

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

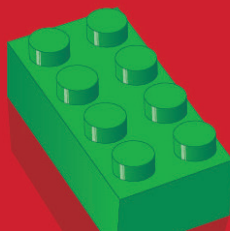
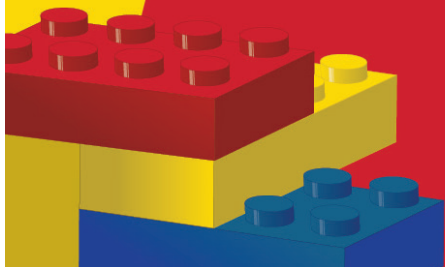
The DEVO

JULY 18 - 22, 2022

BRICK *UBS 2022*

BY BRICK

Build Yourself Up in Him!



MONDAY

Read **Matthew 7:24-27; John 16:33**

“Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:20)

When constructing a house, does the builder start with the roof? Or with the kitchen? Do they build the bathroom first? No. They start at the bottom—the foundation. It’s important for the builder to make sure the house’s foundation is strong—if the foundation is shaky, so is the house itself.

Israel has sandy desert within and around it—it was easier for people to build on top of the sand. It was more work to dig through the sand to get to the bedrock, to establish a solid, lasting foundation. And so it is for many today, whatever their origins. Many people live apart from God, either as superficial “Christians,” or those ignoring Jesus, or some even actively opposing God. Their lives are like houses built upon rickety, unreliable foundations.

God’s Word, the Bible, is the best foundation for our lives. It teaches us how to love God, enabled by His first loving us: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). The Bible shows how and why to love others: *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32). It teaches right from wrong: *“In everything, do to others what you would want them to do to you.”* (Matthew 7:12).

It instructs on how to follow God: “*What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*” (Micah 6:8).

Jesus Christ shows a better way. When life gets tough, when “the storms” come (and they will), we know that our life is solid when based upon God’s Word—the rock.

How strong is your life’s foundation? Is it built upon intimacy with God in Christ, fortified by ongoing prayer and repentance, Bible study, Christian fellowship, and selfless, God-honoring service and sacrifice? Do you rest in God’s promises and a personal relationship with Jesus?

QUESTIONS

How is life apart from Jesus Christ like a house built on an unstable foundation? Which of the Scriptures quoted in today’s devotional do you find most helpful? Which is most convicting?

PRAYERS

For Glenkirk’s Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Pray for the 350 children who will be on Glenkirk’s campus for VBS. Pray that God would do a mighty work in our midst, stirring these children into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ and keeping them safe.

TUESDAY

Read **Luke 15:11-32; Romans 5:8**

“All we like sheep have gone astray.” (Isiah 53:6)

Jesus never appeared rushed. God has time for anyone truly seeking Him: *“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD*” (Jeremiah 29:13-14). There is only one time in the Bible wherein God is pictured as hurrying—it is in today’s featured Luke 15 story.

In ancient Israel, children asking their father for their inheritance amounted to telling him that they wished him dead so that they could have his money. When we express dissatisfaction with God or His provision, we are like the prodigal son. Consider his choices, each of which we’ve made in some fashion:

- He disrespected his father, disrupting his family hurtfully; his actions were unloving.
- He sidestepped responsibilities, acting selfishly; he squandered time, money and privilege, thinking only of himself.

If the story ended with the prodigal son feeding pigs (“unclean” animals among ancient Jews), it would be merely a sad tale. But that’s not the end. The father sprinted to greet, forgive and welcome his returning, remorseful child—running like this was shockingly countercultural for a respectable Jewish father. But this father’s love went even deeper.

Fellow villagers were perhaps so offended at the son's scandalous behavior that, had the father not rushed out and shielded him, they would have stoned him. The father not only instantly forgave, but also protected his wayward son.

Even while trying to walk faithfully with God, we sometimes sin. But no matter how we falter, God's love does not. He demonstrated this love by coming to earth on a rescue mission as Jesus of Nazareth.

God loves us and will forgive us no matter what we have done if we sincerely ask His forgiveness and repent. Today's story is not merely about an errant son and his father—it's about God's love for us. God "hurries" only when it comes to forgiving and welcoming, *"not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

QUESTIONS

What was the prodigal son's message to his father when asking for his inheritance? How was the father's rushing out to meet his returning, repentant son more than simple forgiveness? What are the only circumstances which apparently cause God "to hurry"?

PRAYERS

For Glenkirk's Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Pray for the families of next week's VBS campers, that God would rouse the hearts of these families, including those who are unchurched and/or have doubts about Christ. Pray that many would come into saving faith in the Lord.

WEDNESDAY

Read [John 6:1-14](#); [John 21:3-6](#)

“I came that [you] may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

There are several key themes in today’s featured story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. The disciples’ limited faith—despite their having witnessed Jesus’ earlier miracles firsthand—is noteworthy. The boy who donated his lunch, rather, was both generous and available—he exemplified that the greatest ability is avail-ability! The boy’s role here reminds us that we are not called to results, but to faithfulness—the results, the “harvest,” are the Lord’s.

A superficial scan of this story also grossly underestimates the magnitude of this miracle. Matthew 14:21 says about this event: *“Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”* If there were 5,000 men, there may have been 10,000 or more people overall, fully fed by *“five barley loaves and two fish”* (John 6:9). *“Barley loaves were the food of the poor, but Jesus was able to make five of them into a Messianic feast.”* (Peter Pett) These “loaves” were likely little rolls, the two fish perhaps sardine-sized.

What I find most compelling in this incident, however, is what it illustrates regarding God. The enemy would have us believe that the Lord is stingy and mean, a God of scarcity. Jesus Christ, the Son, reveals a God *“who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.”* (Ephesian 3:20) We worship a God of abundance, One offering abundant life in Christ.

Moreover, in the aftermath of this mass meal, Scripture indicates that the leftovers exceeded what they started with, one basket of bread pieces for each of the twelve disciples (John 6:13). Can you imagine that? All of the people, perhaps 10,000+, were filled by five rolls and two small fish, with resultant remains greater than what was on hand as they started.

Do you envision God as tightfisted and vengeful, closer to a punisher than a loving Savior? Or do you rightly see Him as One who gloriously fashioned humankind “*in His own image*” (Genesis 1:27), a God of abundance who loves us so much that He willingly sacrificed to pay our sins’ debt?

QUESTIONS

How did the boy donating the five loaves and two fish show more faithfulness than Jesus’ disciples? Do you tend more toward seeing God as the Source of abundance or scarcity? What was the symbolic significance of the baskets of bread left over after the crowd ate?

PRAYERS

For Glenkirk’s Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Pray for all of our VBS volunteers, whether students or adults. Pray that God would use them to build meaningful connections with the campers for kingdom purposes. Ask the Lord to call all on hand into deeper relationship with the Savior.

THURSDAY

Read **Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 10:9-17**

“Let your speech always be gracious ... so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” (Colossians 4:6)

Do you keep good news to yourself? Do you hoard a great gift, or see it as a blessing to be shared? In Christ we have received the greatest gift ever: eternal adoption into God’s family. Yet there are flawed ways—even among well-intentioned, mature believers—to share this.

Some misguidedly default to “If I simply live a good life, that’s sufficient for Christian witnessing.” This may never verbalize the Gospel to unbelievers. A related motto, “Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words” is akin to “Feed the poor; when necessary, use food.” A faithful, well-lived Christian life is *necessary* for faithful witnessing, but *insufficient*. *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 9:17).*

Others make the opposite mistake, shelling unbelievers like targets, recklessly “dropping truth bombs.” Some of these people apparently feel that unrepentant sinners can be “scared into believing” by threats of eternal damnation apart from Christ. While this may work with some, most are moved by God’s love and goodness more than His holiness and righteous judgment of sin.

Today's featured Matthew passage reminds us that even disciples who lived with Jesus for 3+ years and witnessed His miracles wrestled with doubts. However, their post-resurrection transformations—from those struggling with Jesus' mission, some betraying Jesus and nearly all abandoning Him on the cross, to boldly proclaiming the Gospel at the cost of their lives—are among the most compelling proofs of biblical truth. A well-lived life, perhaps even an amazingly changed life in Christ, complemented by caringly meeting people where they are and "*speaking the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4:15) can be used by God to draw "pre-Christians" whom He loves (John 3:16) and "*made in His image*" (Genesis 1:27) to Himself.

God is holy—just, righteous, set apart from the world's corruption and unable to abide with sin (Habakkuk 1:13). Concurrently, however, "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8). Such God-given balance enables us, if we are faithful, to "*make disciples of all nations*" (Matthew 28:19).

QUESTIONS

What are the problems with limiting your faith merely to "living a good life"? Is it a sin to have periodic doubts and/or struggle with biblical truth? How will you show the God who "*is love*" to others this week?

PRAYERS

For Glenkirk's Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Pray for our communities, that a great revival beginning among God's own would sweep over the cities that Glenkirk Church serves, drawing many into deeper relationship with God Himself in Christ.

FRIDAY

Read **Matthew 25:14-29; Romans 12:5-8**

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” (James 1:17)

One aspect of fallenness is our tendency to stereotype. This issue is particularly problematic when considering people from “other groups.” We’re inclined to see richness and variety in “our own kind,” but sameness, limitations and problems in groups who “are different.” Racial prejudice, other forms of dehumanizing people, self-righteousness, and additional problems result.

Some unbelievers resist Jesus because, among other misperceptions, they don’t want to become “cookie-cutter Christians.” However, such concern couldn’t be more misguided. The closer to Christ we are, the more “fully human” we become, our individuality showing through. God created humankind “*in His own image*” (Genesis 1:27); accordingly, the farther we are from God, the murkier His image is in us and the less human we become. As we walk ever-closely with the Lord, our God-given uniqueness and giftedness should be increasingly evident and useful.

I had a boyhood friend who saved money until he could purchase some expensive tennis shoes. However, after buying the shoes, he rarely wore them, “not wanting to get them dirty.” I’ve known boat owners who leave their vessels docked continually, at great expense, for similar

reasons as my friend's regarding his shoes. The last thing we should do with talents is decommission them instead of gratefully using them for God's glory.

Saving faith in the Redeemer is personal, not something inherited or attained communally. The related, distinctive gifts God grants each Christ follower can, and should, be used to glorify God—to draw others toward Jesus. Today's parable of the talents is not about some getting more than others. Rather, it's about how God gifts us individually, expecting us to use our particular talents productively for kingdom purposes. The one receiving one talent and choosing to do nothing with it was judged for unfaithfulness; the others were rewarded with more.

What special talents has God gifted to you? Do you pridefully claim them as your own or—also wrongmindedly—leave them idly “on the shelf,” dismissing the Gift-Giver? How will you use God-given talents to lovingly serve others in Jesus' name and for His glory?

QUESTIONS

What are the problems with stereotyping others? What does “the closer to Christ, the more ‘fully human’ we become” mean to you? What does God mean for us to do with the gifts He grants to each of us individually?

PRAYERS

For Glenkirk's Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Pray for our country, wrestling with unparalleled political and social polarization and strife, the challenges of the continuing pandemic, and the influences of a surrounding fallen world. Pray that God's love and will would guide our leaders and all Americans.

Sources

- Peter Pett's quote can be found at <https://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/eng/pet/john-6.html>.

