

DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE - SEPTEMBER 23

Hey Devotional Teachers,

I'm so excited for this year and so glad that you're teaching this next week in the houses and at Junior High.

I put all of you in the To: field so you could see who else is teaching this coming Wednesday and ask questions to me or each other by clicking "reply all". If you have a question about the talk or the curriculum questions it's helpful for everyone to know it. Last year we did a test run of preparing teachers more by offering a dinner and training/brainstorming time at my house on Thursdays. Those who came found it helpful. The problem was, many of us live busy lives and not many came to those nights.

So, if you are teaching on a given week, like this coming Wednesday, this email is for you. It is in replace of those Thursday dinners. I will attempt to unpack the Devotional for the next Wednesday and give you more to go off of. Attached is the Devotional Page and the Small Group Questions for the upcoming week. Also attached is an explanation of how we are doing the devotional page now. I'll teach more on this at the leaders retreat, but I thought I'd give you a page of explanation. Look those over as you read through the email below. So, here goes:

WHERE WE GET THE MAIN POINT FROM:

The main point of the devotional is "**What I do with my time reveals what I am devoted to.**" The scripture we are using, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says "Or do you not know that your **body** is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your **body.**" You'll notice it says nothing about "time" specifically. It actually focuses on your "body". I've made the leap to "time" because it's talking about what we do with our bodies. It's not too much of a stretch to say, that what we do with our bodies takes time and hence the main point.

THE SCRIPTURE

Unpacking the Scripture a little more, it's helpful to go back to verse 9 of the chapter and see what Paul was specifically talking about. He talks about sexual immorality a fair bit, but also stealing, idol worship, greed, drunkenness, and excessive partying (revilers). He's battling this statement that was probably said by someone in the Corinthian church that "All things are lawful for me.", found in verse 12. The Corinthian church, bought into the freedom they have in Jesus a little too much, or at least a distorted version of that freedom. They may have thought they had freedom from every kind of law or moral that Jewish culture taught. What they had forgotten is that our freedom is not to go back into bondage with sin, but rather to become the people that Christ had created us for and saved us to be. Paul uses the body and talks about uniting it with a prostitute to reveal the absurdity of this distorted version of freedom they had bought in to. With the Junior High, I don't recommend going into all of that, maybe a little in senior high houses, but the point here is to talk about devotion.

CONNECTION FOR TODAY

The Corinthian church struggled with their “distorted freedom.” And we could easily disregard that as, well that happened then, but we’re smarter now. I would ask the question, are we really? Often the thought process that goes on in Christians minds when it comes to sin and what we do with our bodies and specifically our time is: “I’ll do this, and I’ll ask for forgiveness later. Jesus loves me, so he’ll forgive me.” Is it true that Jesus forgives? Absolutely. But is that a backwards way of following Jesus? Absolutely. In your devo, it’s good to highlight how we’re not too different from these silly Corinthians.

WAKE UP SECTION IDEAS

I suggested in the wake up section ideas on hooking these students into the devo. If you share personal life stuff about things you’ve devoted your life to before a few good things to remember. First off, don’t be the hero of your story... make Jesus the hero, or tell about someone else who was a hero... or tell how you epically failed because students will identify more with your failures than your successes. On the failure note, don’t over-share. Youth don’t need to know about your past boyfriends or girlfriends, they don’t need to know too much detail. So... stay between the ditches of hero and over-share. Also, make it accessible. Talk about life issues they can relate to. If I were talking about this, I might talk about my time spent playing too much Starcraft (it’s a video game from the late 90s) or I might even use that World of Warcraft video I put in the curriculum. If you want simple images of the WoW stuff, I have still images of what WoW did to a guy over a year that you could use.

LANDING

You want to finish with students questioning what they actually do with their bodies, and by extension the time of their lives. Obviously they spend a majority of the time sleeping or going to school... or sleeping in school... but seriously, outside of that, what do they do with their time? If they are truly Christ followers how does that impact the way they spend their day? Encourage them to examine that, and to redirect their time to what God would have them do. Encourage them that they were given the Holy Spirit to help them with how they spend their time.

Finally, if you have any questions, please hit “reply all” or send me a text @ (780) 996-5635. Hope this helps.

Thanks for teaching!

DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE - SEPTEMBER 30

Hey All,

This your Thursday email to get you thinking about teaching next week’s message that you are teaching either in a house or at Junior High. I’m excited that we have a great month of discovery ahead of us. Attached to this email is two other things. 1. The

curriculum where you'll find the Devotional Guide for your week and 2. The explanation of our 5 elements of the message if you're new to our system. Below is a little more expanded info on the topic:

WHERE WE GET THE MAIN POINT FROM

The main point of the devotional is "How I choose to live, impacts those around me." The scripture we are using, 1 Timothy 4:12 says "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." This is often a youth ministry type verse that we like to throw out there as a challenge. It's a good challenge. It's a challenge for Paul to Timothy, but also from God, through the written Scripture, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, to us. We get the main point from the "set the believers and example". Students need to realize that what they do doesn't just effect, affect (I never know what one to use) them.

THE SCRIPTURE

Just before this text, Paul encourage Timothy to protect himself and the church from false teaching. He encourages sound doctrine and then this verse 12 shows up about setting an example. I think it's interesting that these are found so closely together because our teaching should line up with our example. When we don't we lack credibility and we confuse people. Timothy, in Star Wars terms would be Paul's "Padawan", his mentor. He looks to Paul like a Spiritual father. As you communicate to students this verse and this message, you may want to give it in the same way... not that you are their mother or father, but you've lived a few years and through your experiences, know this to be true.

CONNECTION FOR TODAY

This verse has a lot to do with respect. Respect is a key teenage culture word that they are always asking for. This isn't just the case now in 2015, but this has been always a buzz word or issue that teens have. Their parents, their authorities, their leaders "don't respect me" they might say. The parents, authorities, and leaders might say the same to them. If you want to talk about respect and how it's gained, this is a key verse. It's gained through setting that right example. There's some great stuff in the devotional guide this week and small group questions about this.

WAKE UP SECTION IDEAS

I suggested a couple ideas of what you could share here. Make sure you share in your stories the impact, how the example effects/affects people. If this were I sharing the story, I might talk about a pastor who showed me what it is to love people. Or I might talk about how my son Jace has picked up on some of my bad habits, like yelling at the dog and smacking it when it has done something wrong.

LANDING

You want to finish with students questioning what kind of example their setting. Try to encourage them to change one thing in one area at a time, not all five areas at once. Either conduct, speech, love, faith or purity. Remember too, that this is a one point message, even though there are five areas of example. It would be really easy to spend

10 minutes on each of the five, but a house devo or Junior High devo should land somewhere between 10 to 15 minutes.

Finally, if you have any questions, please hit "reply all" or send me a text @ (780) 996-5635. Hope this helps.

Thanks for teaching!

DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE - OCTOBER 7

Hey All,

This is your Thursday email to get you thinking about teaching next week's message that you are teaching either in a house or at Junior High. If you're going to do any of the object lessons in the curriculum, you might want to start collecting items you need (ie. mirror(s), sticky-notes, yarn, markers). You may also want to communicate to your house leader because they could probably replace any game or icebreaker you're going to do.

WHERE WE GET THE MAIN POINT FROM

We're kicking it old school, old testament this week, as we talk about the main point "I need more mirror time with my character than my face." We're looking at David and his anointing as King by the prophet Samuel. In our key verse of 1 Samuel 16:7, God clearly states that there is more to a person than just a pretty face. God sees us with different eyes and looks at our heart. David is described as a man after God's own heart. If you want to unpack that a bit in your own study here's a great aid online that I found: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/ron-edmondson/10-reasons-david-is-called-a-man-after-god-s-own-heart.html>

David is in direct contrast to Saul, the previous King. Saul had the appearance of a King (as you find in 1 Samuel 9:2), but didn't have a heart after God. Saul was flawed in his character. He was insecure, self-centred and jealous. These were ugly marks on His character. David was much different as you can read in the link above.

THE SCRIPTURE

If you have the time, feel free to read the stories in between, as they give a lot of insight as to Saul and David and who they were. At the scene of our main verse about David, he is anointed King, but it's not until years later that he actually takes Saul's place. You can read in 1 Samuel 15 about how God rejects Saul because of his dishonour to God in his disobedience and his self-centredness.

CONNECTION FOR TODAY

Today, obviously image is everything to people. Girls and guys want to look right, be the right shape and often will sacrifice ridiculous time and effort to get there. Body image is a big deal and is not just a female problem. Guys wrestle with it too and can often put huge amount of effort into looking right. If you choose to do the mirror exercise, you may even get to experience and hear some of these feelings and struggles with appearance.

WAKE UP SECTION IDEAS

I really feel the object lessons/games will rope students in and get them thinking about how much attention they put into their appearance. If you need me (Joel) to explain more, send me a message.

LANDING

In the end, help students to see their character both the good things God has done in them but also where they might need some work. You may even want to encourage them to take a sticky-note home and place a promise of God on a sticky-note on their mirror that they use in the morning. Something like "I am loved by God."

Finally, if you have any questions, please hit "reply all" or send me a text @ (780) 996-5635. I've attached the document that explains our youth devise and also the curriculum for this week. Hope this helps.

Thanks for teaching!

DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE - OCTOBER 14

Hey All,

This is your Thursday email to get you thinking about teaching next week's message either in a house or at Junior High. Start thinking about it today and it will help you be creative.

WHERE WE GET THE MAIN POINT FROM

The point to all three parables in Luke 15 is the same, and it's found in response to a situation Jesus was experiencing right in the first 3 verses. It says: "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them'. So he told them this parable:" Jesus' purpose in these parables was to respond to the grumbling Pharisees who see themselves as more valuable than the people Jesus was hanging out with. In this we see that Jesus really desires to see lost people come to know Him, to be welcomed into His family. We as Christ followers need to have the same "heart that beats for lost people."

was insecure, self-centred and jealous. These were ugly marks on His character. David was much different as you can read in the link above.

THE SCRIPTURE

Take the time to read all three stories. The first two are similar in their brevity and they also end with the same phrase "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." The third story gives us a little more insight into the heart of God for the lost. It shows how passionately he loves the lost and wants them to come home. Don't forget to pay attention to the older son, who is just like a pharisee standing there saying "you're spending all your time with them!" The last story doesn't end with

the same verbal conclusion as the other two, but the extravagant love of the Father for the younger son does speak for itself.

CONNECTION FOR TODAY

So often when we highlight these stories, especially the Prodigal Son, we miss out on the fact that there was an older son... and that we might be acting like him. Teens and junior highs have often said the phrase "that's not fair" in their lives. The story of the Prodigal isn't fair, especially from the perspective of the older son. It's not fair, but it's loving. It doesn't seem to balance out, but it's merciful. We need to encourage students to reach out to other students with the message and love of Jesus, even ones who are really really lost. Not because it's fair. Not because they deserve it. But because they don't deserve it and God loves them.

WAKE UP SECTION IDEAS

The spoken word video is powerful and the lego one is silly. Either one could be used at the beginning. If you read the Scripture of the Prodigal or even if you just play the silly Lego one, encourage students to picture themselves as each character in the story. Then get feedback from them on their different angles and feelings.

LANDING

In the end, help students to see where their heart should be for the lost, where it is and what their plan is to make up that gap.

Finally, if you have any questions, please hit "reply all" or send me a text @ (780) 996-5635. I've attached the document that explains our youth devos and also the curriculum for this week. Hope this helps.

Thanks for teaching!

DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE - OCTOBER 21

Hey All,

This is your Thursday email to get you thinking about teaching next week's message either in a house or at Junior High. Start thinking about it today and it will help you be creative.

WHERE WE GET THE MAIN POINT FROM

The main point comes from this parable-ish story in Matthew 25:31-46. I say "parable-ish" because it's more of a "future prophecy" parable, not a "this is how it is" parable. As you read through the Matthew text, it's very clear that Jesus is about "the least", from verses 40 and 45. The point "Jesus' heart beats for the little guy." is an attempt at a catchy phrase for students to remember about Jesus' deep concern and love for those in need.

THE SCRIPTURE

Read through Matthew 25:31-46 a few times. What may stand out to you is the last verse “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” If we were to read this story and only this story from Scripture, someone might think that we get eternal life... or get to heaven, by helping the poor. And of course the opposite of that would be, we go to hell if we don't. When we read the Bible, we always have to read it in the context of the whole Bible. Jesus is showing his heart for those in need. He's highlighting that those who have stepped out in faith and chosen to follow Him, will be changed from the inside out especially in the way they care for the poor.

How do we get eternal life with Jesus and ultimately heaven... It's through faith and through Jesus' sacrifice. No amount of serving the poor will buy us salvation. So, if you've passed by the guy begging on the street, you're not going to hell. That said, how you respond to the “little guy” does reveal how much your heart looks like Jesus'. The evidence that Jesus had become the master of our lives, should show in how we live.

All that to say, don't dwell on the salvation piece with the students. Explain it if need be, but move forward into encouraging them to have a heart for the “little guy,” just like their Saviour does.

CONNECTION FOR TODAY

We're going to be very practical in caring for the little guy in our groups by collecting items for the ministry “For the Least” and then praying for that ministry and the people it serves. Often in this world the rich and famous are idolized and put into focus. Our students need to be encouraged to open up their eyes to see those who are the exact opposite, those in need and to go into action to help meet needs.

WAKE UP SECTION IDEAS

There's a few ideas in the wake up section, but honestly the one I like the most is the last one:

“Draw on a whiteboard or large piece of paper a chart with 4 columns with these headings; 1. Financially, 2. Socially, 3. Physically and 4. Geographically. Ask the students if they can think of types of people in these 4 categories who are marginalized or who are the “least”. Write them down as they share them.” This gets students immediately thinking about others in need.

LANDING

In the end, help students to see where their heart should be for the little guy. Get them to pray about how God can change their heart if they seem to miss the mark.

Finally, if you have any questions, please hit “reply all” or send me a text @ (780) 996-5635. I've attached the document that explains our youth devos and also the curriculum for this week. Hope this helps.

Thanks for teaching!