



## **Week Two Devotion**

# Day 1

Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke openly about this. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But after turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's."

Mark 8:31-33 NET

After every national election there is always the same mixture of news coverage. Two crowded rooms full of supporters. One side is riding high; flags waving, banners hung, cheers fill the room. The other side is stunned in defeat; heads hung low, the disorienting mixture of disbelief and worry is palpable. The ever-present struggle between political factions is always a zero-sum game. Someone wins and someone else loses. The victor gets the chance to carry out their agenda, the loser must regroup and hope to fight another day.

This is the mindset of Peter. Perhaps even more than the rest of the disciples, Peter was focused on the political implications of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. He expected Jesus to vanquish the enemies of Israel, make them bow before Him, and send them away with not even the hope of fighting another day. So, when Peter heard that Jesus was to suffer, even to die, he could not fathom that as a possibility.

And so, Jesus rebuked him. Not as a punishment, but a correction. Although Peter could not see it at the time, Jesus was going to win a much greater victory than he could fathom. Peter would not see the armies march through the center of the city with Jesus at their head; a triumphant military and political leader. Rather, he would see his friend, teacher, and mentor suffer a brutal death at the hands of others. And in so doing win the greatest victory of all – against the powers of darkness and death – and provide a way for the renewal of all things through the inauguration of God's Kingdom.

Consider this: Have there been times in your life in which you suffered a major setback that turned out to be an important turning point toward something greater? Spend some time thanking God today for the ways He works above and beyond our limited vision for what victory means in our lives.

## Day 2

Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:5-6 NASB

How often do we hear, it's none of our business? Especially, when it comes to people we really care about. There are often debates between "tough love" and "let them figure it out."

While there may be wisdom to both these approaches, we look to the Bible to help us. It's clear when it comes to the topic of sin, our love for our brothers and sisters is shown by open dialogue of God's truth. This alone is an important reason to study the Bible and put His Word on our hearts. Real danger is when we ignore our loved one's sins and treat it as it's no more than a "white lie." Paul reminded the Galatians to restore their brothers with a spirit of gentleness, notice he didn't suggest a screaming match or bullying someone out of their mistakes.

Our brother James closed out his letter with this thought: that if someone wanders away from the truth, "that whoever turns them from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins." Our motivation should always be love, and it's God's Word, not our opinions, that are the benchmark we measure against.

Consider this: Reflect in prayer to a time when you turned a blind eye to someone who appeared to be blind to their sin or just didn't care of the consequences. Or, perhaps, a time when you thought it best to simply take the "get in their face" approach and it ended badly. How would you have handled these situations after spending time in God's word studying this topic?

## Day 3

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

John 8:31-32 NASB

The late Billy Graham's grandson, Roy, once recounted that his grandfather kept an open Bible around the house and would periodically read a few lines throughout the day whenever he walked by it. He once asked his grandfather how he could have gotten anything out of it in that short amount of time, and Billy's response was, "I sip on the Word of God all day long."

Jesus' exhortation here is a progression from merely believing in Him to becoming a bona-fide disciple who walks in freedom, it involves a choice and a condition: We can allow the powerful truth of His words and teaching to remain with us in our hearts and thoughts, like Billy did, or we can leave it behind and be vulnerable to lies. Christ's truth makes freedom possible from our critical inner dialogue toward ourselves, and others, replacing inaccurate personal narratives with the identity Christ has endowed us with. Freedom indeed!

Consider this: What verse can you continually dwell on throughout the day that reminds you of who you are in Christ Jesus?

## Day 4

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 NASB

Have you ever been overwhelmed by emotion? What caused it? Something you witnessed, a movie, a song, a moment in a sporting event? Did you stop to think about why whatever it was, caused something in you to stir?

There's something about scripture that does the same thing, but on a deeper, more spiritual level. Because we are image bearers of our creator, God's word not only understands our souls, but convicts our thoughts and heart with the accuracy of a sharpshooter. There is nothing we can hide from God, and the more we mediate on His Word, the more it goes to work on us. Showing us with precision areas we need to address as we grow in our own holiness.

Remember these two examples: When Nehemiah built the wall and had Ezra read the Word to the Israelites who had just returned from captivity, the Bible tells us "the people wept when they heard the words of the Law." When Peter preached his first sermon in Acts 2, upon finishing it's said the people were "cut to the heart." Let us be humble enough to let it do the same work within us.

Consider this: When you study the Bible, keep a journal next to you and when you feel something arise in you: joy, anger, sadness, whatever it is, stop and make a note of it. When you're done, review your thoughts and pray about them.

## Day 5

ב Beth

How can a young person stay pure?  
By obeying your word.  
I have tried hard to find you—  
don't let me wander from your commands.  
I have hidden your word in my heart,  
that I might not sin against you.  
I praise you, O Lord;  
teach me your decrees.  
I have recited aloud  
all the regulations you have given us.  
I have rejoiced in your laws  
as much as in riches.  
I will study your commandments  
and reflect on your ways.  
I will delight in your decrees  
and not forget your word.

Psalm 119:9-16 NLT

Have you ever admired a trait or skill that someone had? I know I sure have and sometimes I even went so far as to try and learn that skill or trait. But, it isn't always just that simple, is it? Life gets in the way, sometimes we get lazy or the task just seems so difficult. That doesn't mean the answer is to just give up. In Beth, we have someone calling out "How can I stay pure" (which can also mean: sinless or "clean"). They know the answer is to obey God's word but it's a struggle and so what do they do? They push in deeper, they double down. They ask God for help. They praise Him for His goodness, they lay out what they have already done and state what they plan to do going forward. One thing to keep in mind whenever you are reading a Psalm, is that these are prayer books and worship songs, the very prayers and worship songs which we hear Jesus quote from. If you are feeling like a task is too great to complete or you are struggling, you are not alone and these Psalms have been the prayer book of people struggling, just like you.

Consider this: Take a look at something you have been struggling towards or against. Take a moment to pray and recommit to growing in that area..