DAILY DEVOTION
Fear

Golden thread: If we see Jesus’ love for us as greater than our fears, we’ll thrive in any storm.

Memory Verse: There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 ESV

Monday, June 20th - Building Your House on the Rock

Jesus preaches one of the most important sermons ever in Matthew 5 through 7. He ends it by making a very clear statement: on what is your life built? He gives us two options: solid ground or shaky sand. Here’s the kicker: Jesus tells us that in this lifetime, we will find out which one is our house built upon. This COVID crisis is sending tons of storms into our lives and showing us that Christ’s words are true.

Read Matthew 7:24-27
Journal:

1. Jesus says that we will face storms in our lives. Verses 24-27 make it clear that storms are coming. What storms are you facing right now? If you’re having trouble, make a list of the items that are making you physically ill, making it hard for you to sleep or worrying you that you can’t shake out of your mind.

2. A “house” built on solid ground is one that trusts in Christ and His work rather than our own. We often discover that our “house” is built on sinking sand (our own work) during storms. Read Matthew 5:3-5. How could admitting you need God (v. 3), lamenting your situation (v. 4) and humbling yourself before God (v. 5) help you build your “house” on solid ground?

Table Questions: Where do you tend to trust yourself or your own abilities instead of receiving the help, grace or love that God has for us? If you can’t think of anything, invite someone you trust to speak into your life.

Pray - Jesus, we thank you for these storms, not for the storms specifically but for what they reveal. As your children, we have trusted in so many things that are not from you. Forgive us, God. Thank you for using this time to show us where our hope should lie. Help us to trust you. God, we want to build our lives upon you...the Rock! As we continue our day, Jesus, draw us into a closer love with you. - Amen
Tuesday, June 21st
Trust not Transaction

Most of my life, I’ve been surrounded by performance. If I’m a good kid, I get toys. If I work hard, I am rewarded with promotions and financial gain. If I am a moral person, I’ll never get in trouble. On the flip side, if I’m doing something wrong, I’ll get punished. My mind knows this is how our world operates. Since that’s generally true, I often try to make God happy by doing good things. So to fix that, I’ll naturally do things that, in my mind, will make God happy. And really, I’m doing this hoping that He’ll remove trouble from my life.

It’s like I’m looking to make some sort of transaction. But we read here in Scripture that our actions can’t control God.

Read Psalm 62

Journal:

1. In this chapter, what are some characteristics the Psalmist mentions about God?

2. List the ways that David is trusting in God.

3. Based on your answer to the previous question, pick one way to trust God today.

Table Question: Let’s read Psalm 62. How can we trust God like David?

Pray - God, you are in control over all things. You are sovereign. Forgive me for trying to buy your love. Help me to obey you because you love me. I want to obey you because I see you laying down your life for me. Since this is true, I can trust you even in a storm. God, help me to trust you like David trusted you. Help me to know you more every day. - Amen
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Wednesday, July 22nd
Conquering Fear

What keeps you up at night? What is making your blood pressure rise or your health to decline in general? Whenever you have a chance to breathe, what’s the problem that keeps popping into your mind?

All of us are facing real fears in our world. On top of all that, many of us are isolated right now and living life on our own. We know that Jesus is the answer, but how is the Gospel the Good News that addresses our deeply rooted fears?

Read 1 John 4:18

Journal:

1. As you think about this past week, what are actual things that God could point to that deserve punishment? Jesus has completely absorbed your punishment for all your sins. Take some time to write out your thoughts of thankfulness and praise to Jesus for doing that.

2. Many of our fears stem from our need to be accepted. One of the ways God’s perfect love has the power to remove fear is by showing us how He accepts us. What is your deepest need? It could be to be loved, to be honored, to be cherished, to be appreciated, to be liked, etc. Write out what your deepest need is. How does Jesus’ righteousness give what your heart longs to feel?

Table Question: How do you wish other people affirmed you? How does Jesus fulfill this need for you?

Pray - God, I confess that a lot of my life is wasted because I live in fear. Those fears are usually because I am afraid that I won’t be loved. I’m afraid that I won’t be taken care of. I’m afraid that you won’t protect me. Jesus, help me to see the cross clearly today. Help me to see that if you gave up your only Son, surely you’ll give me everything that I need. God, if you gave up Jesus to make me your child, then you will accept me as you accept Jesus. God, would your love drive out every fear that I encounter today. Would I live a free life because of your deep love for me. - Amen
Memory Verse:
There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 ESV

Thursday, July 23rd
Iffy Theology

We live in an if/then world. If you buy me lunch, then I’ll spend some time with you. If you scratch my back, then I’ll scratch yours.

If I’m not careful, that thinking bleeds into my relationship with God. I say, “God, if you allow me to have this job, then I’ll be sure to give you some money from it”. or “God, if you allow me to have this home, then I’ll be sure to use it to host a small group”.

This is some pretty “iffy” theology. The problem is, we all do this at one time or another. Today we’re going to look at someone who does this to Jesus.

Read Luke 18:18-30

Journal:

1. What “ifs” do you find yourself presenting to God? What would your relationship with Christ look like if you got rid of all the “iffy” theology in your life?

2. Jesus’ love language is obedience. What is the area of obedience that Christ is helping you to grow in today? What does that look like? How can you take a step to obey Christ more today?

Table Question: Explain “iffy” theology to your table. What is an area of your life that looks “iffy”? Why?

Pray - For today’s prayer, be open and honest with Him. Confess the “ifs” you have towards God. If there’s parts of your heart that can’t fully accept Him without conditions, it’s good to admit that too. After confessing, allow God to show you grace. Ask God to show you where you need to be obedient and trust Him to give you the power to take that step. May your confession and receiving of His love towards you turn your prayer into worship. - Amen
Memory Verse: There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 ESV

Friday, July 24th - "Can’t Believes" > "Ifs"

Do you remember the “ifs” that you identified yesterday? How did it feel to realize that you’ve been holding on to so many idols or little gods? Even so, God is not ashamed of you. He loves us so much that He will not let life’s stormy circumstances go to waste, but instead, uses them to help us get rid of our “ifs” which are and have been failing us. But Jesus stands firm through all storms. Jesus is never impacted by life’s circumstances because He is above all. Jesus does not punish us for looking to other gods because He already took the punishment we deserve. Rather, He continues to think of us, to be with us, to love us, because of His greatest suffering.

One of our responses should be saying out loud: I can’t believe it. “Can’t believes” represent our response to Jesus’ incredible love and grace that is given so sacrificially, freely and abundantly that it is hard to believe it’s true.

Read John 17:20-26

Journal:

1. This passage is one of Jesus’ prayers. What is the setting of when He prays this prayer? Where is He? What is about to happen? Read a little bit before and after chapter 17 to find out.
   - Read verse 20 again. Who are all the people who Jesus is talking about?
   - Now that you have a little bit more context, read the passage again as if Jesus is talking to God the Father directly about YOU because He is. Write down all the things that Jesus wants and asks the Father for on your behalf.

2. Read the things that you wrote down. Based on these things, how do you think Jesus feels about you? Why does He feel this way about you? What did He decide to do because of how He feels about you. Write all of those down too.
   - Which ones are you struggling to believe are really true? Circle them. Those are your “can’t believes”

Table Question: Find or invite someone else to walk through this passage with and share your “can’t believes”. Talk about why you struggle to believe those things.

Pray - Lord Jesus, I can’t believe we’re allowed to talk like this, so freely and intimately. I can’t believe you see me as your precious person. I can’t believe you choose to set your affections on me, fully knowing every part of me and all the ways that I have and am choosing so many things over you. Thank you for being so patient with me every day and especially this week, walking with me and showing me my sin. Thank you for thinking of me before you went to the cross so that we could be with you and God forever. I beg you to help me seek you with all of my heart. Help me to remember and feel my “can’t believes” and be in greater awe of them each day. Everything is crazy right now, but you do not change. Help me to cling to you and be more like you. Thank you for loving me! today because I believe that you didn’t just die for me to take away my sin, you lived a perfect life for me so that I might have your righteousness. - Amen.