



## ▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

**Saturday/Sunday, 4/6-7/19**

**“Is God to Blame? ‘Freedom and Risk’”**

**John 17:20-26 (CEB)**

*“I’m not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word. I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I’ve given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be one just as we are one. I’m in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me.*

*Father, I want those you gave me to be with me where I am. Then they can see my glory, which you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*

*“Righteous Father, even the world didn’t know you, but I’ve known you, and these believers know that you sent me. I’ve made your name known to them and will continue to make it known so that your love for me will be in them, and I myself will be in them.”*

The text above shows Jesus praying for the disciples, but Jesus doesn’t stop there. He says a prayer on behalf of you, me and others. Jesus does not force people into believing. There is no coercion or corruption. Jesus’ motives are pure. He wants people to live together as one body glorifying God. Jesus gives us the ability to choose. Each devotion this week will give us the opportunity to make a choice. Let’s read together. Let’s pray together. Let’s choose Christ together.

- *Pastor Britton*

**Family Activity:** Get a deck of cards. Shuffle the deck and have everyone draw a card. Be careful that you don’t look at your card. Put the cards on your foreheads so that all other players can see it. Everyone takes a turn to decide who the highest card is. It could be your own. It could be another player. Take the cards down and see who has the highest card. To simplify the game for younger players, remove the face cards and the aces to leave only numbers. To simplify it further, guess whether your own card is red or black. An alternative to a deck of cards is to use paper numbered from 1 to 10.

At the end of a few rounds, explain to your kids that sometimes we have to make choices even though we don’t have all the information. It’s just like guessing our cards that we cannot see. God gives us the ability to make choices and to fail. God gives us the forgiveness to choose again. Pray to God to help us all make good choices.

**Monday, 4/8/19**

**“Choose ...”**

**Romans 6:14 (CEB)**

*Sin will have no power over you, because you aren't under Law but under grace.*

- I remember reading about a study that looked at our ability to choose. It collected research on organ donors. Some countries had 80% of its citizens as organ donors. Other countries had only 20%. The only difference is in how the countries created the organ donor form. Countries with high donor rates required people to check a box if they wanted to opt out. In other words, all people were organ donors by default unless they checked the box. Conversely, countries with lower donor rates required people to opt in. That means a person had to check a box to become an organ donor. It turns out we don't like checking boxes. The study showed that we don't have as much control over our decisions as we think we do. Sometimes life feels like this. We think we have no ability to choose because life comes straight at us. All we can do is react. Sometimes we think God is the master puppet, orchestrating our lives. Do you believe you have the power to choose?
- The passage states the law is no more. We operate under a new set of circumstances, the grace of God. Grace operates differently than the law. The law requires us to meet a certain standard. The problem is, on our own power, we often fail to meet the standard. That's where grace comes in. When we choose God's grace, we begin to make choices we could not make on our own. The only choice we need to make is to choose grace. Pause for a moment. Clear all distractions. Choose God's grace in this moment.

**Prayer:** God, what a precious gift you have given us. You freely give of your grace, holding nothing back. May we experience the fullness of your grace today. May your grace take over our lives, moving us in ways we couldn't. Amen.

**Tuesday, 4/9/19**

**“Choose Freedom”**

**Exodus 14:13 (CEB)**

*But Moses said to the people, “Don't be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again.”*

- The Israelites are afraid and for good reason. They are fleeing from Egyptian captivity, but the Egyptians are in hot pursuit. They tell Moses, “Why did you bring us out here? It would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die out here!” They wanted to turn back even though the path to freedom was forward. When you face a difficult decision or moment in life, do you want to turn back or is it easy to have faith and push forward?
- Moses reassures the Israelites and says, “Stand firm. God is faithful. Yes, the Egyptians are coming, but this will be the last time you have to deal with them. Don't turn back.” Moses knew what turning back meant. That meant going back to comfort. That meant going back to slavery. Moses knew God wanted them to live as free people. Whatever you are struggling with today, God wants to free you from that. Will it be difficult? Maybe. Will you want to turn back? Possibly. God, though, wants to free you to live the best possible life for God. Choose the freedom that God has for you today.

**Prayer:** God, I no longer want to look back. I want to put the past behind me. I want to remember it though I want to move forward. Help me to move forward. By your grace, grant me the freedom from the things that hold me back, from the things that keep me enslaved. I want to live my life freely and openly for You. Amen.

**Wednesday, 4/10/19**

**“Choose Prayer”**

**Jude 20-22 (CEB)**

*But you, dear friends: build each other up on the foundation of your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep each other in the love of God, wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you eternal life.*

- The scripture above lists several foundations of the Christian faith. Did you notice the first one on this list? It's prayer. Sometimes I think we confuse prayer as a way for God to solve our problems. The true miracle of prayer is it places us in God's care. In all things we do, we should choose prayer. How can you incorporate prayer in your life right now? Don't discount the power of a 10-second prayer.
- Prayer is so essential because it connects us to God, but it does much more than that. It keeps us in the love of God. It allows our lives to be filled with the mercy of Christ. It is a reminder that we have eternal life. When we begin with prayer, it gives God a chance to break through. What is going on in your life that you would like to begin with prayer?

**Prayer:** Loving God, we take a moment of pause to connect to the Holy Spirit who guides us. May Your love flow through our lives filling us with mercy. Remind us that we have been gifted eternal life. We pray that You break through our own desires, attitudes and shortcomings so that Your glory may be revealed. Amen.

**Thursday, 4/11/19**

**“Choose Love”**

**1 John 3:16-18 (CEB)**

*This is how we know love: Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. But if someone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but refuses to help — how can the love of God dwell in a person like that?*

- John 3:16 may be a more famous passage, but 1 John 3:16 is just as good. Jesus set the example of what love looks like by laying down his life for us. It's a choice Jesus made. Jesus loved the unlovable, the very people who put him to death. He loved the outcast. He loved sacrificially. Do you ever feel unlovable? Choose to rest in the love of Jesus Christ.
- I love these verses because they are so practical. A challenge is issued to follow the example of Christ by laying down our lives for others. While that may seem extreme, a much easier example follows in verse 17. It says those who have material possessions should give to people in need, otherwise the love of God cannot dwell in them. Choosing love means we choose to give. We choose to share. Think of a person in need or something you may be able to give. Choose love today by sharing what you have to offer to someone else!

**Prayer:** God, we are grateful for the example of Jesus Christ who was willing to give all of himself out of his love for us. Help us to take that same love and put it into action. May the world know your name by the way we love. Amen.

**Friday, 4/12/19**

**“Choose to Continue”**

**1 Timothy 6:11-12 (CEB)**

*But as for you, man of God, run away from all these things. Instead, pursue righteousness, holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance and gentleness. Compete in the good fight of faith. Grab hold of eternal life — you were called to it, and you made a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses.*

- Ever heard the phrase, “Life is like a roller coaster?” It means life has its ups and downs, its highs and lows. Our faith journey is similar. I’ve had moments in my life where I’ve felt on fire for God. At other times, God seems distant. It’s like I’m riding that faith roller coaster. Where are you at on the faith roller coaster right now?
- Two words stick out to me in this passage: pursue and endurance. When we feel close to God, we are in a season of pursuit. We pursue because it’s easy to pray, to go to church, or serve in some way. When we feel distant from God, we are in a season of endurance. We must endure the suffering, hardships and complacency. Now that you know where you are on the faith roller coaster, how can you pursue or endure at this time? Know that your church family is encouraging and praying for you. When you want to give up, choose to continue!

**Prayer:** God, we offer you our praise for Your consistency. Though we go up and down while experiencing the thrills of life, You remain. Let us pursue Your heart. Let us endure as Your love endures for us. Amen.

***This week’s devotional was written by  
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