

**Devotions – October 5-11, 2014**  
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**Sunday, Oct 5, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus*

Text: Matthew 16:13-15

**Now...Jesus...asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”**

We who pray often call ourselves Christians or disciples of Christ. We claim the identity of followers of Jesus Christ. But do you think much about who this Jesus is whom you follow? To some extent you probably do, but is your image of him pretty one-dimensional? When you pray, do you picture his whole body, or just his face? Is he standing up, sitting down, with a crown, with a smile on his face, or a tear in his eye? Does your vision of Jesus change depending on the prayer you offer? Do you even have an image in your mind while you pray?

Through the centuries many people have prayed to God through Jesus, and they found it helpful while praying to think of Jesus, or image Jesus, in the different roles he filled for his followers during his ministry in our midst. Imaging Jesus in these different roles has been fruitful in connecting them with Jesus (God) more deeply because prayer is a relational activity. We pray to a particular someone: our advocate and helper, Jesus. And when you can image Jesus while you are praying, your prayer can become more personal. As your image of Jesus becomes more complete and three-dimensional, you may even see Jesus' expression change as you pray. You may be more able to sense his response.

What are these roles of Jesus that others have found helpful? While there are many, the primary roles (per Richard Foster in *A Spiritual Formation Workbook*, Smith and Graybeal; Harper San Francisco, 1999) used through the ages are Jesus as Savior, Teacher, Lord, Friend, and Brother. Of course we can add to this list of personal, relational images the image Jesus gave to us of God: Dad.

As you pray today, choose an image of God, or God in Jesus, that fits the prayer you offer. See if it draws you closer to the one who listens to you and responds in love.

Let us pray: Jesus, my teacher, you know all there is to know about me and my life. May your Spirit stir my heart and mind to sense your guidance today. Help me to look for and see opportunities to learn your will from those you put in my path. In your holy name, Amen.



**Monday, October 6, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus as Our Friend*

Text: John 15:12-15.

**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.**

My best friend is someone that has been with me through lots of good days and plenty of not-so-good days. She has known me for years and seen me at my best and worst. No matter what I have done, she has supported me. When she thinks I'm being dumb, she tells me! When I need someone to simply listen without giving advice, she's there. She understands me, she comforts me, she encourages me, she talks to me, and she listens to me. We talk – a lot! We listen to each other – a lot! She's easy to talk with. I trust her completely. And I try to be as good a friend to her as she is to me, even though she has set a very high standard!

Picture your best friend. How does Jesus compare? Can you imagine Jesus as a friend, a friend that is as good (or better) than your best friend? How do we nurture a friendship? How can you nurture a friendship with Jesus? How can we come to trust Jesus like we trust our best friend? Probably a good start would be to talk with him – a lot. Listen to him – a lot.

Let us pray: O God, I am thankful that you have made me just like you made Jesus – a person who needs friends, who is better when sharing life with others. Grant me the patience and persistence it takes for me to talk to you and listen to you – a lot. I pray this in the name of the one who wants to call me friend, your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen



**Tuesday, October 7, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus as Our Lord*

Text: Luke 6:46-47

**[Jesus said] “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them.”**

God wants our life to be abundant and the way God has created this possibility is for us to center our life around Jesus Christ. Dallas Willard writes about how the word “Lord” conjures up the idea of obedience. A Lord is one whom we obey; or, in other words, one to whom we submit our will. Submission to God requires discipline! It is a discipline of abstinence because it's about denying ourselves the power or privilege we want. We're choosing not to make things

happen for ourselves, not to control people or situations even if we can, but instead to come under the Lord's authority, wisdom, and power. Often this includes submitting to people as we would submit to the Lord. Submitting to Jesus or a person who is "wise in godly life", leads us to do the things we want to do, and refrain from doing what we don't want to do. Note that the person to whom we submit does not see himself or herself as a leader, but as a servant to the one to whom they are obedient. We follow these people, not because they control us, but because we submit our wills to their example.

Jesus has shown us what obedience, submission to God's will, looks like. We even see Jesus, the Son of God, submit himself to people and circumstances just as he did to his Father. He submitted to people as diverse as John the Baptist who ate locusts and wild honey and to the hand-wringing and washing Pilate who ordered him to be crucified to placate the crowds. Time and again we see Jesus rolling with his circumstances, letting situations play out as he submits himself to the Father and listens to him: storms at sea, needy people interrupting him, disciples walking away from him, Judas betraying him.

In Jesus' example we see how he has made submission to God a concrete, daily reality by abandoning outcomes to God. With regard to our relationships, this means that to submit to God in any given situation is to refuse to try to get anyone to do anything, or to make things turn out a certain way, but instead simply to be responsible for loving God and neighbor, and to trust Jesus your Lord to bring about the best outcome. Can you picture a quietly and deeply powerful, loving, and obedient person as you offer your prayers?

Let us pray: Lord, you are worthy of my obedience and worship. Open me to the stirring of your Spirit so that I may submit to God's will. Help me to follow you closely all day. Move me to act and speak as you would, even if it doesn't feel comfortable, trusting that your agenda is better than mine, and that the results (outcomes) of my words and deeds will prove to be "good, pleasing, and perfect." Amen.

[Primary source: the website [soulshepherding.org](http://soulshepherding.org)]



**Wednesday, October 8, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus as Our Teacher*

Text: Matthew 17:5b

**[God said,] "This is my beloved Son – listen to him!"**

My best teacher was Mr. Jones, a college professor who taught freshman chemistry – a class that I almost failed. It wasn't his fault. I slept through most classes, which, as it turned out, wasn't a great strategy for passing the class. But even though he had hundreds of students, he made the effort to call me to his office to discuss my status as a student and future mining engineer.

He had me sit down next to his desk and proceeded to explain that I would most likely fail chemistry unless I changed my ways dramatically. He also asked if I knew how important chemistry was to a mining engineer (it turns out that it's pretty important – who could have guessed?). Then he told me that he would work with me to get my grades up so that I could pass the class. But that was not his main concern. His main concern was that I learn chemistry and he strongly suggested that even if I managed to pass, I should take the course again. He was my best teacher because he cared about me and my future. He was interested in successful students, not just passing grades. He knew more about my world and hopes than I did. Mr. Jones taught me a lot more than chemistry.

As you know, teaching was important to Jesus, too. The word teacher is found about 60 times in the New Testament; 30 of those times in direct reference to Jesus. In all his teaching Jesus closely associated a body of disciples with himself. They were to learn his teaching and pass it on; they shared his work of proclamation, healing, and feeding. The word disciple, meaning learner, pupil, or apprentice (my favorite), is used about 260 times in the Gospels and Acts.

With his teaching, Jesus taught his disciples, corrected the teachings of the religious establishment, and encouraged people to make a decision about following him into the kingdom of God. In his teaching, we find some major themes, including: the imminence of the kingdom of God, the offer of forgiveness to sinners, and the possibility of obedience to the point of suffering and death.

Within Jesus' teachings around these themes can be found his teaching about God's will for us (life in the kingdom of God), his own understanding of his work, and his clear hope that we will be his apprentices.

Jesus' role of teacher was broader than our present day understanding of the term. Besides instructing, he was a teacher who also healed, prophesied, and sent out disciples. He did not create a school of scholars; he created a movement built by disciples (apprentices) skilled in the craft of kingdom living.

As you pray with the image of Jesus in your minds, what do you see? Do you see someone who is brilliant beyond our imagination, knows you inside and out, and is interested in your “success” as his follower? Can you see him listening to you, his student?

Let us pray: Jesus, my teacher: you are worthy of my study, thought, and following. Teach me your wisdom and guide me into truth. Shape me by your example and teach me the craft of working in your kingdom. Amen



**Thursday, October 9, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus as Our Savior*

Text: John 12:46-47

**I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.**

What does it mean to you that Jesus has come to save you? What person that you know comes closest to being your “savior”? How can you picture a savior with whom you can converse (pray)? You may find it tough to imagine just what a savior could look like and how to keep that image in your mind as you pray.

For me the image of savior looks a lot like my mom. When I was a child, I lived on a dairy farm. Dad would often leave for the day and give us a short list of jobs to get done before he got home. More than once, my brothers and I would fritter away the day and have most of our work left to do in very little time. That's when Mom would show up. In a scene that played out countless times, she would start directing us, “Matt, you clean the stalls. Tom, go up and throw down the hay. Pete, ...” And then, while we worked, she would work, too. And she always took the hardest job. So in short time our work would be done. When Dad came home and asked about the work he had left for us, we could say, “Yep, we got it all done.” Saved by the mom.

Jesus tells us that he came to save us, not to judge us. This is really good, because we need saving! He saves us from the sin that we keep doing, and frees us from its hold on us and from its penalty. We have a Savior! And, thanks be to God, our Savior has sent a helper for us to get through this life. Because we have a Savior and a helper, we do not have to keep sinning the way we do today; we can grow in our similarity to Jesus. Because we are in partnership with the Holy Spirit, we can live like we do not fear death and that we are more powerful than the downward pull of the world. But to do that takes a strong and trusting connection to the one who has freed us: our Savior. It takes prayer.

Let us pray: God, in your Son you have given us the Savior we need. In your Spirit we find a live-giving partner. Thank you! Grant to us a growing connection with you that will allow us more and more to live my life as your Son would. We pray in his holy name. Amen



**Friday, October 10, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus as Brother*

Text: Hebrews 2:11, 17

**For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters...Therefore, [Jesus] had to become like his sisters and brothers in every respect...**

I have brothers and sisters; nine of them. When I was growing up in their midst, it seemed like I couldn't get away from them if I tried! Now, it seems like I can't get enough of them. The other day I needed help putting a roof on our chicken coop. I called my brother. A few years ago when I was looking for a job, my brother called me about one and put in a good word for me. I got the job. I am going through a little medical adventure right now and whenever I have a question (and often when I don't) my sister the nurse comes to advise me. You get the picture. Siblings can really be handy.

Of course, we all have the best (handiest!) sibling of all, our brother, Jesus. God the Father has seen to it that none of us will be without that person with whom we grow up. In Jesus your brother we have one who will give you advice if you ask. He will lend a hand if your soul needs some remodeling. If you need someone to put in a good word (a really good word) for you, he's your guy. Imagine that.

Let us pray: Jesus, my brother, where you see my life needs fixing up, please lend me hand. When I need some advice, let me hear your word. Open my eye to the needs of our sisters or brothers in need, and help me to support them however I can. In your name I pray. Amen



**Saturday, October 11, 2014**

*Getting to Know Jesus as Father*

Text: Matthew 6:8-9

**...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way: Our Father...**

It may be pretty easy for you to set the image of Father in your mind as you pray. For some of you that will be a powerfully loving and unconditionally accepting image. For some, it will not. For those of you for whom "Father" is not a positive image, maybe you can think of someone who does love you unconditionally, who is deeply and forever interested in your well being, who is present whenever needed, to whom you can always, always return. To the family of that one we belong.

Again and again Jesus turned to God the Father for comfort, strength, and direction. At critical times in Jesus' life we see and hear the Father showing up to remind him (and us), "You are my son!" We can feel our Father's pain when our friend, our teacher, our Lord, our brother dies on the cross. The tearing of the temple curtain, the shaking of the earth, the darkened day combine to groan, "My son, my son, is dead!" God is a good Father.

And he is our Father. This all powerful, unconditionally loving, all knowing one is our Father. Our Dad. Can you imagine God your Father when you pray in times of your deepest need, your most pain, your most confusion, your most lost, your least sense of worth?

Let us pray: O God, our Father, I give thanks for being your child, for being able to call on you anytime and anywhere, for being able to find a home with you. Bring me comfort, strength, and a sense of your love for me. Carry me through this day. In the name of your Son, I pray. Amen.

