



VISION YOUTH DEVOTIONAL

Term 2, 2020

Volume 2



Day 1 - A Higher Way

Read: Mark 2:15-19; Mark 2:23-28; Mark 7:5-8

I'll tell you something I find so disappointing - when you go to bite into an apple that looks great on the outside, but inside is bruised, flowery and perhaps even has evidence of worms! It's yuk!

You may have heard the saying - 'it's what's on the inside that counts', and in our lives of faith, God is more concerned about what is going on in our hearts than mere outward appearances. The problem with the religious environment and religious rulers in Jesus' time, was that faith had become more about outward appearances, following rules and regulations, and looking 'holy' to impress others, than having a changed heart that was turned toward God that then led to a transformed life.

Because of this, there were so many hoops to jump through for people to be 'good enough' to come before God. Jesus challenged the religious rulers that they had missed the point, that true faith was about a relationship with God, more than rules and regulations and 'looking good' on the outside. When Jesus came, He came to bring a higher way, a better standard - not one that would burden people with unattainable standards and expectations - but the way of freedom and life!

Do you feel like you have to jump through a whole lot of hoops just to feel 'good enough' to come before God? Do you feel unworthy when you do make mistakes and then keep God at a distance? Let me encourage you with this good news - because of Jesus, there are no longer any 'hoops' to jump through to access God! Jesus made a way for us to have relationship with God, which means we can come to Him, know Him, and experience His life and freedom. Come to Him today, and ask (and allow) Him to transform you from the inside out.

Lord, thank you that you came to bring a higher way - a way of life, freedom and relationship. Help me to live from that place of relationship with you and allow you to transform me on the inside. Amen

Day 2 - By Grace Alone

Read: Galatians 2:15-21

This passage is packed full of beautiful and complicated truth about our faith and salvation in Christ. There are so many layers we could talk about and so many things we can learn! But today we're especially going to focus in on verses 16, 20 and 21. Let's read verse 16 again.

This verse tells us very clearly that we are justified only through faith in Jesus Christ, we can't be justified through 'works of the law'. What does this mean? What is justification? In the Amplified Bible it summarizes justification as being in 'right standing with God' - and the verse tells us this only happens through faith in Jesus Christ.

Y'all, this is very, very good news!! We can't earn God's love. We can't earn salvation. We can't be made right before God by following all the rules. If we could be justified and made right by following the rules, then verse 21 tells us that 'Christ died for nothing'!

But it is because of God's great and marvellous grace that we have been saved! Because He knows that we get stuck in sin and can't get ourselves out, Jesus has rescued us. He has come into our mess and pain and lifted us out. It is by faith in Jesus Christ and the great grace of our Heavenly Father that we have been saved! How amazing!

You may be thinking, "yep that's cool, I've known that since I was little". But stop. Read the passage again slowly, word by word, really thinking about what this means.



Day 2 - By Grace Alone

The encouragement for today is to ask God to open your eyes to see the marvellous wonders of His grace towards you and to remind you that we can't earn His grace. It is through faith in Jesus Christ alone that we are made right with God.

Here is a prayer you might like to pray to help you to focus on the Lord and His amazing grace.

Heavenly Father, thank you that I do not have to earn your love. Thank you that I can't earn your love and grace because you have made it free to me through faith in Jesus Christ. Father, please forgive me for thinking that I am 'good enough' or 'smart enough' to earn your love. Holy Spirit please remind my heart that it is through faith in Christ alone that I have been saved. Father, thank you that Christ lives in me. Please help my trust in you to grow each day as I live for your glory. Amen.



Day 3 - Outward Appearance

Read: Colossians 3:22-24; 1 Samuel 16:7;
Proverbs 4:23

One of the issues that can occur when we pursue religion (outward appearance) over our relationship with God is that we become consumed by what other people think. The Pharisees were so concerned with their outward appearance that they totally missed Jesus - the Son of God!

Sometimes it can be really easy to get caught up in what other people think of us and try to impress people by our outward behaviour and actions. Whether that's at school, where we want our peers to like us and try to fit in, or at church where we want to come across as good Christians. But in reality, God's opinion is the only one that really matters. He looks at our hearts, and our heart attitude - not our outward appearances.

In Colossians, Paul is addressing the different members of Christian households, which in that time could include slaves, or 'bondservants'. He appeals to them to obey their masters, but not out of a desire to please them. Instead they should "with sincerity of heart, fear the Lord". It is their heart attitude that really matters, and the same goes for us. No matter what we're doing or who we're doing it for, our desire should be to serve God and honour Him. Let us not be people who miss relationship with Jesus because we are so caught up in our outward appearance and what other people think of us. Instead, let us turn our gaze to Him and walk in the freedom He has for us!

God, we're sorry for the times where we have been too focused on pleasing other people and turned our hearts away from you. Help us to fix our gaze on you and glorify you in all that we do. Amen.

Day 4 - Still Important

Read: Mark 7:1-8; 1 Timothy 4:7-11; 1 Timothy 6:11-12

When sitting through yet another maths class, have you ever thought 'what's the point of this - I'm never going to use this once I've left school'?! Whilst there are some aspects of our education that we perhaps may not use after our school days are done, there are many elements of our learning that are foundational and so important to life (even if you can't see it now!)

The last few days we've been looking at how Jesus came to bring a higher way - and how our faith is not based on works or keeping burdensome expectations, rules and regulations. Instead, we are saved by grace, and following Jesus is not so much about the outward appearance, but rather an inward transformation that flows to every part of our lives.

We want to make it clear however, that following God's commands, walking in His ways, and living in a way that is pleasing to Him are all still vitally important. We are not in any way trying to do away with them, but rather challenge our heart attitude and motivation around why we do what we do as Christians.

When we encourage you to read your Bibles, pray, worship God, live in a way that honours Him - it's not so you can EARN God's approval, tick the right boxes so God owes you one - NO! - it's out of response to who He is and all He's done for you, as well as so you can grow in relationship with Jesus and see your faith strengthened.



Day 4 - Still Important

Let your faith be more than just an outward thing, a bunch of rules and regulations you feel you have to keep. Ask the Holy Spirit to touch your heart afresh, fill you with God's love, and change you more and more into the likeness of Jesus. You will find that this then has an impact on all the outward things - and your motivation to read God's word and grow closer to Him will be out of a desire for relationship, rather than just to do the 'good Christian thing'.

As you open up your Bible this week - ask God to help you understand it. Ask Him to speak to you through His word, and in your times of prayer.

Lord, thank you that you are at work in my life. Holy Spirit would you touch my heart afresh today - please fill me with God's love, and help to become more and more like Jesus. Lord, change me from the inside out so that my life would bring you much glory, and that our relationship would grow deeper and stronger. I love you Lord. Amen

