

GLENKIRK CHURCH



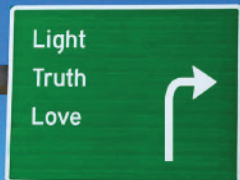
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

OCT 28 - NOV 1, 2019

## WALKING IN THE TRUTH

SERMON SERIES 9/8 - 11/24



# MONDAY

## John 9; Matthew 25:31-46

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### Discerning Jesus

We sometimes think, “If we could only see Jesus, we would recognize Him.” And yet many who saw Him in His day did not discern who He was.

In John 9, the disciples were debating what caused a certain man to be born blind—the blind man’s sin or the sin of his parents? “Neither,” said Jesus. “This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (v. 3). Jesus healed the man’s blindness on the Sabbath, causing some of the Pharisees to say, “This man [Jesus] is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath” (v. 16). For those Pharisees, healing on the Sabbath was a litmus test that showed them Jesus was not from God. Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind” (v. 39). The Pharisees did not discern Jesus.

Jesus lamented that Jerusalem did not realize who [Jesus] had come to visit them (Luke 19:44). The people were divided concerning Jesus, some saying He was a good man, while others said, “No, He deceives the people” (John 7:12).

The New Testament is full of people who *did* discern something special about Jesus: Simeon, Anna, John the Baptist, Nathaniel, Andrew, Peter, Nicodemus, the woman with an issue of blood, the Syro-Phoenecian woman, and more.

Today we are faced with a different challenge—discerning Jesus in people. The ability to do this is what separated the sheep from the goats in Jesus’ parable (Matthew 15:31-46). “*When did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or a prisoner and help you (or not help you)?*” Jesus will answer, “*Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me*” (Matthew 25:40).

## QUESTION

How can we become better at discerning Jesus in those who cross our paths? All of us are made in God’s image. How can we see Jesus in our friends, neighbors, or strangers?

## PRAYERS FOR HINDUS

October 27 marks the beginning of Hindu religion’s Festival of Lights (Diwali). Hindus are said to have 330 million gods. There are three main gods: Brahma (creator), Vishnu (protector), and Shiva (destroyer). Especially over the next two weeks, pray that unreached Hindu people groups will find the One True God.

# TUESDAY

## Daniel 1-2

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### Discerning the Way

Consider the story of Daniel and his three friends. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment. They are carted off captive to a foreign country. Their ministry opportunities are out the window, right? No—their story illustrates the fact that God is also in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. He wants the interpretation, but he will not be tricked into a false reading of it. No, the one who discerns the meaning must also discern the dream itself. That's not possible, right?

Like Joseph before him, Daniel claims that God is the discerner of dreams. In fact, Daniel's God can also discern the meaning of strange writing on a wall. With God's help he discerns the future of the following day (in King Belshazzar's case) and things still to come in the future. His life reflects the truth of the Don Moen song, "God Can Make a Way Where There Seems to Be No Way." His life shows that a person can rely on the fact that God's word "*is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path*" (Psalm 119:105).

When we cannot see the way forward, if we call on God, He will share the discernment we need. A fictional account of this truth is found in C.S. Lewis's second Narnia book, *Prince Caspian*, when the Pevensie children (Peter, Susan, Edmond and Lucy) did not know how to proceed. Lucy saw Aslan (a talking lion who serves as an allegorical stand-in for Jesus) beckoning toward a cliff. The other children could not see Aslan

yet, and Aslan's urging to Lucy made no sense to her. But she trusted Aslan and walked forward. Aslan revealed a path hidden from view that took them where they needed to go.

You may not have read this Narnia story, but it makes two good points: (1) You may not see or hear God as well as others, or you may see and hear God better than others. Either way you have something to learn about how to handle the situation. (2) "God can make a way where there seems to be no way."

God makes "*known to me the path of life*" (Psalm 16:11). God "*guides me along the right paths for His name's sake*" (Psalm 23:3).

## QUESTIONS

Are you having trouble seeing the path before you? How do we find God's path for us?

## PRAYERS FOR HINDUS

Diwali celebrates light (knowledge and wisdom) overcoming darkness (wickedness, lust, oppression, evil). Diwali commemorates the many triumphs of the Hindu gods, such as the triumph of Rama, the lord of virtue, over the demon Ravana. Pray for many Christian ministries that are bringing the Light of the Gospel to Hindus.

# WEDNESDAY

**John 8:12-59; 1 John 4:1-6**

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## **Discerning the Truth**

*“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* —Jesus (John 8:31-32)

Right after Jesus makes these claims, the people listening push back. They are pretty sure Jesus is not telling them the truth. In fact, they believe He’s speaking “crazy talk.” We are the children of Abraham, they say. Jesus replies, *“If Abraham was your father, you would believe me, but in fact you are the children of your father, the devil, who speaks in character when he lies, because he is a liar and the Father of lies”* (vv. 42-45). In other words, according to Jesus, they were deceived and not discerning the truth at all.

Of course, this is a big deal. But why do some people have trouble discerning the truth? And how can people avoid having this problem? When Pilate later asked Jesus, *“What is truth?”* Jesus’ response included this statement, *“All who are on the side of truth listen to Me”* (John 8:37). As believers and followers of Jesus, we have in our spiritual DNA the ability to discern well (1 John 2:20-21). But it is also true that our adversary, the devil, is working to deceive all people, including, if possible, even “the elect” [us] (Matthew 24:24; 1 Peter 5:8).

The people in this account self-identified as “children of Abraham.” Like we do sometimes, they assumed they could not be wrong. But at the same time, they were violating some of God’s principles, such as humility and teachability. *“God resists the proud, but gives grace*

to the humble” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Paul talks about some “who are ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). But we should always be learning to better discern the truth. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are our teachers, and we have much to learn.

John writes down principles of discerning “the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:1-6). And one of the Spirit’s gifts is the discernment of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10).

## QUESTIONS

What can a person do to receive or grow in discernment?  
How can we help others be more discerning?

## PRAYERS FOR HINDUS

Hindu gods are not like fathers and are not relational. They demand righteousness, sacrifice, and works. Hindus do not believe in one sacred book. Vedas are a collection of writings; Bhagavad-Gita is a book of stories. Pray that Hindus discover the loving Father God and Jesus as the Word of Life.

# THURSDAY

**Genesis 2:9-3:13; 1 John 4:1-6**

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## **Discerning the Life**

*“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* —Paul (Romans 6:23)

Jews and Christians understand that human history began with a big boo-boo by Adam and Eve. This gross lack of discernment on the part of our forefather and foremother is described as: original sin, disobedience to God’s explicit instructions, distrust of God, trust in a lie, a bad choice. According to the Genesis account, there were two trees at the center of Eden’s garden: (1) the Tree of Life and (2) the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The forbidden fruit was eaten from tree number two; the unforbidden, permissible fruit was not eaten from tree number one (Genesis 3:22). Jesus came to earth to restore the forfeited possibility of life—eternal life. Paul’s statement is a summary of the whole Bible: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

John records Jesus’ statement on the subject: *“The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10).

God’s gift is meant to be received. It comes in a package that is meant to be opened. Because the gift is life, it is meant to be lived. If you don’t



know how to live, the gift comes with instructions, God's Word. And it comes with a Helper, the Holy Spirit.

Yes, discernment may still be a challenge. But because "*He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world*" (1 John 4:5), we have confidence to live the life that God gives. Following Jesus is the mark of His true disciples. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

## QUESTIONS

How can we be certain we are living the life God has given us and will have eternal life?

## PRAYERS FOR HINDUS

Hindus believe in reincarnation, which means people come back to life again as other people or animals. Karma is the belief that the way someone behaves in this life determines what they will be in the next life. Pray that Hindus discover the peace and hope for eternal life through Jesus.

# FRIDAY

## Matthew 5-7

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### Discerning God's Kingdom Values

*Righteousness* is the biblical word for “what’s right.” *Sin* is the biblical word for “what’s wrong.” The Holy Spirit is here to help us to discern between right and wrong, “*When He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*” (John 16:8 NKJV).

The Bible provides God’s litmus tests between right and wrong; for example, “*By their fruits, you will know them*” (Matthew 7:21) and “*Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother or sister*” (1 John 3:10).

So, what do we do when we find ourselves with wrong thoughts and/or wrong actions? Earlier in his letter, John said that if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus. And we have God’s promise that if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Almost certainly this is how Paul was able to maintain a clear conscience (Acts 24:16) by keeping short accounts with God—confessing often. We can do the same.

Seeking God’s kingdom is a trait of those who live in God’s kingdom, according to Dallas Willard. “Seeking is the key to understanding how to enter into the kingdom of God and live there. One of the problems that many Christians today have is that since they are Christians, they have stopped seeking. But seeking is the way we live. We never get beyond

seeking.” In the Old Testament, the defining trait between a good or bad king in Judah and Israel was whether or not he “set *his heart on seeking the LORD*” (2 Chronicles 12:14).

Perhaps the best thing we can do regarding discernment is to emulate the psalmist who invited God to discern him: “*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*” (Psalm 139:23-24). After all, nobody discerns like God. And we can trust him.

## QUESTIONS

How do I set my heart to seek the Lord? How do I maintain a clear conscience?

## PRAYERS FOR HINDUS

In Hinduism salvation means becoming part of a main god when the cycle of being reborn ends. The path to salvation includes rituals, good works, meditation, yoga, and worship of gods. Radical Hindus and the current government desire India to be fully Hindu. Pray that Jesus makes Himself known to persecutors.

## Sources

- C.S. Lewis. *Prince Caspian* (Published by Geoffrey Bles, 1951). Chapter 9, “What Lucy Saw”; Chapter 10, “The Return of the Lion”; and Chapter 11, “The Lion Roars.”
- R. Arthur Matthews. *Born for Battle: 31 Studies on Spiritual Warfare*, edited by M.E. Tewksbury (Published by Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 2001). Day 20, “Perspective”; Day 21, “Opportunity Price Tag”; and Day 22, “The Architect of Victory” suggest the thoughts conveyed in Tuesday’s devo about Daniel and his three friends.
- *Wikipedia*, “Aslan.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aslan>
- Dallas Willard. *Living in Christ’s Presence: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God* (InterVarsity Press, 2014), p. 71.

