus say of your faith?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 44 — October 29th-November 4th

Matthew 26:1-5; 26:14-27:56; Mark 14:1-2; 14:10-15:41; Luke 22:1-23:49; John 13:1-19:37

We don’t have to read this week’s passages to realize the strong opposition to God present in the world today. The hatred for and rejection of Jesus Christ and the Gospel is evident in so many places. This week’s readings concern the last hours of Jesus’ life on earth. One of the aspects that stand out and what we will focus on has to do with the opposition to Christ, and not solely directed to Christ but also His disciples.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Describe the levels of opposition to Christ. Does the difference in intensity change the outcome?

Philosophically, some believe their objections to God cannot be answered, yet we have numerous testimonies from those whose objections were answered. Do you know of a testimony like that?

Does Jesus give up on those who oppose Him? (see Oct. 31)

Day 301 – October 28th

Matthew 24:36-25:46; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:34-38 — Cheap Grace

“Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In illustrating the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus told a story about three servants. This story teaches us about the appropriate response to God’s grace. To receive God’s grace and never change your life, actions, or behaviors is to be like the third servant, to not receive God’s grace at all. This is what the great German theologian Bonhoeffer called cheap grace.

The Apostle Paul was accused of promoting cheap grace by the Jewish believers who wanted the Gentile believers to follow the law. In Romans 6:1-2, Paul sets the story straight, “Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? The invitation to receive God’s grace includes an expectation to take up your cross and follow Jesus (Matt. 10:38)

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 278 – October 5th

Matthew 12:22-13:9; Mark 3:20-4:20; Luke 8:1-8, 19-21 — A Heart Search

“Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.” Jesus went beyond just saying good things. He went beyond just saying He was equal with God. Jesus also did good things. He also did things which displayed His power. But to many of the unbelieving, it wasn’t enough: “Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove that you are from God” (Matthew 12:38), as if He had not already done enough. Up to this point, He had turned water to wine, healed the sick, the lame, the leper, the paralyzed, cast out demons, and even raised a boy from the dead.

The Pharisees had already made a decision in their heart. I pray your heart is open to Jesus. It probably isn’t if you are looking for more miracles and waiting for more evidence than the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. “If you look for Him with all your heart, you will find Him.” (Deuteronomy 4:29)

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 279 – October 6th

Matthew 8:23-27; 13:10-52; Mark 4:21-41; Luke 8:9-18, 22-25 — Teachable Spirit

Dad says to his son, "You better get ready. The bus will be here in a minute to pick you up and take you to Sunday School." His son asked, "Did you go to Sunday School when you were a boy?" Dad replied, "Yes, I did." The boy said as he was getting dressed, "It probably won't do me any good either!"

Either you're teachable or you're not. Jesus explained, "To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given... but to those who are not listening..." The disciples around Jesus had things explained to them far more than anyone else. Although there were, I'm sure, times Jesus shook his head, His disciples were teachable. That teachable spirit (soft heart and open eyes and ears) may take time to prove itself. The son in the paragraph above came to the conclusion that his dad was not too teachable. The disciples authenticated their teachable spirit years later. Their growth took them from students to teachers.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 300 – October 27th

Matthew 24:1-35; Mark 13:1-31; Luke 21:5-33 — Efficacious Grace

"'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." – Amazing Grace by John Newton

In Jesus' description of the time of tribulation, He mentions that there will be attempts "to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones" (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). This statement by Jesus gets me thinking about the role that God's grace plays in bringing about our salvation. As the words to Amazing Grace declare, "grace will lead me home." How true.

God's grace is efficacious in our lives, meaning that it will produce its desired effect in our lives once it has been given by God himself. Simply put, when someone is saved by God's grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), that grace will absolutely guarantee their salvation. "And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those He has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day" (John 6:39).

May you stand confident in God's grace, knowing that it will indeed lead you home.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 299 – October 26th

Matthew 22:34-23:39; Mark 12:28-44; Luke 20:41-21::4 —
Generous Grace

“He who gives what he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice.”

– Sir Henry Taylor

As Jesus and His disciples sat and observed the giving practices of those who came to the temple to worship, Jesus seized a teachable moment when the widow dropped in two small coins (Mark 12:42). In that moment, we see the principle of proportionate giving at work.

As Jesus noted, even though the rich individuals gave more money, the gift of the widow was considered far greater in the eyes of God because of her sacrifice.

Aren't you glad that, in God's greatest gift to us, He did not limit Himself to a small portion of His grace, but rather made the ultimate sacrifice in sending Jesus to die on the cross. God is truly generous with His grace, giving it to all who might come to Him. There are no restrictions, no qualifications, no prerequisites. There is only free grace that is offered generously.

My Prayer List:

Day 280 – October 7th

Matthew 8:28-34; 9:18-26; Mark 5; Luke 8:26-56 — Living Out
What You Believe

What do you know about faith? Most often, people tend to make some kind of emotionally active connection with descriptions like “hope.” However, today's passage makes a physically active connection.

She had been hemorrhaging for 12 years with no hope in sight, but then she heard about Jesus. She believed that if she could just touch His clothing she would be healed. She made her way through the mob, came up behind Him, touched His robe and was immediately healed. Jesus said that her faith had healed her. The Greek word for “healed” actually means “saved.” In this case, both physical healing and spiritual salvation are meant. She was healed when she touched Him, but Jesus said her faith caused the cure. Faith involved action. The book of James reminds us that “faith shows itself.” Faith shows itself with action. How do you put your faith into action? What in your life demonstrates to others your faith in Jesus Christ?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 41 – October 8th-14th

Matthew 8:18-22; 9:27-10:42; 14-18; Mark 6-9; Luke 9; John 6:1-8:20

The theme for this week is authenticity. As you read about the life that Jesus lived, I hope you are able to see how authentic He was in His dealings with the people around Him. Whether they were friend or foe, He did not deceive or mislead anyone and always acted authentic.

Bible Discussion Guide:

If you were to gauge your “heart for the lost” on a scale of 1 to 10, what number would you give yourself?

Do you feel a stronger desire to share the gospel with those whom you genuinely care about? Why or why not?

What daily challenges do you face as you attempt to live an authentic Christian life?

Do you find it easier to be more real and authentic around Christians or around non-Christians?

Day 298 – October 25th

Matthew 21:28 – 22:33; Mark 12:1-27; Luke 20:9-40 — Grace Rejected

Matthew 22:1-14 is the parable of the Great Feast. The parable illustrates how, because of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, God’s grace is then made available to the Gentiles. As I read this story, I find it remarkable that one of the guests would show up for the feast without the customary apparel. I would think that the gratitude of even being invited to take part in the festivities would result in the appropriate response by this particular guest.

The parallels in this story to the human predicament we face are clearly seen. All around us are people who are rejecting God’s invitation to enter into relationship with him. Hearing the call of grace, they reject the notion of their need for salvation assuming that their own righteousness is sufficient. Like the out-of-place wedding guest, they refuse to clothe themselves with the righteousness of Christ that comes by faith. Instead, they reject God’s grace, trusting in their own righteousness which, in the eyes of God, is like filthy rags.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 297 – October 24th

Matthew 21:12-27; Mark 11:12-33; Luke 19:45-20:8; John 12:37-50 — Fears Relieved

The construction of the Golden Gate Bridge had fallen behind schedule because of a number of workers who had fallen to their deaths. Engineers and administrators could find no solution to the costly delays. Eventually, in spite of the enormous cost, a giant net was installed to catch those who might accidentally fall. After it was installed, progress on the project was hardly interrupted. A worker or two fell into the net, but were saved. Ultimately, all the time lost to fear was regained by replacing fear with faith in the net.

My Prayer List:

Knowing that we need not be perfect in order to avoid judgment removes a great fear for the one who understands grace. Grace is what allowed the tax collectors and prostitutes (Matthew 21:31) of Jesus’ day to be saved. The Pharisees, on the other hand, lived in constant fear of the law.

Like the workers on the bridge who no longer feared death resulting from a misstep, the Christian no longer fears the eternal judgment of God for a misstep.

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Which option do you feel is more appropriate: doing the right thing but for the wrong reason, or doing the wrong thing for the right reason?

Can you be authentic and still choose to do what is right, even when you want to do what is wrong?

Are we saved by having right theology? Why then is it important to study to have a right theology?

Do you have anyone in your life with whom you can be transparent with?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: transparency leads to authenticity? Why?

How can humility lead to authentic Christian living?

1 John 1:10 says, “If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that His word has no place in our hearts.” How does this verse impact an authentic Christian life?

Considering our own awareness of sin, how are we to treat a brother or sister in Christ who has stumbled into sin (Matthew 7:1-5; Galatians 6:1)?

Day 296 – October 23rd
Matthew 21:1-11; 26:6-13; Mark 11:1-11; 14:3-9; Luke 19:28-44;
John 12:1-36 — Saving Grace

Jesus never hid the truth of His purpose here on earth. Time and time again He predicted His death to His disciples, and yet they continually struggled to understand. In comparing His death to a kernel of wheat (John 12:24), Jesus makes it clear that His death will bring about new life for many. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, “For God made Christ who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was able to serve as the perfect sacrifice making full atonement once and for all for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 10:12).

This sacrifice is what allows God the Father to extend saving grace to all who come to Him in faith for the forgiveness of their sins. As John said in 1 John 2:2, “He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins, but the sins of all the world.”

It is an irony that should cause us all to be humbled, that the horrific death that Jesus endured on the cross was the very event that allows for the beauty of saving grace in our lives.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 295 – October 22nd

Matthew 20:1-34; Mark 10:32-52; Luke 18:31-19:27 — Spiritually Blind

“I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see” – Amazing Grace

The beggar Bartimaeus received the gift of sight in today’s reading. While Mark is the only gospel that names the beggar, all three of them consistently show that the original request was for mercy. Why the connection between mercy and the receiving of sight? I think it is because the healing not only involved a physical need, but a spiritual one as well.

Without God’s intervention in our lives, we are spiritually blind and lack an awareness of our sin and we do not see our need for God. Until the Holy Spirit opens ones’ eyes to his or her spiritual need, they will not come to God for forgiveness and grace.

In His ministry, Jesus restored physical sight, but more importantly, He also restored spiritual sight. The Spirit continues on in this ministry, and our role is to direct those in whom the Spirit is working to the light of Christ that they might follow him as did Bartimaeus.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 281 – October 8th

Matthew 9:27-10:42; 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-13; Luke 9:1-6 — A Heart for the Lost

If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. – Matthew 5:46

In the gospel of Matthew, right before Jesus sends out the 12 disciples, He told His disciples to ask the Lord to send more workers to gather the harvest. In that passage (Matthew 9:35-38), Jesus reveals to the disciples His heart for the lost. As He taught and healed among the people, His heart was genuinely burdened for those people whom He described as a sheep without a shepherd.

A heart for the lost is not easily feigned. This is because the lost are not going to be receptive to the message of Jesus, or the messenger for that matter, most of the time. It is so easy to love those with whom we are comfortable. What about those who have hurt you or persecute you? A heart for the lost means that we must respond with grace and mercy to those who don’t deserve it, but desperately need it.

May you, like Jesus, have an authentic heart for the lost.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 282 – October 9th
Matthew 14:1-36; Mark 6:14-56; Luke 9:7-17; John 6:1-21 — Peer Pressure

The court of public opinion is a powerful force, especially for those who live and work in the political arena. When you read about Herod's dealings with John the Baptist, you quickly realize that this court of public opinion, or more commonly known as peer pressure, has been influential for 2,000 years.

Peer pressure can make authentic living very challenging. Authentic living can be understood as remaining true to one's own character when faced with external pressures. When faced with the external pressures, Herod gave up John's life in spite of his genuine respect for him. Jesus too was confronted with a variety of pressures from both his followers and adversaries. However, unlike Herod, Jesus' actions were always consistent with His character. In John 6:15 we read that He turned down the opportunity to lead a political coup, choosing instead to remain true to His commitment to do the will of His Father who sent Him (John 8:28-29).

May you, like Jesus, be able to live authentically in the face of peer pressure.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Do you believe that God's grace is efficacious? Why or why not?

How would you restate the explanation of efficacious grace in your own words?

Can you think of a time when you were guilty of viewing God's grace as cheap grace?

What should our response as believers who have received God's grace be?

Grace cost Jesus His life. What will it cost you?

How is the net that they hung under the Golden Gate Bridge like God's grace?

How has grace relieved your fears?

Can God's offer of grace be rejected? Who can reject it? Who can't reject it?

Why was the poorly dressed wedding guest thrown out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 22:1-14)?

What would our situation before God be if He didn't generously give us His grace?

To say that God's grace is efficacious means that it is absolutely effective in bringing about the salvation of those who receive it.

Day 283 – October 10th
Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; John 6:22-71 — A Changed Heart

“The purpose of my instruction is that all the Christians there would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith.” – 1 Timothy 1:5

Jesus turned the religious system of first century Judaism on its ear. He was able to look through their traditions and recognize that they were attempting to gain acceptance before God by following extensive lists of rules and regulations governing their external behavior.

Living an authentic life for the Christian means that our heart and our actions must match. To practice the externals of religion without a heart that has been changed by God does not make us acceptable before God.

Our acceptance before God is dependent entirely upon the change of heart that occurs when we trust in Christ for forgiveness and salvation. It is this step of faith that allows the Holy Spirit to change us so that our actions will be born out of a heart that beats for God.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 284 – October 11th

Matthew 15:21-16:12; Mark 7:24-8:21 — Simple Faith

I have long struggled with the overabundance of denominations that we have within Christianity. Certainly there have been valid reasons involved that led to some of these divisions. Taking a stand on issues such as the deity of Christ or salvation by grace alone through faith alone is never wrong.

That being said, I am often bothered by the attitudes that I sometimes encounter as a result of denominationalism. Accusing someone of not being truly saved because of a disagreement on a secondary or tertiary theological issue is not our place and yet it happens. I hear some accuse people of other denominations of having an insufficient view of God because they are not five-point Calvinists.

Jesus didn't give the Gentile woman a theological pop quiz to see if she had all the right answers. He recognized her faith, as simple as it may have been, and accepted her for it. Like the thief on the cross, this woman's salvation was not dependent upon right theology, but an authentic faith in the right One.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 43 – October 22nd – 28th

Matthew 20-25; 26:6-13; Mark 10:32-13:37; 14:3-9; Luke 18:31-21:38; John 12

The theme this week is grace. And as you may be able to tell, I had the lyrics to the wonderful hymn, *Amazing Grace*, running through my head as I wrote these devotional thoughts for you this week. Grace is a multi-faceted concept in Scripture and I hope that you thoroughly enjoy considering how God's grace impacts our lives, both as human beings in children and redeemed members of God's family.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Those who are unsaved are also blind to their spiritual need. How should we expect someone who is blind to their spiritual need to behave in general? Are you ever surprised or frustrated when they do behave in this manner? Why or why not?

The Holy Spirit is working in lives of unsaved persons to restore their spiritual sight and cause awareness of their need for God. Are we to only share the gospel with those within whom the Spirit is working? Why or why not?

If Jesus had to die on the cross for God's saving grace to be made available to us, then is grace really free?

Day 294 – October 21st

Matthew 19; Mark 10:1-31; Luke 18:9-30 — Sincerity Reflects Humility

Another feature of a faithful disciple of Christ is sincerity. The story Jesus tells in today’s reading was told “to some who had great self-confidence and they scorned everyone else.” One, a religious leader stands to pray, and what a prayer, even condemning everyone else and lifting himself up with a long list of credentials. The second, a despised tax collector, prays with his head bowed low in humility and reverence asking sorrowfully for mercy from God for his sin. He bared his heart. Jesus said the tax collector was the one who went home justified before God, and He then goes on to say the proud will be humbled and the humbled will be honored.

Therefore, a disciple of Christ who comes before the Lord (and others) transparent, genuine, authentic, sincere and honest will be the one who also reveals true humility. Why? Because the thing that keeps us from being transparent, genuine, authentic, sincere and honest is pride.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 285 – October 12th

Matthew 16:13-17:13; Mark 8:22-9:13; Luke 9:18-36 — Transparency

Jesus modeled transparency to us in how He lived His life. Jesus opened himself up to His disciples and allowed them to know certain things about Him and His purpose. I do think that it is important to note that He was more transparent with some of his disciples (Peter, James, and John) than He was with the rest.

Part of living an authentic Christian life is the practice of transparency with a trusted brother or sister in Christ. Like Jesus, we need not be as transparent with all as we are with some. Transparency involves giving someone else a window into our soul where our deepest thoughts and emotions lie. Transparency leads to authenticity because, when we allow others to know us fully, we can no longer fool them with our external behavior. They know when we’re faking it because they know the real us.

Like an overhead transparency that is revealed when the light is switched on, may your life become transparent when you encounter the light of Christ.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 286 – October 13th

Matthew 17:14-18:35; Mark 9:14-50; Luke 9:37-50 — Humility

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”
– James 4:10

In 1973, Senator John C. Stennis was mugged and shot outside his home. When Senator Mark Hatfield received word of the incident he drove straight to the hospital. Upon arriving, he observed that the hospital staff was overwhelmed with the high volume of incoming calls. Spying an empty switchboard, Hatfield sat down and helped field calls through the night and into the next morning.

It was genuine humility that led Senator Hatfield to assist the hospital staff that night. He was unwilling to view himself as too important to do the mundane task of answering the phone.

Authenticity leads to humility, because when we are willing to see ourselves as we truly are, we learn that we have no greater intrinsic value than the next person. Understanding this lesson allows us to fulfill the command to consider others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 293 – October 20th

Luke 17:11-18:8; John 11:38-57 — Genuinely Grateful

Out of ten lepers who were healed by Jesus, only one came back to thank Him. Jesus even wondered about the other nine who were healed from the most awful skin disease imaginable. And then the one who came back was the foreigner, the Samaritan. Upon coming back, the Samaritan found out the importance of thanks and discovered that his faith had made him well.

Only grateful Christians grow! The magnitude of understanding the importance of this aspect is terrific. A professing disciple of Christ who is not truly grateful for God’s forgiveness will struggle with guilt and also have difficulty forgiving others. A professing disciple of Christ who is not truly grateful for God’s grace will never understand true humility. A professing disciple of Christ who is not truly grateful for God’s purpose will never truly rest in the place God has presently placed him/her. A professing disciple of Christ who is not truly grateful for God’s love... God’s discipline... I could continue to add things to this list that a disciple needs to be genuinely grateful for if they are to grow.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 292 – October 19th

Luke 14:25-17:10; John 11:1-37 — Weigh the Cost

What will it cost to purchase that product? What will it cost to build that? What will it cost to speed through that school zone and get a ticket? What will it cost to go to war? Whether small or large items, we wisely weigh the cost first. Have you ever sat down and listed the pros and cons of a decision you are about to make? It's good to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a decision.

The beginning of today's passage clearly informs us that there is a cost associated with being a disciple of Christ. Jesus made the following statements to the crowd following Him: "Love Me more than your parents," "Carry your cross," "Follow Me," and "Give up everything for Me." He then concluded those words with the statement, "Don't begin until you count the cost." There are obvious advantages to being a disciple of Christ, but Jesus said there are things you may consider a disadvantage in being a disciple (cost, sacrifice, surrender, persecution, etc.). If you don't think being a disciple has cost you anything, maybe you should explore your depth of submission.

My Prayer List:

Day 287 – October 14th

Matthew 8:18-22; Luke 9:51-62; John 7:1-8:20 — Awareness of Sin

F.B. Meyer has been credited with saying that "when we see a brother or sister in sin, there are two things we do not know. First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin. And second, we do not know the power of the force that assailed him or her. We also do not know what we would have done in the same circumstance."

Judging someone in haste, and without full knowledge or consideration of the facts, generates tremendous hurt and damage. Jesus knew this full well when He extended grace to the woman caught in adultery in John 8.

Authentic Christian living requires an awareness of sin in our life. I believe that the more aware we are of our sin and our propensity to repeatedly sin that we are less likely to judge others who are caught in sin. It is those among us who assume that their struggle with sin is done that are often the ones who are so quick to judge. We all must remember that we are all sinners who are equally in need of grace and mercy from a holy and just God.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 42—October 15th-21st

Matthew 19; Mark 10:1-31; Luke 10-18:30; John 8:21-11:57

I was reading something today that described a disciple of Christ as one who follows behind Him with head bowed low wearing a long dark robe. That may display some kind of reverence, but I'm not sure it displays the passion and joy a disciple of Christ should have. This week's passages will describe various aspects of what it means to be a believer/disciple of Christ and how that plays out daily in our lives.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Our ideas of surrender and submission generally carry some subconscious limit. Our human nature rebels against absolute surrender. How absolutely should we yield and surrender to God?

Why is prayer such a vital element in the life and daily habits of a disciple of Christ?

What things in your daily life visibly demonstrate you are a disciple of Christ?

Why do you think Jesus taught so often about money?

Day 291 – October 18th

Luke 13:22-14:24; John 10 — Like Sheep

Things to know about sheep:
Ranked as one of the most helpless animals on the earth, Have a number of enemies, No protection like a dog with sharp teeth or a deer with a fast foot, or a bee with a sharp stinger, or a skunk that can drive away any beast with his smell, It is not adept at sensing danger, They are very easily frightened, They like to wander away from the flock, and have a terrible sense of direction when they get far away, but they will follow one another anywhere (even off a cliff).

Do we need a shepherd? Oh yes. But far more than just having a shepherd present is our need to listen to our Shepherd. The "true sheep" (John 10:8) are those who follow the good Shepherd and recognize His voice and listen to His voice. Do you recognize the good Shepherd's voice? I don't know how we will ever experience all of the benefits of knowing the good Shepherd. There are advantages today and 1,000 years from today for those who recognize His voice. Listen well.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 290 – October 17th

Luke 12:35-13:21; John 9 — Be Ready

I love the way this passage starts out, “Be dressed for service and well prepared...” My dad retired from the airlines, and when I was young we would get an occasional special treat in the form of an airplane flight. As an employee’s family, we were required to dress up a little. I remember dressing in a nice button-up and slacks before the flight. I didn’t regret it a bit because I knew it meant something special was coming.

It should be exciting for us to get dressed and prepared for something special and extraordinary. And not only should we want to be prepared because of our excitement about Christ’s coming because it is something special and extraordinary, but we are also encouraged to be prepared because there will be a reward in it. Jesus says, “There will be special favor for those who are ready and waiting for His return... whenever He comes, there will be special favor for His servants who are ready!” Be ready because something special is coming!

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

What does it mean to “be ready” for the Lord’s coming (see Oct. 17)?

Using some of the descriptions (but not limited to) in the Oct. 18 reading, describe the things our good Shepherd can save us from. In other words, list the benefits of having a Shepherd.

Jesus inferred there was a cost involved with being a disciple. What has being a disciple of Christ cost you?

How “grateful” would Christ say you act?

From Oct. 21 devotional... You could pray aloud a sincere and humble-sounding prayer, but still lack both. What is the key to a truly humble life?

Day 288 – October 15th

Luke 10:1-11:13; John 8:21-59 — Disciple Disposition

Today’s passages describe the character of a disciple of Christ. One of the first things we read is that a disciple of Christ is one who is willing to go where God asks with a message God gives. A disciple is obedient and submissive. He is also a tool God uses to bring the good news to others. Secondly, we read that a disciple of Christ is in love with the Lord with all his heart, soul, strength and mind—that pretty much covers everything. The disciple is also to love his neighbor, and love them as the Samaritan who felt pity on another hurting person who was not even of the same race. He cared for the man and even provided the money for further care. Thirdly, a disciple is also a person of prayer. His prayers are sincere and fervent.

Each of these three characteristics display a committed relationship with God. Everything he does is because of his love and reverence for his Lord. Does everything you do display that love?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 289 – October 16th

Luke 11:14-12:34 — Money and Hypocrites

It is interesting how instructions concerning both money and hypocrisy come up in the same chapter (Luke 12). Jesus discussed the topic of money more often than Heaven. Money is such an enormous part of our lives. It is in front of us daily at work, at the store and at home. It can get to a point where it consumes our thoughts as we think of what we could do with more of it. It has the potential of realigning our priorities and shifting our focus from where it should be.

This is where the potential for hypocrisy is greatly increased. I have met many “disciples of Christ” who have been guilty of hypocrisy as they fell prey to greed, coveting or other detours incurred by money. If you are godly in church, but at work you don’t pay an employee as you should, they will soon conclude you have a problem with hypocrisy. If you say you love God, but you are not willing to share with the poor, you have a problem with hypocrisy.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____
