

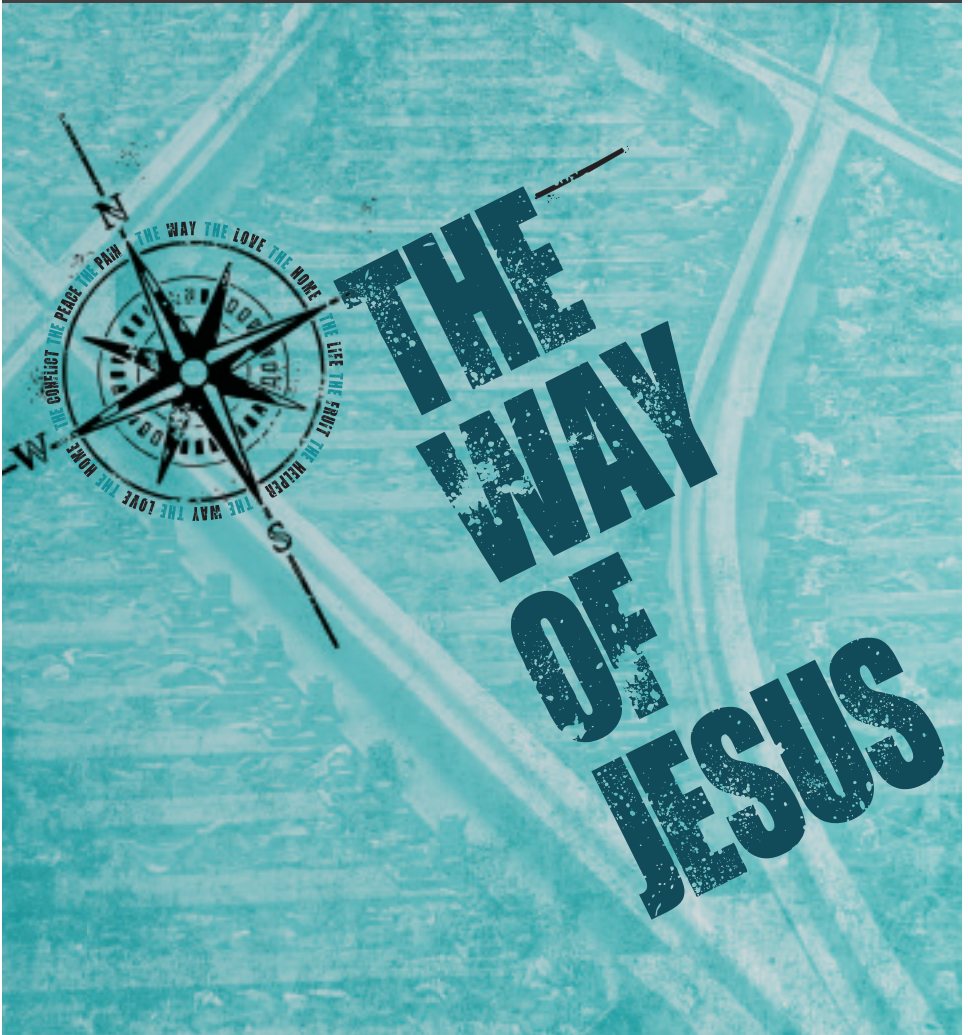
GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

JUNE 1 - 5, 2020



# MONDAY

**John 14:22-31, 10:27-30; Matthew 3:16-17**

John 14:22-31, like John's baptism of Jesus, displays the loving collaboration among the three Persons of the Godhead. God's triunity, though foundational to true Christianity, is elusive. Anyone claiming to comprehend the Trinity is considering something man-made or is otherwise misguided. In our timebound, physical limitations, one God in three Persons remains mysterious.

Yet, Jesus prayed, "And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). We are commanded to love God (Mark 12:30). Jeremiah 31:34 promises in the New Covenant's context, "They shall all know Me." How can we know God, even love Him, given our inability to grasp His "Three-in-One" nature?

C.S. Lewis' attempt to help us: "On the human level one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings—just as, in two dimensions ... one square is one figure, and any two squares are two separate figures. On the Divine level you still find personalities; but ... combined in new ways which we ... cannot imagine. ... You find a Being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube." Lewis adds, "The words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person."

Ray Pritchard references another, aiming to characterize the transcendent: "Dr. Henry Morris ... notes that the entire universe is trinitarian by design ... [and] consists of three things: matter, space, and time. Take away any one of those three and the universe would cease to exist. But each one of those is itself a trinity. Matter = mass + energy + motion. Space = length + height + breadth. Time = past + present + future."

Don't fret—God delights in our desire to know Him (Jeremiah 9:24) despite present, earthly limitations. He promises, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Moreover, "... when [Jesus Christ] appears [again], we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Persevere! Seek Him faithfully!

## QUESTIONS

How do you grasp the Trinity and which related analogies do you find most helpful? How does the trinitarian theme show up throughout creation?

## PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY

Pray for Ken Zell, who works with InterVarsity in Greater Los Angeles. Pray for wisdom. As a senior leader in the organization, Ken feels the challenges of leading effectively through unprecedented times.

# TUESDAY

**John 14:21-24; 1 John 4:7-12; Ephesians 2:8-10**

A quick read of John 14:21-23 shows Jesus seemingly speaking evasively. Judas Thaddeus asked, essentially, “Why did you choose us and not others?” Jesus’ response (paraphrased): “*Do what the Father says, demonstrating your love for Me, and you will enjoy eternity with God.*” And He added that same evening, “*Abide in Me, and I (will) in you*” (John 15:4). Did Jesus answer a different question than that Thaddeus asked?

The legalists might seize upon Jesus’ “*keep My word*” (John 14:23) phrasing to support their “follow the rules, try harder, God rewards merit” orientation. But responsible consideration of Jesus’ statements reveals His emphasis that faithfulness and works are byproducts—fruits—of a loving relationship with Him, not causes of salvation. Legalistic Pharisees missed this, meticulously following the letter of the law (and more) while missing its intent; thus, Jesus’ regular rebukes.

Jesus bridges the gap between the Apostle Paul’s “*justified by faith (alone)*” (Romans 3:28) and James’s “*faith without works is dead*” (James 2:26) themes, a centuries-long Christian controversy. This same “bridge” might reconcile the division prevailing in the “God’s sovereignty versus man’s free will” debate among believers. The associated bridge may be love itself. If you love the Lord, you are eager to please Him and keep His Word, for His glory. That Spirit-enabled love fuels faithfulness.

The legalist perks up, proclaiming, “Ah ha, so we agree! Anyone who sins does not love Jesus and is therefore lost.” Not necessarily—believers continue to sin, though less regularly and extremely than before. Even Paul lamented, “*Wretched man that I am!*” (Romans 7:24) regarding his sinful flesh. Daniel identified with fellow Jews when praying, “... *we have sinned and done wrong*” (Daniel 9:5). More telling is our response to our sin—contented sinning and unrepentance do not indicate a regenerated heart.

The Apostle John famously penned, “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). John Lennon sang, “All you need is love.” And I’ve read an appealing, though oversimplified, opinion: “God’s love = God’s glory” (Austin Fisher). Jesus’ reframed answer to Judas Thaddeus’ “Why us?” question was, “*Because I love you. And My love fuels yours, so act accordingly. Share it with others*” (John 14:23, 24 paraphrased).

## QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus respond to Judas Thaddeus’ question as He did?  
What is the relationship between faithfulness and works in the believer’s life?

## PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY

Pray for the InterVarsity students that Jesus would sustain them through this season of isolation. Ask God to strengthen them and draw them into a deeper dependence upon Him.

# WEDNESDAY

**John 14:25-26, 29; Acts 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16**

It's easy to criticize the disciples for misunderstanding Jesus' mission and ways. They questioned His ability to feed the four thousand (Matthew 15:33), although He had miraculously fed five thousand earlier (Matthew 14:16-21). Peter rebuked Jesus for predicting His crucifixion (Mark 8:32). Thomas doubted the resurrection, despite Jesus' foretelling and others' subsequent witness, believing only upon touching Jesus' wounds (John 20:24-27).

These followers were with Jesus nearly 24/7 for 3+ years. They were eyewitnesses to His miracles, saw Him exorcize demons, and heard Jesus' teaching firsthand. Like the ancient Jews, however, they expected a Messianic insurrectionist, not the Suffering Servant dying for our sins. Note our two advantages relative to the disciples: we have the New Testament accounts of what happened and followed; and we have the Holy Spirit to teach us, whom they did not receive until later (Acts 2).

Jesus didn't dismiss His followers despite their confusion. He lovingly promised, "... *the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name ... will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you*" (John 14:26). We are incapable of beginning to grasp God's majesty and holiness on our own, but God pursues us. He sends us "light"—through our circumstances, relationships, His Word, the wonders of creation—and the Spirit enlightens. "When you [receive and] obey

the light that you have, God will [send] you more light." (Adrian Rogers) And the Holy Spirit is our Illuminator, as He was the disciples' light.

Perhaps you've heard, "The natural person needs to understand before believing; but in God's economy we need to believe, at least a little, before we can *begin* to understand." Our "circuits must be open" for the Spirit to flow into and through us. God prompts this, but we must receive it. And when we do, He enables greater understanding.

Are you frustrated about things of God which puzzle you? God will use that—pray for His enlightenment. Do you grieve over loved ones apparently blind to His truth? Good—you display a heart like God's! Persevere in praying for their salvation and see what the Spirit will do.

## QUESTIONS

Why did the disciples, despite being with Jesus continually during His ministry, misunderstand so much about Him throughout? What changed this, eventually opening their spiritual eyes? What does "our circuits must be open for the Spirit to flow into and through us" mean?

## PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY

Pray for the InterVarsity staff members who serve on campuses across Greater Los Angeles. Pray for creativity and energy as they seek to shepherd students and minister to them through technology and digital ministry.

# THURSDAY

**John 14:30; Job 2:1-6; Luke 4:1-8**

Jesus warned of the coming “ruler [prince] of this world” (John 14:30), a title He applied in John 12:31 and 16:11. Paul called the enemy “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 3:4) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). The devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, describing the world as his to give (Luke 4:6), and also plagued Job (Job 1-2). If God is good, loving, almighty and sovereign, why does He allow Satan to live, torment and influence humankind?

Some mistakenly consider the devil God’s near-equal rival, such elevation likely delighting Satan—they forget that he’s a limited, created being. Others dismiss Satan as a myth or cartoon—this underestimation enables his stealth operation. Neither position is biblical. Note that when the enemy claimed worldwide authority, Jesus did not rebuke him. Today’s Job reading, however, illustrates that Satan can do nothing unless God permits it.

“Imagine a world in which [we did not struggle with evil]. ... There would be little or no sense of morality. ... There would be no consequences ... or occasion to help others ... no courage or heroism. There would be no reason for moral growth or improving one’s soul ... [and] no longing ... for a better world.” (Stephen P. Davis). “Higher virtues (love, charity, etc.) can only be attained by free beings that have struggled with evil and been victorious over it.” (Norman Geisler)

Consider the devil and God allowing him to exist, at least presently, as “spiritual gym equipment” of sorts. The evils and temptations that Satan fosters test us, providing choices that prompt either growth or failure. Overcoming here, in the Spirit’s power, shapes us into greater Christlikeness. “God’s purpose for us humans includes the expansion of our capacity to experience freedom and love. To achieve such a purpose requires humanity’s exposure to sin’s temptations because genuine love demands real choice, just as real choice allows for real evil.” (Hugh Ross)

I don’t like tests and failing, but I love growth. The “father of lies” (John 8:44), completely self-deceived, doesn’t realize he’s working under God. Regardless, don’t give him room—pray for God’s strengthening and faithfulness. “Resist the devil, and he will flee” (James 4:7).

## QUESTIONS

What are the dangers in wrongly viewing Satan as “God’s near-equal rival” or as a myth or cartoon-like character? What role does the devil play in God’s work to refine believers (i.e., the sanctification process)?

## PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY

Pray for trust. Ken is convinced that God is doing a deep work of renewal in His Church through this pandemic. May we trust Him for that and surrender to Him in a deeper way in this season.

# FRIDAY

**John 1:1-4, 14; Revelation 14:14, 19:11-16, 21:5-7**

On Monday we considered the Trinity's elusiveness. Jesus declared, relevantly, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). In John 14, however, Jesus said things seemingly challenging God's triune, "co-equal oneness": "The word you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14:24); "the Father is greater than I" (14:28); and "... I do exactly as the Father has commanded Me" (14:31). Is there hierarchy within the Trinity; is Jesus "inferior" to the Father?

Cults reject God's triunity—one cult deeming Jesus a "lesser god" and others denying His deity entirely. Instead of interpreting Jesus' favorite self-title, "Son of Man," as humble identification with humankind, their theology portrays Christ only as "above humankind while below God." Cults likewise diminish the Spirit to a "lesser god" or "impersonal force" status. However, Scripture teaches that Jesus exists eternally as the Word of God, active in the creation (John 1:1-3). Jesus admonished antagonists accordingly, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) for 33+ years as Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Man and God's Son. During His First Coming mission, the Savior subordinated Himself to the Father and "emptied Himself, by taking the form of a Servant, being born in the likeness of men ... [and] humbled Himself ... to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8).

Psalms 2:1 asserts, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you." Jesus was born into our plight, our *Immanuel* ("God with us"). Following His crucifixion, He rose from the grave as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... [to be] made alive [again]" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Jesus later ascended and rejoined the Father in heaven (Mark 16:19), His deity fully intact. Upon His return—His Second Coming—Jesus will "... judge the living and the dead" (2 Timothy 4:1). He remains "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21:6).

If you wrestle with Jesus' deity, re-read today's featured Revelation verses. All three Persons of the Godhead are equally God, sharing all attributes of the Godhead. Know that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

## QUESTIONS

What is a critical area wherein the cults depart from true Christianity? Is Jesus Christ "something less" than God the Father? How does Jesus' Second Coming help clarify who He is?

## PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY

Pray for spiritual renewal for all of us in this season!

## Sources

- C.S. Lewis' quotes are from his book, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1960).
- Dr. Ray Pritchard's quote can be found at [www.christianity.com/god/trinity/god-in-three-persons-a-doctrine-we-barely-understand-11634405.html](http://www.christianity.com/god/trinity/god-in-three-persons-a-doctrine-we-barely-understand-11634405.html).
- The song "All You Need Is Love" was written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney (© Sony/ATV Tunes LLC dba ATV o/b/o ATV (Northern Songs Catalog), 1967).
- Austin Fischer's quote is from his book, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed: Black Holes, Love, and a Journey In and Out of Calvinism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).
- Adrian Rogers' quote is from his "Love Worth Finding" teaching ministry, airing weekdays in Southern California at 7:30am on KBRT (AM 740).
- Stephen P. Davis', Norman Geisler's and Hugh Ross's quotes can be found at [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)

