

THE CAMP CONNECTION

DAILY DEVOTIONS

ENJOYING SOME GREYSTONE FUN AT HOME. WE  AND MISS OUR MAIN CAMPERS!

MONDAY, JUNE 22 - OPENING DAY

BETTER THAN A NAMETAG

BUT ZION SAID, "THE LORD HAS FORSAKEN ME; MY LORD HAS FORGOTTEN ME. CAN A WOMAN FORGET HER NURSING CHILD, THAT SHE SHOULD HAVE NO COMPASSION ON THE SON OF HER WOMB? EVEN THESE MAY FORGET, YET I WILL NOT FORGET YOU. BEHOLD, I HAVE ENGRAVED YOU ON THE PALMS OF MY HANDS; YOUR WALLS ARE CONTINUALLY BEFORE ME."

ISAIAH 49:14-16

Oh Greystone Girls, what we would give to be getting up at the crack of dawn to welcome you to camp this morning! Today should have been full of name tags and hugs and (of course!) warm scones. But obviously, that wasn't meant to be this year.

When we say the words "Opening Day," what do you think about? How does it make you feel? If you're anything like us, that phrase makes you jump-up-and-down-excited and may-not-eat-breakfast-nervous, all at the same time. It means the countdown has finally ended and camp has begun. Friends! Your counselor! The Blob! But it also means you're saying goodbye to your family for a few weeks. What if you don't fit in? What is the Screamer anyway?

A lot of people would say the best part about an Opening Day at Greystone is how welcomed and loved you feel. You are greeted with huge smiles. There is a place here just for you! Your counselor has made you a name tag - she has been waiting for you. And it all culminates in what we call the "Royal Reception," a newer tradition where campers are greeted at the first assembly with a huge line of staff, cheering and clapping for them. It makes us tear up every time!

There's a reason we do all of these things, and it's the same reason that they make you feel good. We were made to be recognized and welcomed and a part of something bigger than ourselves. Did you know that Opening Day at camp is just a small, imperfect picture of the way God,

the creator of the mountains and the stars and the ladybugs, looks at you?

We read in Isaiah that God has written your name in the palm of His hand - how crazy is that? That's better than any nametag. He created every little bit of you and formed you just right. He calls you the crown of His creation. You are a part of His family, and you (yes, you!) have a place at His table. That cheering as we run into the Pavilion on Opening Day? It's nothing compared to the celebrating in Heaven every time someone accepts Him into her heart.

And the best part? This love, this acceptance, this welcome is already yours. It's not dependent on how good you are or how well you do in school or in sports. It's yours just because God loves you and delights in you. He enjoys you and wants to give you that Opening Day feeling, every day. All you have to do is say yes to Him.

1. What is your favorite part of Opening Day? Can you see how God offers that feeling to you all the time?

2. What would change about your life if you really believed that He has a place for you and has your name written on His hand, just because He loves you?

TUESDAY, JUNE 23

TIMES OF REFRESHING

REPENT, THEN, AND TURN TO GOD, SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT, THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE LORD.

ACTS 3:19

What did this year feel like for you? Did anything happen that you regret, or that didn't go the way you wanted it to? If you're like me, the answer is probably yes. We live in a broken world, and that affects our relationships, our families, and everything we do. Things just feel hard sometimes, and we wish they were different. So, chances are that you were hoping to come to camp this summer to return to the safety of the bubble, that feeling that everything is okay.

You may not be at camp this summer, but you can bring some of the truth of the bubble home with you. (we're hoping these devotions will help!) The world is hard, and if things feel broken, that's because they are! But that's not the whole story. We have a good God who remains the same. He is working in you and using you to make the world whole again. In the meantime? You are totally loved exactly how you are. In Him, you have everything. What if you took these next five weeks and decided to remind yourself of what's true? To make this a time of growth, even while you're at home?

My first summer at Greystone, I came on the heels of a difficult junior year of college. Greystone was so healing for me that summer. I found the community that I needed, and the purpose that my heart was seeking for that season of life. The people I encountered at camp (and still dearly love to this day) were a tangible Jesus to me that year. They welcomed me in, and encouraged and loved me every day. And my experiences at camp changed so much of my mindset, work ethic, and even the direction of my life.

You may not be at camp this summer, but the Lord who meets you there every year is still with you at home. We pray that your heart will find

just what it needs these next 5 weeks. You may hear and see Jesus in an entirely different way. We pray that you do. It can be a time for your heart to really tune in to what God wants your next year to look like, and to connect with your camp friends even if you're not in the same place.

No matter what burdens you have right now, no matter what the last year looked like for you, take it before Jesus and lay it down. Ask for forgiveness if you need to, and allow Him to renew your heart from bitterness and regret. Mark this as a season of refreshing! Open your heart to the people around you and the Savior who loves you outrageously. Encourage those that God places in your path as you're at home. And just wait to see what God might do this summer - He is using it for your good, even though it doesn't look the way you expected it would.

1. Is there anything that you know you need to give to Jesus? Take this time to pray, ask forgiveness, and reflect on the past year.

2. Ask God to make this a season of refreshing for you, in whatever way you need it.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

A LIFE OF CELEBRATION

FOR THIS LIGHT MOMENTARY AFFLICTION IS PREPARING FOR US AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY BEYOND ALL COMPARISON, AS WE LOOK NOT TO THE THINGS THAT ARE SEEN BUT TO THE THINGS THAT ARE UNSEEN. FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE SEEN ARE TRANSIENT, BUT THE THINGS THAT ARE UNSEEN ARE ETERNAL.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18

The world seems to get heavier by the day, doesn't it? Growing up isn't easy, and the more aware you are of the bad in the world, it can seem to outweigh the good. The days and the months can seem to drag. But a life lived in the glory of salvation is a life of celebration, my friend. Not just today, but forever.

The glorious, holy truth is that this world is not our home. We are temporary residents of this imperfect world. You may have had a hard year. You may be discouraged in your personal life, or having trouble understanding where God is leading. You may have experienced huge loss this year, or a break-up, or family drama and separation. Maybe even just a deep fear of the unknown ahead of you!

Those things are painful, and they are definitely hard. But the beautiful thing is that those are "light momentary afflictions" because of Christ's sacrifice. One day they'll be a distant memory, and your reality and mine will be something we can only dream to comprehend right now.

So what do we do in the in-between? In the waiting period? We live with hope. We live with the knowledge that "the things that are unseen are eternal". We live with faith that our hope and trust in Jesus will not be disappointed, but one day fulfilled in the most wonderful way when we are reunited with him. We live with expectation that God shows up in the here and now. One day we'll have eternity with our Creator, but we can always look for signs of God's goodness today.

Take your time to look around this summer. Notice the sunrises, and the sunsets. Take in the simple joy of time with your family. Look for fireflies. Start noticing small things that are worthy of celebration.

We don't live without hope. There is a purpose and meaning in every day. Let's enjoy the beauty of today while we anticipate forever with Him.

1. What are 3 things that you can celebrate about this week?

2. What are some "momentary afflictions" that you are experiencing right now, or this year? What moments of beauty did you see through those times?

THURSDAY, JUNE 25

HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL

THE ONE WHO CALLS YOU IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL DO IT.

LET US HOLD FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE WITHOUT WAVERING, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:24, HEBREWS 10:23

Have you ever felt like you were being faithful to God, but He isn't being faithful to you? It often seems like we are doing all that God asks- but He isn't keeping up His end of the bargain.

We may be doing the right and wise things- spending time with Jesus every day, cultivating patience with our family, and being fully present in what God has called us to do - but we still may not see God showing up in the places we want Him to. Life just feels hard sometimes.

I think a lot of our frustration comes from a misunderstanding of why God wants us to do what He asks us to do. It's not because He wants us to live confined to a miserable set of rules that will lead us to an uneventful and boring life. It's because He created life, and knows how to live it best, and He wants US to reap the full benefits of abundant life.

Our second misunderstanding is in the word faithful... look at that word for a minute. Do you see what it says? To be faithful you must be FULL of faith. It doesn't say that we must be perfect, or rule followers, or the world's best Christian. It simply means that we need to have faith in what God has promised over our lives.

Being faithful doesn't mean being faithful to God so He will in turn be faithful to you- it means having a life full of faith that He will do what He says. If we believe God isn't being faithful to us, then we aren't truly being full of faith.

1 Thessalonians remind us that our God is faithful and He will do it. And

in Hebrews we are reminded that He who promised is faithful. I love these verses because they remind us that our God is a faithful God. If God says He is going to do something- He will do it. God can't not be faithful because FAITHFUL is who God is.

Unlike us, God is perfect and true in character- He can't deny Himself. This means that all of God's promises are "yes and amen" to us through Jesus- every single thing that He promises us He will do; He will do. When God says in Jeremiah that "He knows the plans for us, plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, to give you a hope and future" He really means it! He is working out everything in your life- from the very small to the giant things for your good.

The kicker is that the verse says that "HE" knows- not that we know. Often we see the smallest corner of the truth while God is painting on the giant canvas of our lives. The small corner may be lonely at times and we might just be sick of it- but we can trust that God sees the entire painting and in the end our lives will be beautiful if we trust in Him. So while you're waiting- for friends, for a broken heart to be healed, for God to show up- remember to stay faith-full and have faith to believe that God always does what He says will.

1. Has it been hard or easy to remember that God is faithful this year?
2. Which promise of God do you need to hang on today, knowing that all of his promises are "yes and amen" in Jesus?

FRIDAY, JUNE 26

JOY, JUNK, JESUS

SURELY YOUR GOODNESS AND LOVE WILL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE, AND I
WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER.

PSALM 23:6

During college, I led a bible study for a group of friends. We met once a week and every time we met, it started the same way. I went around the room and asked each person to share their “Joy, Junk, and Jesus” for the week. The first time I asked this question, the girls in the room looked at me with blank stares. A couple of the girls mentioned how they had heard of “highs and lows” or “rose and thorns” but had not heard it explained this way before. I explained that it is very similar in the way that your “joy” is the best part of the day or something that was good in your day and your “junk” is something that was not so great (you don’t have to have a junk!). This then left the question, well what is supposed to be my “Jesus”?

I always used the same examples and illustrations to explain how to identify the “Jesus” in their week. I told them that their “Jesus” could be anything! It could be a person, place, or thing. When trying to decide what or who had been the “Jesus” in their week, I always told the girls to think back on when they felt Jesus’ presence during their week. I used the example of a sunrise or sunset because for me, I always feel God’s overwhelming presence when I am watching a beautiful sunrise or sunset. A majestic sunrise or sunset is always a reminder to me that God is the ultimate creator and author of our lives and that he is watching over us each and every day.

I don’t know about you, but it is always very easy for me to answer what or who my “Jesus” is for a particular day during camp. When I think about these moments during camp, I think about my “Jesus” moments being overnights and the peacefulness of lying on my back and looking up at the stars in heaven. A lot of the time, I think it is so much easier for me to identify these “Jesus” moments during camp because

disconnecting with my phone and the rest of the world while I am in the camp bubble allows me to connect with the Lord more. If I am not looking down at my phone or engulfed in the newest Netflix series, I am not as likely to miss the “Jesus” moments and I can see the Lord more clearly because these worldly distractions are not blurring my vision. So really, these “Jesus” moments are occurring in our lives each and every day, we just have to take the time to identify them.

As the above scripture reminds us, “your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.” This is a reminder that the Lord is not just following us around when we are at camp catching fireflies on the pageant court or having a DMC with our best friend by the lake. Instead, the Lord follows us each and every single day. We are constantly surrounded by his goodness and love whether we are in the camp bubble or at home (whether home is California, New York, Texas, or any other part of the country!)

I challenge you to try to stop and identify these moments in your everyday life right now. These “Jesus” moments are happening every day in our lives because the Lord is near us and his presence is just as abundant as it is when we are in the camp bubble. The Lord is present when we are brushing our teeth in the mornings, completing summer reading, or taking a walk around the neighborhood with our family or friends. Take a minute and think about where you saw the Lord present in your life today. Did you feel the Lords’ presence when were outside enjoying the sunshine? Or possibly snuggled up on the couch with a book watching rain fall? Or maybe a particular song came on your playlist that made you feel his presence? These “Jesus” moments might look different for everyone so try and identify them in your life today knowing that the Lord was with you yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

1. What is your “joy, junk, Jesus” today?
2. How can you create time in your day to sit in the stillness of the Lord and feel his presence each day outside of the bubble?

SATURDAY, JUNE 27

WHY TODAY IS A GREAT DAY

THIS IS THE DAY THAT THE LORD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT.

PSALM 118:24

Remember with me for a second mornings at camp. Reveille blows (probably a little too early), you hear your cabinmates start to stir (or maybe everyone is still fast asleep?), and you wake up, clap your hands, and say, "It's going to be a great day and I feel terrific!" Granted, it's a little weird (you would never do that at a sleepover!), but a lot of what we do at camp is kind of strange. But there's a reason behind everything, there's a reason that before we brush our teeth or even get out of bed, we claim the day. We believe that your attitude matters and that every day can be a great day if you look for the good.

But there's a deeper reason too, and you can see it in this verse from the Psalms. We can say with complete confidence that it is going to be a great day because this is a day the Lord has made, a day He has made especially for us, and given to us in His goodness. Everything that you come upon today is being used by the God who loves us more than we can imagine, for our good and His glory.

This doesn't mean that every day is going to feel great though. In fact, the Bible tells us over and over again that life as a Christian is hard. This year so far has definitely not felt like our favorite. But the best thing about Christianity is that we have a firm, solid, unchangeable hope that God is still working even now, and that He wins in the end.

In New Morning Mercies, Paul David Tripp writes, "There is simply no panic in heaven. God is never anxious.... God never worries about what is going to happen next or stresses over how things are going to turn out.... He never makes promises that He cannot keep. He never forgets what He said or what He wants to do next. He is all-powerful, absolutely perfect in every way, faithful to every word, sovereign over all that is, the definition of love, and He is righteous, just, tender, and patient all at

the same time. He is not dismayed or distracted by our panic and our questions. No, the sovereign move of His grace marches on!"

This is why we can say with confidence that it is a great day, before we've even seen what's in it. Because no matter what happens in your day, God is moving things closer to the one day someday when He is going to make everything right, and we will be with Him. We can feel terrific because He is in control. Nothing surprises Him. He is watching over you even now. Doesn't that change the way you look at the gift of today?

1. Make a list of ways the last few days have felt great. How can you thank God for that?

2. How has the last week or month felt less than great? How can you trust that God is using it in your life?

SUNDAY, JUNE 28

CELEBRATING OUR WEAKNESSES

THREE TIMES I PLEASSED WITH THE LORD TO TAKE [THIS THORN] AWAY FROM ME. BUT HE SAID TO ME, 'MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.' THEREFORE I WILL BOAST ALL THE MORE GLADLY ABOUT MY WEAKNESS, SO THAT CHRIST'S POWER MAY REST ON ME.... FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10

Here's the truth: you're not going to be perfect, in any aspect of life! You are going to make mistakes, and mess up in big and small ways. We all do! To be imperfect is to be human.

But can I tell you now? No one is expecting you to be perfect (including God!). There's a freedom that comes from admitting that we are total sinners, that we can never do anything perfectly. So stop expecting that of yourself!

A phrase that keeps speaking to me lately is something my pastor recently said. He told me, "There's no shoe waiting to drop," meaning that God is not waiting to punish you when you fail. He's not holding his breath for the moment you fail. That's not who he is at all, but so many times, I get caught up in the idea that if I just did every single thing in my life perfectly, then I would be perfect, and I would be loved. But that's not God's heart at all.

In fact, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12 that we get to celebrate our weaknesses! We get to call them good because they show us again and again that relying on our own strength isn't going to work. We simply have to rely on the love that God has for us. And that love doesn't diminish when you lose your temper, or when you gossip, or when your tone becomes unkind. It doesn't diminish from the things that have happened at home, or at school, or any other point in your life. You are safe.

Your position as God's daughter or son is secure. You don't have to keep holding your breath waiting to get in trouble.

Of course, I'm not saying to continue in sin because that's not God's desire for us. But we have the gift of grace that is ours for the taking. God doesn't want us to continue in shame, but to instead come to Him and depend on Him. God doesn't want us to fix everything in our own strength, but instead to trust in Him. We can rest and trust and believe that God loves us, even in our mess.

1. What's an area in your life where you've been trying to fix it all instead of relying on Jesus for help? Take a second and surrender it to Jesus again.

2. Meditate on the fact that you are enough, just as you are, for this coming year. Jesus will work through your weakness.

MONDAY, JUNE 29

WE ARE THE CLAY

BUT NOW, O LORD, YOU ARE OUR FATHER; WE ARE THE CLAY, AND YOU ARE OUR POTTER;
WE ARE ALL THE WORKS OF YOUR HAND.

ISAIAH 64:8

FOR IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR HIS GOOD
PLEASURE.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

Have you ever wondered what it feels like to be clay on a pottery wheel? If clay had senses, what would it physically feel like to be centered on a spinning wheel, drawn up and pat down by the able hands of a skilled potter, pinched and pulled, smoothed and scraped, carved and shaped, made more beautiful and closer to its intended purpose with each touch of the potter's hands and tools?

I imagine that it feels a lot like sanctification, which is a fancy theological term for the process of being made holy, of becoming closer to the heart of God... closer to how He intends us to be.

Our whole life after becoming Christians is this process of sanctification. Of God, our potter, shaping us and molding us into the most beautiful, intentionally created vessels possible. Sometimes this process is comfortable and feels easy and gentle, but other times it can be awkward or uncomfortable—like we are being pulled or pushed out of our comfort zone, or like our impurities, idols, or bad habits are being carved away with a sharp tool, one at a time.

Just as a master potter patiently creates a beautiful vase, God patiently works in us—molding and shaping us. When you are growing spiritually, you are experiencing sanctification. You will find that God is going to stretch you and push you, but as you pursue spiritual growth, you will also find yourself becoming more centered and trusting of His work in you, and that is a sweet, sweet thing.

One of the best parts of sanctification? It doesn't depend on your own strength. The clay doesn't turn into a pot because of how hard it's trying - of course not! It becomes something beautiful and useful because of the skill of the potter, because it surrenders itself into His hands. As Christians, we are in the kindest, most capable hands that exist. He is the one shaping us, using our circumstances to make us more like Himself. That is a wonderful thing.

1. In what ways do you feel that God is trying to push you out of your comfort zone or shape you this summer?

2. Can you name a specific way God has worked in you this year? How did it feel at the time, and now?

TUESDAY, JUNE 30

SO WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH GRACE?

FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH. AND THIS IS NOT YOUR OWN DOING; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST. FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND, THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM.

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

Imagine something with us for a minute. Your life is a book and on its pages is everything you've ever thought, done, or imagined from the day you were born on - the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sounds a little scary, right? But imagine a second book. This book includes all the same stuff, but about Jesus' life. Every single second, but the difference? He was perfect. He never sinned or didn't live up to God's standard for even a single second.

Now, this is where it gets crazy. Imagine if you removed the covers from both books, and switched them. So Jesus' name goes on the contents of your book, and your name goes on His. He takes responsibility for everything you have done, and you are credited with His perfection.

That friends is grace! Grace is God's free gift to you. You haven't done (and you can't do) anything to earn it or deserve it or pay Him back for it. But because He loves us, Jesus died to pay for our sins. Just like in the book analogy, He took on the punishment for every way we have gone wrong, so that when God looks at us, He sees every way Jesus was right. If it's hard to wrap your mind around, that's because we don't have anything to compare it to in our world. This is the greatest love, the greatest sacrifice, the greatest gift anyone has ever imagined!

Pastor Tim Keller says it well, "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." We are so that sinful God had to die for us, but we are so loved that He was willing to. We haven't done anything to earn that kind of love - it is

His free gift to us, His great grace.

Christians will spend their whole lives reminding themselves over and over again of this truth. But the more you understand it, and accept it, the more we love Him and worship him in return. If someone gave up everything for you, just because they care about you that much, wouldn't it change the way you felt about them? The more we recognize our own sin, the more beautiful what He did for us is, and in turn, the more we want to live every second for Him.

We follow God and obey His commands not to try to earn our salvation or His love, but in response to the truth that we are already saved. We are already fully loved. Everything else flows out of that!

1. Are you ever tempted to try to do everything right so that God loves you? How would it change your life if you believed that His love has nothing to do with your performance?

2. The word gospel means "good news." How is this good news for you today?

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

"I DO IT SELF!"

ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU. AS THE BRANCH CANNOT BEAR FRUIT BY ITSELF, UNLESS IT ABIDES IN THE VINE, NEITHER CAN YOU, UNLESS YOU ABIDE IN ME. I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. WHOEVER ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE IT IS THAT BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.

JOHN 15:4-5

According to my parents, when I was little I was extremely stubborn. They like to tell me about how I always wore sundresses and patent-leather combat boots with frilly lace socks sticking out of the top and a matching bow in my hair. It sounds cute, but apparently I wouldn't let anyone help me with anything, even if whatever it was I insisted on doing myself was beyond my three-year-old ability. As the story goes, this defiance typically looked like me stomping my combat boot-clad feet, putting my little hands in fists on my hip, furrowing my brow, and determinedly declaring, "I do it SELF!"

Thankfully, I've grown out of the feet stomping and grammatically flawed declarations, but if I'm being honest, the condition of my heart is often the same. I don't like to ask for help—not from other people and especially not from God. I like to think that I can handle things by myself: big projects, difficult relationships, too many commitments, etc. Over and over again, I have to face the fact that I cannot "do it self," because things inevitably fall apart when I refuse to ask for help. I wasn't created to handle everything; and any time I try to take matters into my hands it only ends in anxiety, hurt, and loneliness. When we try to carry something—even good things—all by ourselves, those things become burdens.

What are you trying to carry all by yourself today? Worry about your future? The pressure of grades or a sports team? A difficult friendship? My encouragement to you is this: release those hands from those fists, relax your shoulders, take a deep breath, and take on the posture of "Lord, I need you," not "I do it self!" One of the coolest things about

God is that He is all-powerful. He can handle anything that you find burdensome, and He calls us to trust him in that. Proverbs 3:5 says to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding."

There is sweet, joyous freedom in admitting our need for help. We don't have to measure up or prove to God that we have everything handled. One of my favorite hymns, "Come Ye Sinners" includes the line, "all the fitness He requires is to feel your need of Him."

Hear this: the only thing the Lord almighty, maker of Heaven and earth requires of you is that you admit that you need Him. That's it. Nothing Else. What a beautiful, precious gift!

1. What have you been trying to handle by yourself lately?

2. What would it look like for you to release those things to the Lord and live in freedom today?

THURSDAY, JULY 2

TURN AROUND

THERE IS A FRIEND THAT STICKS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.
PROVERBS 18:24

FOR THE LORD WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE, FOR HIS GREAT NAME'S SAKE, BECAUSE
IT HAS PLEASSED THE LORD TO MAKE YOU A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF.

1 SAMUEL 12:22

One of the best pieces of advice I've ever received happened over coffee with my school's RUF intern, Linnea, my freshman year of college. I was discouraged and lonely, striving for friendship from people who simply weren't returning it, and it didn't feel good. I sat across from Linnea on the verge of tears, very much feeling sorry for myself, and she gave me this advice: "Sometimes the best friendships happen when we stop striving after fixing our own loneliness and turn around to find that there's someone else feeling lonely right behind you that you can befriend."

We always talk about how the secret of Greystone is unselfishness. I find that a lot of my selfish nature comes out in my trying to protect myself by finding friends and keeping them all to myself, or by wallowing in my own self pity when I feel lonely and remaining blind to the people around me that need a friend. That's pretty selfish, and I'm totally guilty of it. I will say though that I received that advice 4 years ago, and over the years when I've taken the advice, I have been blessed by some of the sweetest, most loyal friendships.

If you are feeling lonely, I get it, I've been there, and I am sorry. Here's my advice, passed from Linnea to me and now to you: turn around, and see the blessings that can come from living unselfishly and befriending the lonely. Also, remember that Jesus is with you in your loneliness. He experienced separation from God on the cross (Matthew 27:46), the ultimate loneliness, so that He could turn around and befriend YOU. Let that truth strengthen you and comfort you as you seek people to befriend today.

1. Take some time in prayer to ask God to show you people that you could befriend today, and when people come to mind, write down their names and commit to praying for them all week.

2. What does it mean to you that God experienced the ultimate loneliness on the cross so that He could befriend you?

FRIDAY, JULY 3

THE BEAUTY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

FOR THE BODY DOES NOT CONSIST OF ONE MEMBER BUT OF MANY. IF THE FOOT SHOULD SAY, "BECAUSE I AM NOT A HAND, I DO NOT BELONG TO THE BODY," THAT WOULD NOT MAKE IT ANY LESS A PART OF THE BODY. AND IF THE EAR SHOULD SAY, "BECAUSE I AM NOT AN EYE, I DO NOT BELONG TO THE BODY," THAT WOULD NOT MAKE IT ANY LESS A PART OF THE BODY. IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EYE, WHERE WOULD BE THE SENSE OF HEARING? IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EAR, WHERE WOULD BE THE SENSE OF SMELL? BUT AS IT IS, GOD ARRANGED THE MEMBERS IN THE BODY, EACH ONE OF THEM, AS HE CHOSE. IF ALL WERE A SINGLE MEMBER, WHERE WOULD THE BODY BE? AS IT IS, THERE ARE MANY PARTS, YET ONE BODY.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-19

This passage has become a favorite for cabin devotions in the first week of camp, and it's easy to see why. Here Paul is comparing the body of Christ (another way to say Christians everywhere!) to an actual body. Your body has lots of different parts with different functions, and the same goes for the church... and your cabin at camp! There's nothing quite like the anticipation of walking into your cabin for the first time on Opening Day. Who is going to be your best friend? Your bunkmate? Your dance party pal? The girls you'll be living with are all different, from all over the country. But you know it's going to be great, because you have something big in common - camp!

That's just a small picture of what the Bible tells us about the community of Christians world-wide. There are millions (probably more!) of Christians all over the world. We speak different languages. We look different. Our day to day lives may have little in common. But the Bible tells us this is a good thing. How crazy would it be if the whole body was an ear? Or a nose? Our body is even more incredible because of how its different parts work together, and the body of Christ is better because we are all different, and gifted in unique ways.

But what does that look like in our day to day lives? When it's easy to

compare yourself to your friends or your siblings? We tend to fall into two traps when we compare ourselves to others. They're a foot and you're an eye - so what do you do? Sometimes we wish others were more like us. Why can't they just like the same things as me? Or see the world the way I do? But other times, we look at what our friends have or look like or can do, and we get jealous. She's so much more talented than me. No wonder she is so popular. Why can't I be more like her?

But both of these traps minimize the truth we see in this passage. Every person (you included!) has been created purposefully, with unique gifts that will make God's kingdom a better place. The fact that we're all different is a good thing - how boring would it be if we were all exactly the same? Just because someone is different than you, with different skills and their own way of seeing the world, doesn't mean that they are more valuable than you, or that they are wrong.

That's what's so wonderful about being a Christian! We know for sure that God is working in each one of us. That He loves us, and that He is using us in our own unique way. Together we become even better and more useful to Him than we ever would be alone.

1. What gifts has God given you? We all have them! Thank Him for how He created you, and ask Him to use your gifts for His glory.

2. Which trap do you tend to fall into? Are you tempted to compare yourself to others?

SATURDAY, JULY 4

SEATED WITH CHRIST

EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR TRESPASSES, MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST— BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED — AND RAISED US UP WITH HIM AND SEATED US WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS, SO THAT IN THE COMING AGES HE MIGHT SHOW THE IMMEASURABLE RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN KINDNESS TOWARD US IN CHRIST JESUS.

EPHESIANS 2:6

I was thirty-seven years old when I discovered a vital truth about Jesus.

A lightning bolt of realization hit me on a summer day in late July as I wondered over the phrase in Ephesians 2:6 that “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” I closed my eyes and began to think about my life.

I knew Jesus. I loved Jesus. I worshiped and served Him. I read my Bible, studied Christian concepts, kept a detailed prayer journal, shared my faith, met regularly with other Christians in church and in small group Bible studies, and worked for my community in various ways.... Life often felt full and blessed.

But something was missing. I did not know how to name it. Underneath the activity of my life ran a dark undercurrent of sin.... Something false, inauthentic, and impure governed my life. I felt like everything I did - all the activity, the writing, serving, speaking, studying - was about something other than Jesus. My life was more about me than Him. I was missing a theological truth that kept me in a prison of self-absorption.

I wanted importance and recognition.

I wanted love.

I wanted something.

When I read Ephesians 2:6, I thought about the word “seated.” I kept

repeating, “I’m seated with Christ.” I imagined the security and sense of belonging that came with having a seat at the most important table in the universe with other Christians. How would that seated person live? What would it feel like to have a special place at God’s table?

I was not living as one who had a seat at the table.

I lived as one fighting for a seat at the table.

It was if God said to me. “Heather, you can stop fighting so hard. You already have a seat at the table. You are already there. Everything you want for yourself is already true about you in Christ. Now start living like a seated person.”

1. Do you live like a seated person? Or like a person fighting for a seat at the table?

2. What would your life at home look like if you could really rest in the security of already having a seat?

SUNDAY, JULY 5

GET WALKING

FOR THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST.

LUKE 19:10

Jesus didn't put on fronts. He didn't live an extravagant life, trying to impress people. He didn't ride on the latest and greatest donkey to get where he needed to go. He didn't say what was easy to avoid ruffling feathers, and he didn't hide his feelings from those around Him. He came to "seek and to save that which was lost", and nothing – absolutely nothing – could have offset that focus.

How many times does my focus get disrupted? Every day, probably 87 times at least. I have a mental to-do list, along with the things that arise unexpectedly. More than I care to admit I'm all too me-centered, and on far too many days I worry more about how people see me rather than if they see the love of Jesus in me. But there is so much more to this life than what we settle for while we're getting through it.

What could happen if we regained our focus? If we realized that the power to truly be a part of changing lives is in our hands? What would happen if you took a moment to think about who you can serve today? Who can you love? How can you give this day to Jesus?

I don't know about you, but I know that many of my most impactful moments have been directly tied to one person that I connected to. One person who loves you differently, or invites you to be a part of something special, or even just takes the time to notice you. You have more opportunity than you realize if you make the decision to look for it.

Unlike our perfect Savior, we will make mistakes. We are feeble and easily swayed. But no matter what your day brings, you have one goal: to glorify Jesus.

The world needs you to look up, and step into the role that God has

for you. We will never know what we're missing if we don't go for it, but God's got something special for you if you'll trust Him and follow where He leads today. He's not going to lose His focus on you, and He'll help you see where to step in. So let's get walking.

1. What are some things that are disrupting your focus right now?

2. Who is someone in your life who made a big impact simply by making an effort to connect with you? Make a list of people you can reach out to and love this week.

MONDAY, JULY 6

GOD NOTICES

THEN CAME ONE OF THE RULERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE, JAIRUS BY NAME, AND SEEING HIM, HE FELL AT HIS FEET AND IMPLORED HIM EARNESTLY, SAYING, "MY LITTLE DAUGHTER IS AT THE POINT OF DEATH. COME AND LAY YOUR HANDS ON HER, SO THAT SHE MAY BE MADE WELL AND LIVE." AND HE WENT WITH HIM... AND THERE WAS A WOMAN WHO HAD HAD A DISCHARGE OF BLOOD FOR TWELVE YEARS, AND WHO HAD SUFFERED MUCH UNDER MANY PHYSICIANS, AND HAD SPENT ALL THAT SHE HAD, AND WAS NO BETTER BUT RATHER GREW WORSE. SHE HAD HEARD THE REPORTS ABOUT JESUS AND CAME UP BEHIND HIM IN THE CROWD AND TOUCHED HIS GARMENT. FOR SHE SAID, "IF I TOUCH EVEN HIS GARMENTS, I WILL BE MADE WELL." AND IMMEDIATELY THE FLOW OF BLOOD DRIED UP, AND SHE FELT IN HER BODY THAT SHE WAS HEALED OF HER DISEASE.

AND JESUS, PERCEIVING IN HIMSELF THAT POWER HAD GONE OUT FROM HIM, IMMEDIATELY TURNED ABOUT IN THE CROWD AND SAID, "WHO TOUCHED MY GARMENTS?" AND HIS DISCIPLES SAID TO HIM, "YOU SEE THE CROWD PRESSING AROUND YOU, AND YET YOU SAY, 'WHO TOUCHED ME?'" AND HE LOOKED AROUND TO SEE WHO HAD DONE IT. BUT THE WOMAN, KNOWING WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER, CAME IN FEAR AND TREMBLING AND FELL DOWN BEFORE HIM AND TOLD HIM THE WHOLE TRUTH. AND HE SAID TO HER, "DAUGHTER, YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL; GO IN PEACE, AND BE HEALED OF YOUR DISEASE."

MARK 5:22-34

In this story, a man named Jairus has come to Jesus in desperation asking him to heal his daughter. As Jesus always does, He agrees to go and help this man and is on the way to his house. But, as he is walking in a great crowd of people, a woman who had literally not stopped bleeding for twelve years (which sounds like the most miserable thing ever), reaches out in the hopes that even by touching Him, she will be healed. Many times, we focus in on this story and what Jesus does at the end in raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, but instead I want to focus here on this woman.

I can't even imagine how much a sacrifice it was for her to go out in public and even attempt to see Jesus, but she did it anyways. And when she just touched Jesus' robe, she was healed.

But, the most important part about this is that he noticed when she touched Him, even in a huge group of people. He could have kept on towards his destination, but instead he stopped and took time for this woman. He had a conversation with her that changed her entire life and that healed her from twelve years of suffering. He didn't let his destination distract Him from the present situation.

I think so often, especially at home, we get into a routine and we like to stick to it. But, sometimes we get so caught up in the next thing or where we are headed that we miss out on the present situation. I wonder how things would look different if we focused on who was in front of us or walking next to us, instead of being so intent on the place we are headed or what is next.

So today, be present. Be like Jesus, don't just keep walking. Don't let the next thing distract you from what is going on in your life right now and the opportunities that God gives you to bring hope into a hopeless situation in someone else's life. Remind others that they are noticed by God by taking the time to acknowledge them.

1. Do you feel like God notices you?
2. Is there anything in your life that you need to reach out to God for healing from?
3. How can you take the time to notice someone else today?

TUESDAY, JULY 7

BUT WHAT IF I FALL?

WHEN I SAID, "MY FOOT IS SLIPPING," YOUR UNFAILING LOVE, LORD, SUPPORTED ME. WHEN ANXIETY WAS GREAT WITHIN ME, YOUR CONSOLATION BROUGHT ME JOY.

PSALM 94:18-19

At High Adventure, one of the most common questions we get asked is, "But what if I fall?" Each time a camper asks this, we explain all the different safety measures we have in place. And paradoxically how, with some of our elements, the safest way to get down is to fall.

For example, with the Screamer or the Leap of Faith, there is no way to get down except to "fall." The same remains true for climbing the wall because once you're at the top, you don't just stay up there, you have to come down. Campers have to take a deep breath, trust us, and fall. They have to lean back in their harnesses and place all their trust in the person belaying them.

But what makes all this falling safe is the strength of the support they fall into. These cables could support an elephant if they needed to. Our harnesses are the best you can buy, and the counselors have been rigorously trained - all of it working together to make a trustworthy system. So that campers know if they fall, we have got them.

How much capable and more trustworthy is our Savior than the High Adventure cables, and yet, how often do we really surrender and "fall" to His will for us?

I know I doubt His hold on me all the time. Something in my life goes differently than I expect and I freak out. Plans that I thought had all fit together perfectly fall apart at the last second and I become a whirl of worry and anxiety. My head filled with thoughts of, "What can I do to fix the situation?" Really all I need to do is sit back and trust and fall. I need to trust in the Lord, and His plan. Trust in the fact that despite my tendency to immediately question or distrust his plan, that He has never let me fall and He won't start now.

1. What are some places you struggle to give up control to God out of fear? He has never let you fall and He won't start now.

2. Ask the Lord to show you areas of your life you haven't surrendered to Him, and to give you the strength to trust everything to Him and His will.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

SERVICE IS JOY

I APPEAL TO YOU THEREFORE, BROTHERS, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

ROMANS 12:1

FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY.

MARK 10:45

ABOVE ALL, KEEP LOVING ONE ANOTHER EARNESTLY, SINCE LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS. SHOW HOSPITALITY TO ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT GRUMBLING. AS EACH HAS RECEIVED A GIFT, USE IT TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER, AS GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S VARIED GRACE: WHOEVER SPEAKS, AS ONE WHO SPEAKS ORACLES OF GOD; WHOEVER SERVES, AS ONE WHO SERVES BY THE STRENGTH THAT GOD SUPPLIES—IN ORDER THAT IN EVERYTHING GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. TO HIM BELONG GLORY AND DOMINION FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

1 PETER 4:8–11

A few years ago, I accidentally left my jacket at camp after a staff reunion. Ellen-Anne kindly mailed that jacket to me, and left me a little note on this pretty stationary and printed on the front was this quote from Rabindranath Tagore: "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

That little postcard is now in a small black frame next to my mirror. The lesson in that quote is a beautiful summary of one of the main things I have learned at camp, and I love having that reminder right in front of me every day (because goodness knows I need reminded every day!). Service is joy. Sometimes it is hard, mundane, and tiring, but it can be beautifully rewarding and one of the most joyous things we can experience on this side of heaven, because it is so intimately in tune with the heart of God.

Jesus lived with a heart of service. He was the ultimate servant, giving us

an example to live by. Jesus washed feet, healed the sick, comforted the hurting, fed the hungry, and he did these things at the expense of his own comfort...even to the ultimate act of service, which was His death on the cross in our place!

Service—messy, sacrificial, exhausting, selfless, service—aligns our hearts with the heart of God, and because of the Spirit, that alignment will result in overflowing joy and a selfless heart. When we live with selflessness and serve, the result is joy! During his ministry, Jesus did seemingly small acts of service, but they had an eternal impact. Take heart, keep on, and find joy in service!

1. What was a time that you found joy in serving unselfishly?
2. Have you ever been on the receiving end of an act of service? Who did it, what was it, and how did it affect you?
3. Set a goal to do 2 intentional acts of service today that you wouldn't otherwise do, write them down, and then tomorrow, check them off if you did them!

THURSDAY, JULY 9

A WORLD OF DISTRACTIONS

FINALLY, BROTHERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS HONORABLE, WHATEVER IS JUST, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS COMMENDABLE, IF THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE, IF THERE IS ANYTHING WORTHY OF PRAISE, THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL AND KILL AND DESTROY. I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY.

JOHN 10:10

SO WE DO NOT LOSE HEART. THOUGH OUR OUTER SELF IS WASTING AWAY, OUR INNER SELF IS BEING RENEWED DAY BY DAY. FOR THIS LIGHT MOMENTARY AFFLICTION IS PREPARING FOR US AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY BEYOND ALL COMPARISON, AS WE LOOK NOT TO THE THINGS THAT ARE UNSEEN. FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE SEEN ARE TRANSIENT, BUT THE THINGS THAT ARE UNSEEN ARE ETERNAL.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

Let's be real: life is noisy. I don't mean the sound we audibly hear; what I'm talking about is the busyness, chaos, and troubles that make our brains feel foggy and flustered. One of the greatest things about camp is that we get to turn the volume down on some of that noise for a while, but it doesn't mean the noise completely goes away.

I don't think what Paul is telling the Philippians to do in this verse is to flippantly ignore the things in life that are hard or messy, but rather, in the midst of the messiness and chaos, to fix their eyes on the things that are sure and steady. In the midst of the noise—sorrow, struggle, anger, fear, exhaustion, whatever it is—the Lord is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, and excellent. He is worthy of praise, and keeping our minds on Him quiets our hearts. As the old hymn, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, says, “the things of this earth will grow dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

Whatever you are carrying today, whatever noise is trying to distract you

from the goodness and wholeness of knowing the Lord, turn your eyes to Jesus.

My encouragement is this, the Message version of the 2nd Corinthians passage above: “So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.”

It can sometimes feel easier to set down our burdens when we're at camp, but you can give them to Jesus at home too. Whatever it is you are carrying, this too shall pass. Don't lose heart!

1. What are the “noises” in your life that distract you from being able to live abundantly? What are you carrying in your invisible luggage?

2. Philippians 4:8 calls us to think about things that are worthy of praise. Think of, pray about, and write down at least 3 things that you are especially grateful for or finding praiseworthy lately.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

WHAT QUALIFIES YOU FOR GRACE

WHEN MY SOUL WAS EMBITTERED, WHEN I WAS PRICKED IN HEART, I WAS BRUTISH AND IGNORANT; I WAS LIKE A BEAST TOWARD YOU. NEVERTHELESS, I AM CONTINUALLY WITH YOU; YOU HOLD MY RIGHT HAND. YOU GUIDE ME WITH YOUR COUNSEL, AND AFTERWARD YOU WILL RECEIVE ME TO GLORY. WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT YOU? AND THERE IS NOTHING ON EARTH THAT I DESIRE BESIDES YOU. MY FLESH AND MY HEART MAY FAIL, BUT GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY PORTION FOREVER.

PSALM 73:21-28

Generally, we try to be good Christians. We wake up each day, intending to avoid failure. Though we try our hardest to meet God's standards by loving Him and our neighbor, at one point or another our failure is inevitable.

Of course, you and I know that everyone makes mistakes. No one's perfect. Yet we exhaust ourselves trying to prove otherwise, and we can't escape the thought that comes with every failure: "God must be furious/angry/disappointed/irritated/disgusted with me."

Feeling like a disappointment to God is our deepest fear. Psalm 73 speaks to our inevitable failure, and God's view of us in light of it.

For the first 20 verses, the Psalmist is seriously concerned about the prosperity of the wicked. He brings the matter before the Lord, but as he tries to discern how justice might come to punish the wicked, he finds grace for himself.

He realizes that in the midst of his sin (which makes him like a beast before God), he finds himself in the grasp of God. But it gets better: the Psalmist has inherited the benefits of walking with God, despite being guilty of sin! He lists them:

God holds my right hand.

God guides me with his counsel.

God will receive me to glory.

This grace and the living presence of God is not a result of the Psalmist being perfect. To the contrary, the grace comes because of his sin and need for God, unlike the wicked, who know no need for God, and in turn, suffer the ultimate consequences.

Your status as a child of God is secured for you by God's grace through Jesus. Even when your sin, or proud, stubborn heart makes you beast-like, God's love for you does not leave and the gifts of His presence are not taken away. You do not need to make yourself perfect to be accepted by God. Let that sink in! When you fail, when you are disappointed with yourself, remember, God is not surprised or disappointed - He loves you!

1. What part of your life are you most disappointed with yourself in?
2. Based on Psalm 73, how do you think that God would respond to you in the midst of this failure?
3. How does this affect your motivation for following Jesus' commands?

SATURDAY, JULY 11

THAT HE FIRST LOVED US

IN THIS IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE HAVE LOVED GOD BUT THAT HE LOVED US AND SENT HIS SON TO BE THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.

1 JOHN 4:10

Sometimes Grace doesn't feel free in the way that it should. Sometimes it feels burdensome. Sometimes it feels fun-sucking. But why?

So often we get it in our heads that when we start to follow Jesus, we have to stop the things we like. We may feel like we have to find new friends, but we really like the friends we already have. We may feel like we can't gossip anymore, but we like talking about other people, it feels good. We feel like we need to change what we do on weekends, but what else would we do?

The thing about God's commands is that they are good; better than the life we already know. However, they don't always feel good, they feel burdensome.

My pastor always describes it as feeling like doing the dishes. He doesn't want to do the dishes, it's dirty, it takes effort, it's not fun. If he didn't love his wife, he probably wouldn't do the dishes at all. But because he has fallen in love with his wife and lived with her for 10 years, he desires to do the dishes because he knows that if he doesn't, she will have to. He does the hard things as a response of his love. His RELATIONSHIP with his wife is what brings him to do the things he doesn't necessarily want to do.

When we fall in love with God, our desires begin to change just like my pastor's. Giving up gossiping feels like no big deal because we love God so much it doesn't matter. It's worth giving up. We begin to trust in His promises. When He says, "Respect your parents, I promise I will give you a better life," we believe Him. We put our trust in who He says He is. Jesus says to His disciples in the Bible, "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." When we are feeling dragged down by the commands of

God, when our yoke feels hard and our burden heavy, it may be time to take a step back. Look at God's description of love: not that we love Him but that He loves us. When things are feeling heavy, ask yourself, "Do I believe that God loves me? Does that love penetrate my heart? Does that love bring me to my knees in thankfulness?"

God doesn't demand that we do what He wants. Of course, He desires certain things from us, but only because He knows what will bring us life. What God really desires is that we KNOW the love He has for us. That we believe in Him and His display of love in sending His Son to die on the cross for us. Focus on this. Experience the freedom of that love. Experience the freedom of that Grace.

1. Does grace feel like it sets you free today?

2. Are you trying to obey God's commandments out of guilt or out of a relationship with Him?

SUNDAY, JULY 12

THE GIFTS OR THE GIVER?

HE MADE THE ONE WHO DID NOT KNOW SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, SO THAT IN HIM WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

I don't know about you, but I know that if you asked me I could rattle off a list of qualities I'd like to change about myself or grow into as soon as you said the words. I tell myself to be more patient. I tell myself to be more forgiving, and loving, and kind. I remind myself to trust God more, and to have a more thankful outlook. I wish for all of these things and more, and I find myself feeling like I don't measure up year after year.

The thing is, we're never going to measure up to the standards that we think we need to meet. Even as hard as we strive, and even if you got your Greystone G, we will never completely embody Sincerity, Courage, Honesty, Kindness, and Truth (or any other good thing) by our own effort and merit. And that begs the question, what should we do, then?

We should look to the source.

Sweet friend, if we're focusing on ourselves, we're missing the point. We will never be able to check everything off of our list, because the more than we lean into learning who our Savior is, the more evident it will become that we can never achieve His perfection. That's what makes Him who He is. (If you're not saying Hallelujah, wake up and read that again.)

That's where grace comes in. We are covered in His cloak of mercy and righteousness when we surrender to Him. God became sin so that we "might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). It becomes not about what we can ever be on our own, but what He has already done, and who He is. The perfection and completeness you strive for has already been accomplished in our Savior.

Today, is your heart longing to console itself with thinking you're a good

person because you're this or that, or is it longing for the One who created it? If you really think about it, what a blessing it is to know that we can't reach perfection! Our shortcomings beautifully point to our Savior, and we have perfect rest and peace in His salvation and sacrifice.

So inhale, exhale, and look to the Giver of life and every good thing. His purpose is always ultimately His glory, and your recognition of His beautiful worthiness and surrender of your heart is what He wants today.

1. What are some things you are freed from striving to be because of Christ? (List them, and then celebrate!)
2. Have you fully surrendered your control to Christ? If your heart says no, pray for God to help loosen your grasp on those areas.
3. Write out a short thanksgiving to Christ. Take time to mention specific qualities and attributes of who He is, and what they mean to you.

MONDAY, JULY 13

SEATED WITH CHRIST

NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHHOLD FROM THOSE WHOSE WALK IS BLAMELESS.

PSALM 84:11

I was meditating on Psalm 84:11 where we read the audacious and nearly impossible-to-believe statement that “No good thing will he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”

This cannot be true. Are you thinking this? Are you mentally listing out all the things that the Lord has failed to provide for you? I am too. But guess what - I’ve learned this: If I pray for it, and God doesn’t provide it, it means it wasn’t a good thing or it wasn’t a good thing for me right now.

But even deeper than this simple platitude is the idea of “withholding.” I read in John 3:34 that “God gives the Spirit without limit.” Without limit! In other words, God does not withhold Himself from us. We can have all of Him that we want in an unlimited way.

Finally, when I think about how Jesus is my Good Thing, and how God promises in Psalm 84 to not withhold Him (the ultimate Good Thing) from me, then suddenly I feel like the wealthiest woman in the world.

I have Jesus. I have all of Him. I have all that I need and want at all times. My account just burst into the billions. I have Jesus. I’m indeed the richest one at the party.

1. Are you tempted to believe that God is withholding things from you?

2. What would it mean to truly believe that you are the richest one at the party for having Him.?

TUESDAY, JULY 14

THE SECRET TO FRIENDSHIP

WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

1 JOHN 4:19

Making friends seems so much easier at camp, right? All it takes is a “hi!” walking from Waterpark to Dog Camp and you’re off to the races. We hear it from Jimboy all the time at Breakfast Club. Say it with us now: the best way to make a friend is to smile! Do you know why we make such a big deal of this during the summer? Because of what God says about the people He created.

Every person you have in your class at school, or wave to on your walks, or even your sibling who gets on your nerves, is created by God, and He loves them immensely. C.S. Lewis says it well, “There are no ordinary people. You have never interacted with a mere mortal.” That person who you have a hard time loving? She is created in the image of God! She is valuable. She is the crown of His creation. Who are we to ignore or gossip about or pick on people who God loves?

We are told in the Bible over and over again to love our neighbors, but it is so hard to do! And of course it is. We are sinners living with other sinners. (Basically we’re imperfect, and so is everyone else we see!) So what’s a girl to do? What is the secret for loving our friends and family members the way God tells us to?

It sounds a little crazy, but the first step is to admit that we can’t do it on our own. We are never going to be able to love people perfectly. You know the only person who could? (Get that Sunday School answer ready guys!) Jesus. He loves us all with what the Jesus Storybook Bible calls a “never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.” When you are loved like that (especially when you have done nothing to deserve it), it overflows out of you and allows you to start to love others in the same way.

We can love only because He loved us first. Pray and ask God today to

show you how much He has loved you, and ask that He would show you how you can love the people in your life today.

1. Is there someone you are having a hard time loving today? Take a minute to pray for them, and ask God that he would let you see them the way He does.

2. Do you know how much God loves you? How does that then enable you to love others?

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

GOD'S GOT THIS

FOR AS THE RAIN AND THE SNOW COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DO NOT RETURN THERE BUT WATER THE EARTH, MAKING IT BRING FORTH AND SPROUT, GIVING SEED TO THE SOWER AND BREAD TO THE EATER, SO SHALL MY WORD BE THAT GOES OUT FROM MY MOUTH; IT SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME EMPTY, BUT IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH THAT WHICH I PURPOSE, AND SHALL SUCCEED IN THE THING FOR WHICH I SENT IT.

ISAIAH 55:10-11

Have you ever been in a situation where you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders? The decision at hand, a passage to defining your future, hinges on you, and there are so many details to consider that your mind is scurrying rapidly to answer each one? Simply put, it seems impossible—to make the right decision, but also to deal with the outcomes of it.

I recently lived this situation. I had a decision to make, and a very on-the-spot deadline in which to make it. My heart desperately wanted to make the right one, to obey God's plan for me, but with all of the details to consider, it was quite overwhelming.

Thankfully, my mom was with me and she suggested that we take a minute to sit down and pray. Truth is, she prayed, I panicked. But when she finished praying, she looked at me and said, "Cecilia, I think God was telling me that you've got to believe He's got this..." "God's got this."

It's like a huge wave came over me and went WHOOSH, and all of the anxieties over details and frantically wandering thoughts went still. They were replaced with a peace, the kind that transcends our understanding. There are countless things in this world—decisions, problems, tasks, responsibilities, cases, people—that seem to be impossible. And yes, with just us in control, they are. But God has proven too many times His capability to do the seemingly impossible for us not to consult with Him or trust in Him on everything!

To assure us further He says that, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Our capacity to think and to do are limited; there are countless ways that we can come up short. But God's ways, His thoughts, are so much greater than ours. We cannot even fathom it; our minds cannot grasp it.

One of my greatest fears has been that I might get in God's way. That I might make the wrong decision and then I'll have to pick up and mend all of the wreckage I've caused because of it.

I think I think too highly of myself—to think that I can get in the way of the Almighty God?!! For He goes on to say in Isaiah, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

God spoke us into being; therefore, He will achieve through us what He purposes to achieve. We cannot get in the way of that. Trust and believe that God's got this, whatever the "this" might be.

1. What's something today that you need to believe is totally in God's control?

2. Do you really believe that you can't get in God's way?

THURSDAY, JULY 16

WHY YOU CAN STEP OUT IN FAITH

AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER YOU HAVE NOT COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?

ESTHER 4:14B

Did you know that God is not mentioned one time in the book of Esther? And yet, in its pages we read of an orphaned Jewish woman living in Persia who, chosen to be Queen, helps to thwart an evil plan to wipe out the Jews living in Persia. With odds like that stacked against her, our unlikely heroine sounds like she could exist in a Hollywood epic, not in the pages of Biblical history.

But God is not afraid of using unlikely characters for the good of His children, and for His glory. His sovereignty is not to be underestimated. Queen Esther is made aware of the evil plot crafted by Haman, one of her husband's most trusted advisors, by her cousin Mordecai. Mordecai tells her, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish" (4:13b-14a).

Why does Mordecai say to her that the Jews would be delivered in another way? He believed in God's sovereignty and remembered the promises that God had made to his forefathers (Genesis 12:1-3, Jeremiah 31:35-37) - and also believed that it would not be beyond the reach of God to place Esther in a position to work out His plan, for such a time as this.

Esther was compelled to obey. Perhaps she was motivated by faith in God, or she reasoned that she would perish in the genocide anyways. At any rate, she was willing to die at least trying to save her people. Though it is unlikely that you will ever be in a position where you must step out and risk your very life for someone else, there will be numerous times you have the opportunity to put your comfort and preferences

aside for the welfare of others. Fearing rejection, you may avoid sharing your story with a fellow counselor. Or your position at camp may leave you feeling overwhelmed by new responsibilities, and you are tempted to shut down or run away from them, not believing that you are up to the challenge.

Though God may seem far, consider this: He is there, working quietly to position you to be used for your good and His glory, for such a time as this.

1. Pause and consider the work of God and His promises towards you. What has He already given you in Christ that enables you to step out in faith?

2. What position have you been put in this summer? How has God placed you there for such a time as this?

FRIDAY, JULY 17

GOD CELEBRATES ORDINARY PEOPLE

AND ELIUD THE FATHER OF ELEAZAR, AND ELEAZAR THE FATHER OF MATTHAN, AND MATTHAN THE FATHER OF JACOB, AND JACOB THE FATHER OF JOSEPH AND JOSEPH THE HUSBAND OF MARY, OF WHOM JESUS WAS BORN, CALLED THE CHRIST.

MATTHEW 1:15-16

Confession: I love celebrities. I read People daily. I like to know who is dating who, who broke up with who, and what the latest trend is. Award season is marked on my calendar and I eagerly await the pre-show to see what everyone chooses to wear. My husband thinks I'm crazy and wishes I read more newsworthy material, but these people captivate me! I secretly want to be walking that red carpet. And while not all people share this desire to be the center of attention, every human heart does long to be celebrated and noticed.

In the first chapter of Matthew, a genealogy of Jesus is given. I did not include the entire 16 verses, but men and women such as Hezron, Ruth, Nashon, Uzziah, Manasseh, Joram, Zerubabel, are all recorded. The list seems like just a bunch of unimportant names - and they would be, if not for the very last name they are connected to: Jesus.

What Jesus does to this genealogy is what he does to us - he makes us significant. Did you know that in the eyes of God you are celebrated, noticed, and significant because of Jesus' death and resurrection? My name is a regular topic of conversation in the trinity and so is yours. God uses broken, sinful, and seemingly unimportant people to bring about the salvation of the world through Jesus. And he is still using broken, sinful, and seemingly unimportant people - you and I - to extend his kingdom and build his church until Jesus returns.

One of the most life changing truths you can share with someone is their significance in the eye of God because of Jesus' death and resurrection. People are hungry today to hear that they matter.

1. Do you believe that God is using you (as broken and sinful as you are) to extend his kingdom?

2. You matter. How does this encourage you today?

SATURDAY, JULY 18

WHEN YOU'RE NOT SO SURE ABOUT HAVING A HOPE OR A FUTURE

FOR THUS SAYS THE LORD: WHEN SEVENTY YEARS ARE COMPLETED FOR BABYLON, I WILL VISIT YOU, AND I WILL FULFILL MY PROMISE AND BRING YOU BACK TO THIS PLACE. FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, DECLARES THE LORD, PLANS FOR WELFARE AND NOT FOR EVIL, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE AND A HOPE.

JEREMIAH 29:10-11

You've often heard these verses quoted in seasons of change because these verses offer hope from a good, promise-keeping God. But sometimes it's hard to believe these promises are true, particularly when we find that we're in a difficult situation because of poor choices we've made, or if we're suffering painful consequences from someone else's choice. We ask ourselves, "Did God's plans to give me hope and a future really include this, or is this a mistake?" Pain often tempts us to question the goodness and faithfulness of God.

However, the context in which God first speaks these words to the people of Israel gives us good hope. The nation Israel, after years of idol-worship and willful disobedience without true repentance, received the painful consequences of its unfaithfulness when they were taken captive in Babylon and torn away from the land promised to them by God (Genesis 12:7).

But God, through the prophet Jeremiah, speaks to the people of Israel, encouraging them to "seek the welfare of the city" by means of building homes and gardens, having children and raising them. God wants them to remain in a posture of believing Him. They are to wait for His promised redemption.

These verses are more than just making the best of a painful or troublesome situation. This gives us an excellent picture of what JimDaddy meant when he would say, "Dwell in the land and cultivate

faithfulness."

When you are tempted to give up, believing that a season of sorrow, or a humbling situation, is a move by God to exact His wrath on you, remember that because you are in Christ, God is able to fulfill His promise to you, which includes:

- Never being separated from His love (Romans 8:38-39)
- Adoption as a child of God (Romans 8:14-17)
- Victory over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:56-57)
- Grace for sufficiency in all things to abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8)
- Remaining with you to the end of time (Matthew 28:20)

As His child, God's plans for you involve providing you with hope and a future - no matter your current circumstances. It is because of the grace that enables us to be in Christ, not what we have or have not done, that we receive both.

1. What situations have you been in where it has felt difficult to believe that God's plans involved giving you a hope and a future?

2. What does it look like to cultivate faithfulness exactly where you are today?

SUNDAY, JULY 19

CALM MY ANXIOUS HEART

FOR THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST.

LUKE 19:10

This year I have struggled some with anxiety. It begins with a small flickering of worry but then spirals into stress and fear. This often happens at night when I am trying to go to bed. It can be hard to turn my brain off because I am worrying about all the things that happened during my day.

Throughout this experience, I have learned ways to cope. One of the things I have started doing when I can't turn my brain off at night is placing myself in the stories of the Bible. So often when we read our Bibles, we think of ourselves as the righteous character. I am always Mary and never Martha, always the father and never the Prodigal son, always the blind man and never the Pharisee.

Although we can find ways to relate to everyone in the Bible, denying our similarities with the unrighteous can minimize the Lord's influence in our lives. I believe my anxiety comes from my desire to control my life; so placing myself in these stories where I can only rely on Jesus to control my destiny restores the peace in my heart.

For example... One of my favorite stories I love to recreate is the story of Zacchaeus. Imagine with me as I describe this experience:

"Jesus entered Greenville, SC and was passing through. A woman was there by the name of Victoria: she was always trying to steal the spotlight because she wanted to control her own life and the lives of those around her. She wanted to see who Jesus was, but because she was short (work with me here, we all know I'm tall) she could not see over the crowd (I imagine I also wanted to hide from Jesus because I was ashamed of my sin).

So she ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus

was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to her, 'Victoria, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' So she came down at once and welcomed him gladly (while at the same time I am sure I was in disbelief that of all people Jesus chose me to eat with). All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.'

But Victoria (realizing that Jesus did not just come for the righteous but the unrighteous like her) stood up and said to the Lord, 'Lord, Lord! Here and now I will stop stealing the spotlight and give up control to you.' Jesus said to her, 'Today salvation has come to this house because this woman, too, is a daughter of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.'"

This story gives me chills. Something incredible about the Bible is that it never seems to go out of date. The stories are and will always be relatable because they target what is ultimately human in each one of us. We all desire to know God and we all desire to be chosen and loved. I learn something about myself each time I read the stories of the Bible because I hear Jesus speaking His words not to distant characters, but to me.

Hallelujah that our God is one that does not come for the righteous, but for the lost because I am a sinner that is daily in need of mercy.

1. What story in the Bible can you insert yourself into?

2. How does this show you more of Jesus' love and mercy?

MONDAY, JULY 20

HE WILL FULFILL YOUR PLANS

MAY HE GRANT YOU YOUR HEART'S DESIRE AND FULFILL ALL YOUR PLANS! MAY WE SHOUT FOR JOY OVER YOUR SALVATION, AND IN THE NAME OF OUR GOD SET UP OUR BANNERS!

PSALM 20:4-5

Do you ever have days that seem to be busier than others? Some days you just don't feel like you can accomplish anything. There just doesn't seem to be enough time in the world. Between work, family, exercising, cooking, studying, and being social will life ever get easier?

I used to think once I finish elementary school I'll be older and happier. Once I finish high school I'll know what I want to do with the rest of my life. Once I finish college I'll have my life together and I'll be married and successful. Currently as a recent college graduate I think, "Maybe once I finish my current career I'll move on to a bigger and more successful one."

What if this feeling of longing to be content and of never being completely satisfied is normal? What if we were made for something more than life on earth?

One of my favorite authors, C.S. Lewis, eloquently explores these questions in his book *Mere Christianity*, "If we find in ourselves a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."

God gives us desires in our hearts for good things. Sometimes it requires listening to His voice and reading His promises to know what desires we should pursue. He will, "fulfill all your plans" because His plans are also our plans when we are walking closely with Him.

"Shout for joy over your salvation," because you are never alone and trust that God will grant the desires of your heart.

1. What are the desires of your heart today?

2. How can you turn them over to Jesus today?

TUESDAY, JULY 21

ALL GRACE ABOUNDING

AND GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE ALL GRACE ABOUND IN YOU, SO THAT HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY IN ALL THINGS AT ALL TIMES, YOU MAY ABOUND IN EVERY GOOD WORK. AS IT IS WRITTEN, "HE HAS DISTRIBUTED FREELY, HE HAS GIVEN TO THE POOR; HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." HE WHO SUPPLIES SEED TO THE SOWER AND BREAD FOR FOOD WILL SUPPLY AND MULTIPLY YOUR SEED FOR SOWING AND INCREASE THE HARVEST OF YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. YOU WILL BE ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY TO BE GENEROUS IN EVERY WAY, WHICH THROUGH US WILL PRODUCE THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8-11

Reading through this passage I catch myself rereading a single word over and over - before the first period ends the sentence the word "ALL" is used 4 times! When you look up synonyms for "all," you will find - completely, everything, absolutely. Now think for a second what having ALL of something would look like - if you had all of the riches in the world, or ALL the answers to every test you had to take. what a relief it would be knowing that you would be able to walk into a test, completely relaxed, relying on the comfort that you will ace it because you already have all the answers.

But seriously, while we will never have all the answers to every test, there is one thing that we have that exceeds all those others - the grace of our merciful and loving Father. And we don't just have a little bit of grace, we have ALL grace abounded to us - giving us the ability to do every good work that God calls us to. Now if you only had 60% of the answers, you wouldn't get that passing grade, but God does not just give us a portion of grace, He gives us all grace.

Take for instance the mustard seed - if you flip to Matthew 13:31, you can read the parable of the mustard seed - but in this parable, Jesus teaches of this. Our lives can be those mustard seeds, being planted and growing, and what you show those around you each day should be the full amount of grace that the great Father has bestowed upon you.

Today, whether you're starting your day or ending it before falling asleep, rest in the comfort that our great Father does not give us just a piece of the whole - He gives us ALL grace, multiplying our seeds for sowing, taking our lives and, through us, shining His glory for all the world to see.

1. Where in your life have you seen mustard seeds planted that have grown into strong trees?

2. How do you see your life changing, knowing that God makes ALL grace abound in you? How does this encourage you as you go into this next year?

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

THE ULTIMATE BANQUET

THEN I HEARD WHAT SEEMED TO BE THE VOICE OF A GREAT MULTITUDE, LIKE THE ROAR OF MANY WATERS AND LIKE THE SOUND OF MIGHTY PEALS OF THUNDER, CRYING OUT, "HALLELUJAH! FOR THE LORD OUR GOD THE ALMIGHTY REIGNS. LET US REJOICE AND EXULT AND GIVE HIM THE GLORY, FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB HAS COME, AND HIS BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY; IT WAS GRANTED HER TO CLOTHE HERSELF WITH FINE LINEN, BRIGHT AND PURE" - FOR THE FINE LINEN IS THE RIGHTEOUS DEEDS OF THE SAINTS. AND THE ANGEL SAID TO ME, "WRITE THIS: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE INVITED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB." AND HE SAID TO ME, "THESE ARE THE TRUE WORDS OF GOD."

REVELATION 19:6-9

Whenever we survey campers about their favorite Evening Program of the summer, there's one that wins almost every single time, and we bet you can guess it - Banquet! And it's not hard to see why. It's the biggest celebration we have! When you combine a huge surprise (the theme!), a spectacularly decorated Dining Hall, and the chance to reflect with your favorite people on your time at camp, you get something that feels a little like magic. The whole night is a gift from the staff to the campers - you may laugh, you may cry, you may jump up and down.. you may do all of those at once! Just the word "Banquet" - doesn't it just sound special?

Banquet at camp may be the best thing you can imagine right now, but did you know as Christians, we have an even better feast to look forward to? The book of Revelation comes at the very end of the Bible, and it can sometimes be a little intimidating because it includes lots of symbols and pictures. But it's really just a picture of how God is going to come back and redeem the people He loves. It tells us how our story is going to end. Do you ever feel tempted to flip to the back of the book you're reading and see what happens? This is what Revelation shows us, and spoiler alert, it's really great!

We get more information about what this is going to look like later in the book: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall

be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4) This means that everything that makes you sad or scared or angry right now will be taken away, and even more than that, it will be made right. It will be pure happiness forever and ever, because we will finally be with Jesus, which is all our hearts were created for. And we see in Revelation 19 that there will be a huge feast, and the biggest celebration ever, happier and more fun than the best birthday party or wedding you've ever gone to.

If you're a Christian, this is what you have to look forward to! Everything will be made right. We will be at peace and with our Savior. No matter what happens in this world, nothing can take that away from us. Our Banquet at camp is just a small glimmer of what heaven's banquet is going to look like - can you imagine? That is the best news for today friends - we know how our story ends, and it is really, really good.

1. Do you ever feel tempted to look at the back of the book to see the end of the story? Why do you think that is?
2. How does knowing a little bit about what heaven is going to feel like give you hope right now? What can you give to God knowing that it will all be made right in the end?

THURSDAY, JULY 23 - CLOSING DAY

CARRYING JESUS INTO THE WORLD

NOT TO US, LORD, NOT TO US BUT TO YOUR NAME BE THE GLORY, BECAUSE OF YOUR LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS.

PSALM 115:1

Have you heard of Corrie ten Boom? You might know her from her book *The Hiding Place* (if you haven't read it yet, it's worth a read!). She lived in the Netherlands during World War II and was amazingly brave and faithful to Jesus as she hid Jews in her house, risking everything. Fun fact: she actually visited camp before she passed away - wouldn't you have liked to be there that summer?!

Someone asked her once how she stayed so humble after she became famous. Corrie said, "When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on the back of a donkey, and everyone was waving palm branches and throwing garments onto the road, and singing praises, do you think that for one moment it ever entered the head of that donkey that any of that was for him? If I can be the donkey on which Jesus Christ rides in His glory, I give Him all the praise and all the honor."

What an incredible picture of how to look at your life as a Christian! We read in the book of James that "every good and perfect gift is from above." (James 1:17) That means that everything you have - your talents, your money, your dog, the breath in your lungs, everything you can think of - is given to you by God, and our job is to praise Him for it, and use His good gifts to point people back to Him.

The donkey didn't have anything to do with the cheering as Jesus entered Jerusalem, but what an honor to be a small part of it! In a similar way, we have the huge privilege of carrying God into the world. Any praise that comes our way goes straight to Him, because He has given us every good gift. As you go on from here to enjoy the rest of your summer, and next school year, think about how you can be the donkey. How can you give all glory back to Him?

1. What good gifts has God given you? How can you give Him all glory for them?

2. How can you carry him into your life at home this year, knowing that any glory that comes your way is his?