

AUGUST 2013



TODAY IN THE **Word**

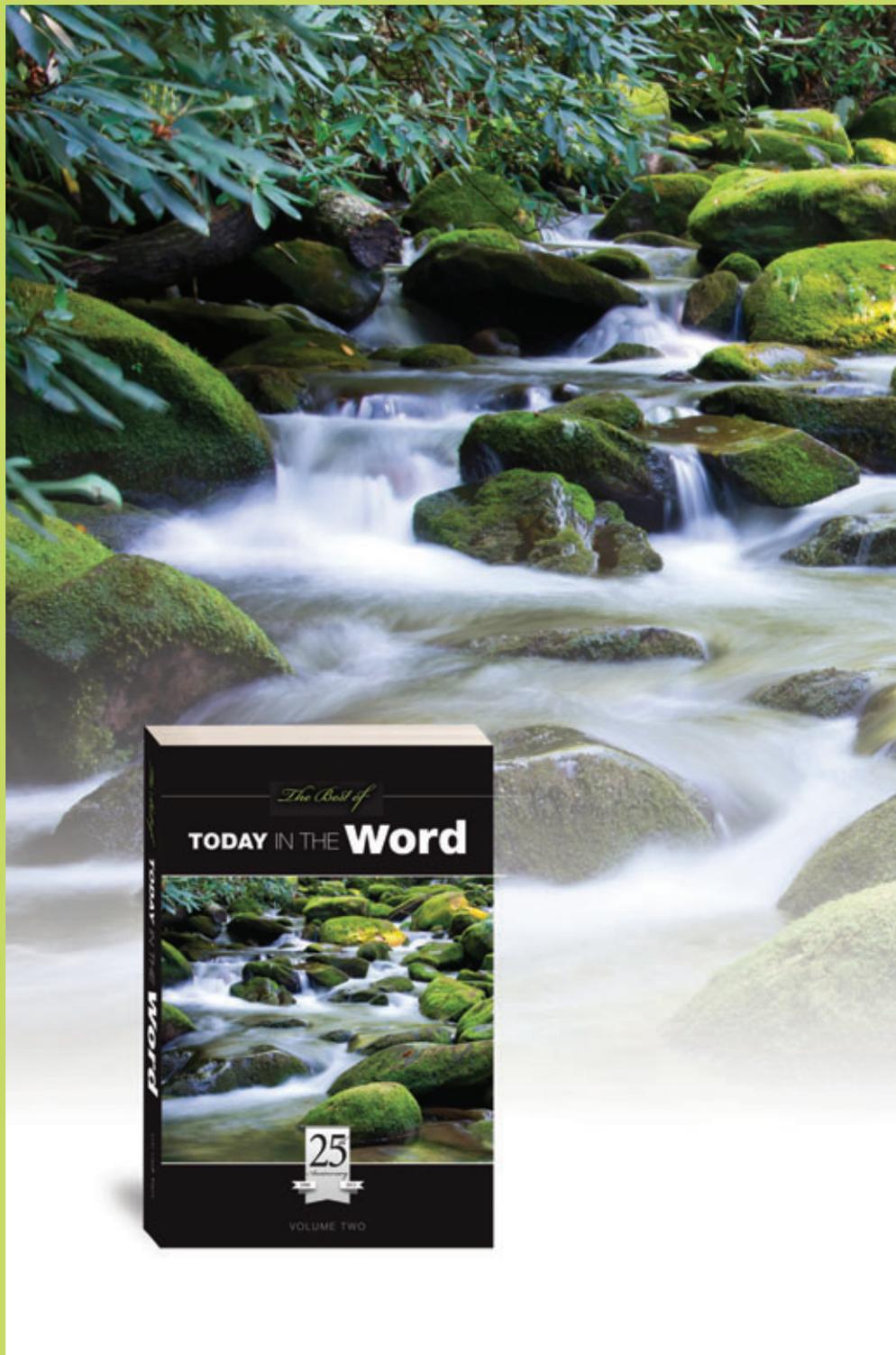
A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE



“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

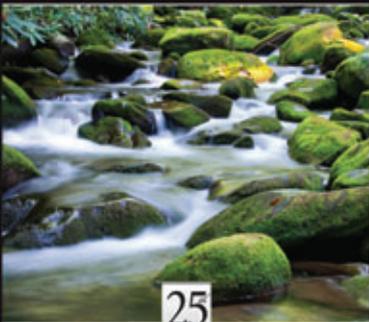
Mark 1:17

People Encounter Jesus



The Best of

TODAY IN THE **Word**



25

VOLUME TWO

The Best of TODAY IN THE Word

VOLUME TWO • 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Enjoy *The Best of Today in the Word, Volume Two*, a selection of 12 of our readers' favorite monthly devotionals. With this useful resource, you will deepen your knowledge of God's Word as you delve into Old and New Testament, character, and topical studies. These *Today in the Word* favorites will encourage and challenge you on your life's journey.

Daniel: Commitment or Compromise?

Published June 2005

Day 1

Read Daniel 1:1-2, Jeremiah 28:1-4, and 1 Kings 18:1-16.

TODAY IN THE WORD

New Year's Eve, 1899, saw of men celebrating the turn of a new millennium with enthusiasm, planning, and hope. It was a time to get out and celebrate. The third millennium was just beginning. In other words, the year 2000 would be the first millennium only if there had been one.

A look at the accounts in 2 Kings 18:1-13 and Jeremiah 28:1-4 presents a side-by-side comparison of the Babylonians' and the Jews' responses to the fall of Jerusalem in the fourth century B.C. The Babylonians did not believe in the same God as the Jews. The Jews would eventually be taken into captivity, while the Babylonians were not. How do you think the Jews would have responded to the fall of Jerusalem? How do you think the Babylonians would have responded to the fall of Jerusalem?

Characters of Faith and Wisdom

Published January 2009

Day 1

Read Hebrews 12:1-3.

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance.

Hebrews 12:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

On the first Sunday of January 1757, Father Edwards Burr, daughter of Jonathan Edwards, wrote in her journal: "I long to begin this year with God—oh for God's presence through this year! When I look back on the year past and take a view of the Numberless Mercies I have been the subject of, I stand amazed at God's goodness to such an ill-deserving, ill-discussing creature. I feel I am—by my sin—disgraced by the greater part of the World—What obligations am I under to spend the remainder of my time for God—I don't want to live unless I can live more in the glory of God and do more good."

Let her resolution be ours as well in 2009 as we kick off a year of Bible study centered around the theme of "God's Wisdom for Real Life." We begin this month with "Wise Characters of Faith," a series of biblical character portraits.

Today's passage refers to these and other Bible characters as a "great cloud of witnesses" who have run the race before us. Their lives show us the way. As witnesses, they testify to the faithfulness, power, and love of God, by whose grace they lived and by whose grace we now run an identical race (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16).



In this "race" of Christian life, we should not let all that hinders us spiritually, especially sin. We are also to run with perseverance, because the race may be long and difficult. Encouragingly, it has been marked out for us, reminding us that God is always to control.

Finally and most importantly, we must fix our eyes on Jesus. He founded the faith by which we run, and in perfecting our faith as we run. He is the ultimate example, since He, too, ran a grueling, sacrificial race marked out for Him by the Father. When we encounter opposition, shame, suffering, and even death, we should "imitate Him"—He has overcome all these obstacles, and we share in His victory.

Let us run this race right, why not compose a New Year resolution journal? Father Edwards Burr and focus your resolution on spiritual concerns and your relationship with the Lord. And since our purpose this month is "Wise Characters of Faith," let us be a resolution specifically

Request your copy today!

Use the reply card in this issue, or order a copy online at www.todayintheword.com.

Thank you for your ministry partnership!

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Radical Grace



Between the ages of 15 and 30, Tom was in and out of jail. Though he managed to earn an associate's degree in nuclear engineering, he was a drunk and a drug addict.

As a result, he ruined his marriage, lost his job, and alienated his family. He landed in jail again in 1979.

I'm afraid that if I had bumped into Tom prior to 1979, I might not have befriended him. But I didn't meet him until years later. We have a tendency to look at people and quickly evaluate their worth to us based on external factors, don't we? For instance, how successful are they? How attractive are they? How spiritual are they? Do they have it all together?

In studying the life of Jesus, it's interesting to observe how Jesus evaluated people. Many of the men and women Jesus chose to engage wouldn't have fared well on our scorecards. They were outcasts, often defined by their poverty, sickness, social standing, and sinful lifestyles. It is amazing to note that Jesus recognized value in everyone—men, women, children, sinners, Samaritans, lepers—and He often sought out those whom others condemned and ridiculed.

Regarding this issue of evaluating people, the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh." Before putting our trust in Jesus, Paul says we recognized people "according to the

flesh." The Greek word translated here as "regard" means to appraise someone, to size them up.

After we put our trust in Jesus, He calls us to *His* view of people, and He wants us to encounter people like He did when He walked on earth. We are to recognize the intrinsic value of everyone we meet based upon the fact that they are God's creation, a person for whom Christ died.

During Christmas of 1979, the Gideons visited Tom's jail, and they gave each inmate an apple, an orange, and a New Testament. After reading and rereading the New Testament, Tom gave his life to Christ. When he was released from jail he got involved in a local church and enrolled in a Bible college where I first met him.

After graduating in 1987, Tom became a chaplain, ministering in the same jail where he first encountered Jesus. Today, Tom leads a successful prison ministry that is introducing hundreds of inmates to the life-changing message of the gospel. None of this would have happened if not for a few faithful men who recognized Tom's intrinsic value to God.

Paul goes on to write in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." What a beautiful explanation of what happens when we give our life to Christ! He offers grace that radically changes our life and then gives us the remarkable opportunity to offer that same grace to everyone we encounter.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler

The Heart of the Bible



Jesus is at the center of the Scriptures. He told the religious leaders who opposed Him, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you possess eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39). We know these Scriptures as the Old Testament.

The Old Testament predicted the details of Christ’s miraculous birth, suffering, death, and resurrection. The Gospels point to specific events in the Savior’s life and note that these things took place to fulfill what the Lord had predicted in the prophetic books of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 27:9; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:44; John 12:37–38). Jesus appealed to this Old Testament testimony when He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus following His resurrection: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

Jesus is at the center of the whole Bible because He is the culmination of all that the Scriptures reveal about God. The writer of Hebrews characterizes Him as God’s final word about Himself. Jesus is God’s most explicit revelation of Himself

because He is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3). He is God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). Because Jesus is one with the Father, He provides us with the clearest understanding of the Father (John 10:30). Jesus affirmed this to His disciples when He told Philip: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). But Jesus does more than simply inform us about God. He is also the way to God. No one can come to the Father except through the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

We cannot know Christ apart from what is written in the Scriptures. Jesus is the lens that enables us to understand both the significance and the implications of all that have been written in the Bible. This does not mean that we should look to find Jesus in every text. But it does mean that we should look at every text through the lens of Christ. When the Bible shows us our sin, it does so in order to reveal our need for the forgiveness that comes only through Christ’s shed blood. When the Bible reveals our duty, it is a duty that can only be fulfilled by relying on the empowering grace that Christ supplies through His death and resurrection.

For Further Study

To learn more about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, read *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey (Zondervan).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Mafter

Jesus Is Everywhere

My coworker Julia often tells me stories about her family. The latest story was about her 2-year-old nephew who tells his mother that he sees Jesus. And Jesus speaks to him too. So far, according to the toddler, Jesus told him two words: "Taco Bell." With a certainty and sincerity of all 2-year-olds, he proclaims, "Jesus is everywhere!" He loves to pray, and he does it with gusto. And he cleans up the mess in his room with a happy song he learned in Sunday school.

Interested and intrigued, I wanted to know more about the nephew's encounters with Jesus: Ask him, what did Jesus look like? Was He sitting or standing? Was He moving? . . . As I peppered my coworker with questions, I suddenly had a chilling realization: I envy the 2-year-old! Why don't I see Jesus? Why doesn't He talk to me? Why don't I pray with gusto and clean up the mess in my room with a happy song? What's wrong with me? Have I lost my first love and the joy of my salvation?

I would have been wallowing in this despair for a long time, but the Lord in His mercy and in the power of His Word dispelled my misery. As it happened many times before, the work on *Today in the Word* brought encouragement. When I looked at the theme of this month's issue, "People Encounter Jesus," I remembered

all the men, women, and children in the Bible who saw Jesus and to whom He said exactly what they needed to hear. And I remembered all the times in my own life when the Lord spoke to my heart with the words of love and compassion. As gratitude filled me, my envy and doubt disappeared. Yes, the 2-year-old is right: Jesus is everywhere, in time and space. Just as He spoke to people from all walks of life in the New Testament, He speaks now to every heart that belongs to Him. We need to pay attention, to listen, and to be grateful.

Dear readers, we hope this month's issue of *Today in the Word* encourages you as well. We pray that as you read about people who met Jesus—a tax collector, a religious lawyer, a woman from Samaria, a paralyzed man, a grieving widow, a Pharisee—you will remember your encounters with the risen Lord. Perhaps you would like to write to us about these encounters. In the June issue we asked you to share with us your summer journeys with *Today in the Word*. This month, please send us a letter or an email about meeting Jesus with the help of *Today in the Word*—through Scriptures, circumstances of your life, or a "still small voice." Then, in one of the future issues of *Today in the Word*, we'll dedicate this column to publishing your accounts of God at work in your life.

Please send your stories and pictures to Today in the Word, 820 N.LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610 or email to titw@moodycommunications.org.

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

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People Encounter Jesus

At a juvenile correctional center in rural Virginia, inmates face the issues of crime and punishment, and it changes their lives. They take a Russian literature class led by faculty from the University of Virginia. Russian literature seems a good fit, particularly Dostoyevsky, with his fascination with criminals and titles like *Crime and Punishment* and *An Honest Thief*. But the real reason Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy have such a profound effect on the correctional center residents is that these giants of nineteenth-century literature ask questions that resonate with everyone: *Who am I? Where am I going? If I'm going to die, how should I live?* As Christians, the two writers themselves grappled with these questions while seeking God.

Inmates in Virginia encountered the power of the written word. Their comments after taking the class—"Now I constantly think about how I want to live my life"; "I felt like a human being again"—reflect deep changes in their hearts. In this month's *Today in the Word*, we'll read about different people facing God in the flesh. No wonder people's lives were never the same after they saw Jesus, the Word, face to face! We'll read about people healed, people surprised, people freed, called, and sent. And as we follow their journey with Christ, we'll see their questions reflected in our own lives—and we'll see how Jesus is the answer.

Dear readers, your prayers and financial support help thousands of people around the world encounter Jesus through God's Word. Thank you for your faithfulness to *Today in the Word* as we serve God together. This journey wouldn't happen without you.

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Effortlessly Redeemed: The Daughter of Jairus

Advances in modern technology enabled us to do many things: to communicate better and in more ways, to contact more people, and to obtain easily all the information we need from many different sources. The possibilities of the digital world can create a false sense of power. It seems we can achieve anything, there's no limit to human progress and creativity.

But when we lift our eyes off our screens and ponder the reality of life, death, salvation, we are reminded again and again that ultimate power is in the hands of God. Only through Christ can we come from death to life. It's the encounter with Jesus that truly changes everything, and this month we'll look at people's encounters with Jesus in the New Testament.

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of a father who begged Jesus to heal his daughter. Despite being pushed and pulled by others' needs, Jesus made

His way to the little girl who had been suffering with illness. But before Jesus could arrive there, this little girl was pronounced dead. After reassuring her desperate and brokenhearted parents, Jesus touched and healed the girl, raising her to new life. The little girl came from death to life. Her life, and the lives of her parents, were changed forever.

Her spirit returned,
and at once she
stood up.

Luke 8:55

Too often we can be tempted to behave as if it is our movement toward Jesus that saves us. But not this girl. No doubt, for the rest of her life she remembered the precarious experience of sickness and death. Her parents would remind her that there had been nothing that anyone was able to do to restore her, except for Jesus. By no human effort or will of her own, Jesus came to her and raised her to new life. Graciously, this is how Jesus operates! He extends grace when we are still bound by the powers of sin and death.

Apply the Word

Have you been tempted to believe that Jesus would touch you if you could just exert the right amount of prayer or energy or effort? What a burden! Know that Jesus is always moving toward us. It's how He operates. Jesus is faithful to move toward us, and we meet Him in our darkest moments, like the girl who received His touch at death's door.

Pray with Us

It's our privilege to pray for Moody's trustees today. Please lift them up to the Lord as they serve Moody with their time, skills, and efforts. Please welcome two new trustees: Dr. Julianna Slattery and Dr. Manuel Gutierrez.

Gradual Healing: A Twice-Touched Blind Man

Cochlear implant surgery has changed many lives in recent years. In the revolutionary surgical procedure, doctors drill holes in the skull to insert a steel plate about the size of a quarter just above the ear. In a second procedure, surgeons replace the patient's own cochlear with a sophisticated hearing device. Following this implant, the patient is completely deaf for a month before the device is activated. To be successful, the process requires multiple steps. After following the required process for a cochlear implant, including a month of complete hearing loss, recipients call the first day they're able to hear "activation day."

In Bethsaida, when people begged Jesus to touch a blind man, He also used a multiple-step process. First, Jesus spit on the man's eyes. After his first

attempt to see, the man reported that people looked like walking trees! But his healing process wasn't complete. After Jesus applied His hands to the man's eyes, his sight was completely restored. For reasons known then and now only to Jesus, He chose to heal this man in a way

He didn't use with other people that He healed.

Then his eyes were
opened, his sight
was restored,
and he saw
everything clearly.

Mark 8:25

Like a skilled surgeon, Jesus used two different techniques to restore the man's vision. The text doesn't tell us how the man felt when he first opened his eyes and had only partial sight—was he hopeful or

disappointed? When the man opened his eyes a second time, he was able, at last, to see clearly. At the moment of "activation," the man who had been blind knew Jesus to be a healer who was committed to his full restoration.

Apply the Word

Perhaps you've experienced God's healing in your life in some way. God has touched your heart or your mind or your body or your relationships. He has brought new life where there was death, light where there was darkness. Are there still areas that need His healing touch? Don't give up. Continue to trust Jesus for full restoration. He will be faithful.

Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media. Ask for God's help and wisdom in Greg's leadership responsibilities as he guides Moody's media ministries in our digital age. Today, also pray for Employee Appreciation Day at Moody.

The Priority of People: A Man with a Withered Hand

When an energetic black Rottweiler named Leslie went missing from home, her owners became concerned. After seven days, the father found Leslie at the bottom of an abandoned well in the woods behind their home. Local firefighters, who had recently trained for this sort of rescue, climbed to the bottom of the well and raised Leslie to safety. Like so many first responders, these rescuers had not hesitated to save—even a distraught dog.

When Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, the religious Pharisees were already irritated with Him because He and His hungry disciples had picked grain to eat on the Sabbath. Looking for an excuse to charge Him as a rule-breaker, they spotted a man with a withered hand and demanded, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (Matt. 12:10). Knowing Jesus to be a healer, they wanted to nail Him for breaking the law by doing “work” on the Sabbath.

How much more
valuable is a
person than
a sheep!

Matthew 12:12

The man, listening in, might have drawn a quick breath as he waited for Jesus’ answer. Without hesitating, Jesus reminded the religious leaders that when one of them had a sheep who had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, they would do what they declared was prohibited: the “work” of lifting it out. “How much more valuable is a person than a sheep!” Jesus insisted. And then He healed the man’s hand.

Because first-century individuals with disabilities were often thought to have been cursed because of their sin, the man wouldn’t have expected mercy. He seemed to be caught in the crossfire of religious conflict. But he experienced Jesus as one who not only miraculously restored his hand, but also confirmed his undeniable worth to God. In fact all those gathered at the synagogue that day discovered the priority that Jesus placed on people over religious rules that devalue God’s creation.

Apply the Word

People with physical and mental disabilities are often marginalized in our culture, even in the church. Does your congregation welcome people who require additional services like a Sunday school aide, assistance with mobility, or help transcribing notes? Is there a way you can help meet these needs, and follow in the example of Jesus in affirming their worth?

Pray with Us

Moody Publishers reaches thousands of readers around the world with the printed word and digital word. Pray that the service of its Production staff, Ryan Lloyd and Randy Westerlund, will touch many hearts for Christ.

Known by One's Fruit: A Man Blind since Birth

In the back yard of one Arizona home is a very unusual tree: some of its branches produce tangelos, but other branches produce grapefruits. While the hybrid tree is most certainly the result of grafting, the current owner does not have information about its history. When visitors ask about it, he simply describes his experience of the tree, "I can pick tangelos and I can pick grapefruits! I can't tell you more than that."

As Jesus and His friends were walking along one day, they encountered a man who had been born blind. Showing mercy on the man, Jesus spit into the dry dirt to make some mud that He applied to the man's eyes. When, at Jesus' instruction, the man washed in the Pool of Siloam, he could see!

Because Jesus healed this man and others on the Sabbath, the Pharisees were convinced that He was violating laws

against working on the Lord's day and therefore could not possibly be from God. Launching an exhaustive investigation, they grilled both the healed man and his parents. Summoning the man a second time, they pressured him to agree that Jesus was a sinner. Weary, the man replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" (John 9:25).

Instead of inviting the man, the Pharisees rejected him. Jesus, however, not only healed the man physically of his blindness but gave him spiritual sight as well. He proclaimed his faith in Jesus and worshiped Him (v. 38). This was nothing less than full restoration. Jesus demonstrated that physical infirmity is not always caused by sin; rather, it could be intended to bring about praise and worship of God, who redeems and restores all things for His glory.

By their fruit you
will recognize them.

Matthew 7:16

Apply the Word

We often ask the question *why* when we experience suffering. God doesn't always answer our *why* questions. But He shows us *how* He will sustain us through sorrow and bear our burdens. Perhaps He will receive glory through our restoration in this life, or perhaps He will receive glory through our perseverance in faith while we are in pain.

Pray with Us

Please pray for the Moody Publishers Editorial team: Carolyn McDaniel, Elizabeth Newenhuyse, Pamela Pugh, and James Vincent. May the Lord grant them unity and success in reaching audiences with content that helps each reader know, love, and serve Jesus.

From Greatness to Smallness: The Mother of James and John

The parents of Mary Todd raised her with money and privilege. They were unhappy that their daughter planned to marry a man named Abraham Lincoln. Their concerns stemmed from the fact that her suitor had been raised in poverty and had very little formal schooling. They wanted the best for their daughter, and they could not imagine that this was the man who could give it to her. Imagine the Todds' surprise, in 1860, when their son-in-law was elected president of the United States!

So the last shall be first, and the first will be last.

Matthew 20:16

Two of Jesus' earliest followers were two humble fishermen James and John. When Jesus called them beside the Sea of Galilee, they left their father, Zebedee, in the family boat to follow Him. Can you imagine the conversation between Zebedee and his wife that evening? The future they had envisioned for their sons had been dashed. Over the course of Jesus' ministry, however, Zebedee's wife

decided that her boys should be granted the privilege of sitting at the right and left of Jesus in His kingdom. In fact, she decided to be proactive and boldly ask this favor from Jesus. Turning to the two brothers, Jesus asked if they could drink the cup He drank. They confirmed that they could.

Neither James nor John nor their mother seemed to have a firm grasp on the kind of kingdom Jesus had ushered in. While they seemed to expect it to be one of upward mobility, Jesus—

who had just finished teaching that the last would be first and the first would be last—preached and modeled a kingdom that was decidedly downwardly mobile by the world's perspective. Worldly prestige would be replaced by scorn and material loss. Those who follow Jesus will find that the glory of the resurrection is preceded by the sorrow of the crucifixion.

Apply the Word

It can be tempting for Christians living in an affluent culture to believe that following Jesus means that our lives will fall into order. We want to think that being a Christian means we'll experience ease and comfort. We must learn that to drink the cup Jesus drank is to choose humility. How is Jesus inviting you to drink the same cup?

Pray with Us

Lloyd Dodson, vice president of Human Resources, welcomes your prayers today. We thank the Lord for his ministry and the ministry of his team at Human Resources who bring the dedicated servants of Christ to Moody.

Discovering an Unlikely Hero: A Religious Lawyer

The government of South Africa instituted apartheid in 1948, which legalized the separation of people of different races and restricted some privileges for whites only. A young lawyer named Nelson Mandela joined with others to actively resist his country's unjust policies of segregation. Arrested for his activism, Mandela was imprisoned from 1962 until his release in 1990. Four years later, in the country's first multiracial elections, Mandela was elected president of South Africa. Just a decade earlier, such an outcome would be seemed not only unlikely but also impossible.

Centuries earlier, another lawyer had asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life. After establishing the importance of the two great commandments to love God and love neighbor, the lawyer asked Jesus just who his neighbor was. The story Jesus told in the presence of a curious crowd

challenged every assumption the man held about "neighbor." Jesus' description of the kind of neighbor to emulate would have come as a huge surprise to this lawyer, most likely a specialist in religious law. After all, the hero in Jesus' story was both the "wrong" race and the "wrong" religion!

To the lawyer, and to all of the Jews who had gathered around to listen, the idea of a Samaritan hero was nothing less than posterous.

It was a teaching that would have sounded shocking to religious insiders. It's one of the reasons the first-

century crowds who encountered Jesus didn't describe Him the way some do today, as a "good teacher." No, he was entirely unconventional! His convictions about who loved well, and who was worthy of love, were controversial. This particular exchange—surprising, offensive, risky—would have been remembered by the man, and by those who heard it, for years afterward.

Go and do
likewise.

Luke 10:37

Apply the Word

Jesus challenged the expert in religious law to imitate someone he would have considered to be an enemy. It is the same challenge extended to you today. Who is your unlikely neighbor? How are you being called to love others across boundaries of race and culture and religion by expressing genuine mercy and compassion in the name of Christ?

Pray with Us

We are grateful for the service of Louis Ballasch, Lillie Hill, and Elouise Peace who work in The Commons cafeteria on Moody's Chicago campus. We pray that they will continue to encourage others with their faithfulness and love for God and His Word.

Unanticipated Resurrection: A Grieving Widowed Mother

Steven Frayne has captivated audiences on both stage and screen, especially in his native Great Britain. Better known by his performing name, Dynamo, Frayne is considered a world-class magician and illusionist. People have been shocked and awed by feats including turning snow into diamonds, levitating himself and others, and walking across the River Thames barefoot.

Shock and awe would also have been the response of the crowd who watched Jesus raise to life a young man who had died. He was the only son of his widowed mother. As his corpse was being carried out of town for burial, Jesus approached the pallbearers. When Jesus commanded the dead body to get up, the man sat up and began to talk. Those gathered could not believe what they were seeing! They knew this young man was dead; they were

on their way to the burial when instead a praise session erupted. The man's mother joined the other witnesses in praising God for her son's restoration.

Throughout human history, human beings had battled against the power of death, and lost. And yet the holy glimpse of resurrection experienced by this grieving mother and her son, was a foretaste of what was to come in the saving resurrection of Jesus Himself. Her response, which was joined by the voices of other witnesses,

demonstrates how she understood what had just happened: "God has come to help his people" (v. 16). Jesus showed compassion in His tender words to this widow and showed power in His mighty work of restoring this son to life. He is indeed the incarnate presence of God who has come to help His people.

God has come to
help his people.

Luke 7:16

Apply the Word

God is not the cosmic magician in the sky, doing tricks and illusions to show off His power. He loves His creation and extends mercy and kindness. He cares about our hurts and sorrows. If you are grieving over a situation today, take hope and confidence from His Word: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Pray with Us

Would you pray for Dr. Junias Venugopal, Provost and Dean of Education? Ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to guide, strengthen, and refresh him as he leads Moody's Education ministry of training future Christian leaders.

A Sinful Dinner Host: A Tax Collector Named Zacchaeus

The first Sunday that Kathleen visited church, she created quite a stir. She was wearing sweatpants that looked at least one size too small and bedroom slippers. No one was sure how she had arrived at church—had someone dropped her off? Did she walk? When Kathleen requested prayer, another woman from the church stood with her and held her hand. Over the next few months, Dana befriended Kathleen, who had suffered a series of tragedies and was destitute. Dana helped provide Kathleen with clothes and shoes that fit, made sure she had transportation to church, and invited her to her home. Today, Kathleen is a valued prayer warrior in the church.

Confusion and outrage when someone “undesirable” shows up in church still happens. Jesus experienced that kind of reaction, too, when he addressed

Zacchaeus, a tax collector. Did Jesus realize how offensive Zacchaeus was? Did He care at all about His reputation?

Jesus knew that Zacchaeus’s community despised him. He was a pawn of the Roman authority, authorized to extort his neighbors for as much money as he wanted as long as the government got their cut. And though Jesus understood exactly who Zacchaeus was, He did not avoid him. Rather, when Jesus spotted him in a tree, He made a beeline toward him.

Zacchaeus was shocked that Jesus wanted to have a conversation with him. In fact, Jesus insisted on receiving hospitality from Zacchaeus by visiting his home. This relationship with Jesus produced a result that exclusion and shunning did not: repentance! Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his home, and Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus into God’s family.

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:15

Apply the Word

If we’re honest, most often we would prefer to keep our distance from folks who make us uncomfortable. We can’t imagine inviting one of “those people” into our homes or building a relationship with them. This week, how will you imitate Jesus? Who do you find scandalous or repellent? As the Holy Spirit prompts you, offer them an invitation to grace.

Pray with Us

We value the service of Moody’s Student Programs staff, Joe Gonzales, Nok Prukpitikul, and Cherie Carson. August is a busy time for them: serving new students and managing students’ leadership retreat and move-in day. They welcome your prayers.

The Wrong Sort: A Samaritan Woman

In his book *Congregations in America* sociologist Mark Chaves presents data representing the decline in church attendance over the past fifty years. He notes that churches who resisted embracing different people from different demographics—race, socioeconomic class, age—tend to shrivel, a trend that is accelerating. According to his research, churches do not have the luxury of keeping out the wrong sort of people who look or sound different from what they find comfortable.

When Jesus' disciples returned from fetching lunch supplies at the market, they found Him talking to a woman who was decidedly the "wrong" sort. For starters, she was the "wrong" race. Samaritans were descendants of the Jews left behind in the land during the Babylonian exile, and they had intermarried with non-Jews. Because of this history, Jews considered Samaritans to be half-breeds.

This woman was also the wrong religion. The Samaritan religion had developed during the Exile while the temple was in ruins. They had established worship on Mount Gerizim. Although they shared some common worship elements with Jews, observant Jews did not consider their worship authentic.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

John 4:39

Finally, she was a woman with a sordid past. Clues from the text indicate that even other Samaritan women didn't want to associate with her—she was drawing water alone in the heat of the day instead of the morning or evening, when most women did this work (vv. 6–7). Jesus knew that she had already had five husbands before living with a man. This woman, considered by most to be worthless, experienced the grace, love, and mercy of Jesus. In fact, she was so moved by the inextricable kindness and truth of Jesus that many in her village were saved as a result of her testimony.

Apply the Word

Has the Lord delivered you? Perhaps you have a story of addiction or reckless living that was transformed by the grace of God. Or perhaps you were saved from a life of pride, greed, and self-righteousness. We are all sinners redeemed by Jesus, and we need to testify to the work of God in our lives.

Pray with Us

Please mention while you pray the ministry of Patrick Friedline in Career Development on Moody's Chicago campus, as he helps Moody students and graduates find full- and part-time jobs.

He Is for You: A Sinner

Most emergency rooms in the United States are structured around the concept of triage. A patient is first assessed by a nurse, who checks vital signs and determines the severity of the patient's condition. She assigns each condition a rating of "immediately life threatening," or "urgent but not immediately life threatening," or "less urgent." The purpose for triage is that the most severe or time-critical cases are the first to see a doctor.

When Jesus and His disciples were eating dinner at Matthew the tax collector's house, many of Matthew's friends also joined them. Like him, his friends were tax collectors and others that the religious leaders considered to be sinners (v. 10). The religious leaders noticed Jesus was consorting with sinners, but rather than approach Him directly they asked His disciples why their master would debase Himself with such company.

It is not the healthy
who need a doctor,
but the sick.

Matthew 9:12

Though it would have been interesting to hear how the disciples would have answered, Jesus overheard and answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (v. 12). Looking at the condition of all the suffering souls around Him, Jesus had performed spiritual triage and identified the condition of Matthew and his friends as urgent enough to receive immediate attention.

Those called "sinners" were embraced by Jesus, and they experienced something—Someone—radically different from either the cool rejection or hot fury of the religious leaders. They were treated as those who were worthy of dignity and respect. They encountered Someone who loved them enough to share a meal with them. They were embraced by Someone who not only diagnosed them as sick and sinful but also offered them healing and salvation.

Apply the Word

Jesus was less concerned about His reputation than He was about His ministry. As His followers, do we care more about keeping up appearances or about building relationships with sinful people who need the Lord? Would we rather stay in the safe confines of the church fellowship hall or venture into a disreputable person's home to share a meal?

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, will appreciate the prayers of the Moody family for his responsibilities of overseeing financial operations at Moody. Thank you for upholding in prayer Moody's consistent pursuit of good, godly stewardship.

Included in the Family: A Canaanite Woman

Abeedah was a foreign exchange student at an American university, and one of her professors invited her to church. Though raised Muslim, she was curious about Christianity and accepted the invitation. When all the students cleared out of campus in the middle of December, Abeedah was left alone in her quiet dorm. But then her professor and his wife asked her to join their family for a Christmas celebration. When each of their children presented her with a gift, Abeedah was surprised and touched at being included in their family's celebration.

Though Jesus was trying to keep a low profile as He moved through Tyre, another "outsider" learned where He was staying (v. 24). The woman, a Greek, was born in Syrian Phoenicia. Her daughter had been possessed by an impure spirit, and this desperate mother threw herself at Jesus' feet, begging for His help. At this point in the text we might be surprised to see

Jesus' answer. Perhaps provocatively, He articulated what His disciples were surely thinking: an "outsider" didn't deserve the same gifts as God's chosen people.

This woman showed spiritual and theological insight, and she protested on behalf of her daughter, "Even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (v. 28). She demonstrated her faith in the Master's hand, and Jesus healed her daughter that moment.

Receiving God's gracious gifts—healing, salvation, inclusion into God's family—was never meant to be the exclusive right of the Jews. Rather, God had always intended to save other nations through the Jews. A desperate mother and her tortured daughter experienced God's goodness through Jesus, who shared God's gifts freely. The eternal plan of God to bless all nations is the same today as it was then!

Through your
offspring all nations
on earth will be
blessed.

Genesis 22:18

Apply the Word

If there is a college or university nearby, you have a global mission field at your doorstep! Many international students long to build relationships with local families, and many are lonely while far away from home. Contact the student services department to see how you or your church could extend hospitality to these young people in the name of Jesus.

Pray with Us

Our Payroll department, headed by Eleanor Ehresman, includes George Palmiter, Julie Vinlasaca, and Carol Walters. Their behind-the-scenes work requires a great deal of focus and attention to detail. They will be grateful for your prayers.

A Sordid Companion: A Tax Collector Named Levi

Bernie Madoff orchestrated the largest financial fraud in U.S. history through an elaborate web of fake investment opportunities known as a Ponzi scheme. Dozens of people, institutions, and even charities lost tens of billions of dollars through Madoff's lies and trickery. In 2009, he pleaded guilty to eleven charges, and he was sentenced to 150 years in prison. The judge in his case noted that no one—not even friends or family—had sent what are called mitigating letters attesting to good deeds or character for an accused person. Currently, Bernie Madoff lives in a federal prison in Butner, North Carolina.

Given the scope of Bernie Madoff's crimes and the people he hurt, perhaps it's not surprising that no one wanted to vouch for him. Tax collectors were viewed with similar disgust and disdain in the first century. Jesus was walking

alongside a lake near Capernaum teaching when he spotted Levi sitting at a tax collector's booth. A first-century tax booth was less like a kiosk at the mall and more like a tollbooth where travelers were obligated to pay whatever was asked of them. When

Jesus called out to Levi and asked him to become one of His followers, Levi must have been shocked by the invitation. Can you imagine the Messiah, the Savior, asking such a notorious thief to be part of His closest followers?

When Jesus called Levi, as when He met with Zacchaeus, He didn't leave him in the same situation. Zacchaeus made restitution. Levi left tax collecting and followed Jesus. An encounter with Jesus offers freedom from the bondage of sin and the opportunity for restoration. He extends this to all, even thieves, prostitutes, and tax collectors.

Through Christ
Jesus the law of the
Spirit who gives life
has set you free
from the law of sin
and death.

Romans 8:2

Apply the Word

Throughout the Gospels, those who encounter Jesus are set free mentally, physically, and spiritually. This freedom means leaving our sinful activities behind. From what has Jesus set you free? And, perhaps equally important, what might it be that Jesus is inviting you to leave? Levi left his tax booth behind, but he gained peace and fellowship with God.

Pray with Us

Thank you for praying today for Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio. He leads his teams in producing programs that reach millions around the world with biblical teaching and Christian music.

Saved: A Bandit Awaiting Crucifixion

The 1995 movie *Dead Man Walking* recounts the true story of the relationship between convicted murderer Matthew Poncelet, who was awaiting execution on death row, and a Roman Catholic nun named Sister Helen Prejean. After his plea for a pardon was denied, Prejean served as Poncelet's spiritual counselor as he prepared for his death. Though Poncelet continued to insist upon his innocence, Sister Helen taught him that redemption was only possible if he took responsibility for his actions. Shortly before he was led to his execution, Poncelet came clean with Sister Helen and even confessed to the families of his victims.

During Jesus' final hours before death, He hung on a cross between two criminals. These two heard Him ask His Father to forgive those putting Him to death. Both heard rulers sneer at Jesus and soldiers mock Him.

They watched how Jesus behaved when assaulted. One of the criminals responded by joining those hurling insults at Jesus. The other responded by confessing his own sin and seeking forgiveness. He recognized and testified to Jesus' innocence. When this one pled to Jesus for mercy, he received it.

Truly I tell you,
today you will
be with me in
paradise.

Luke 23:43

In order to be redeemed, we must be willing and able to face the reality of our sin. Some who encountered Jesus, like the taunting criminal, hardened their hearts to God's grace which was available through Jesus Christ. Others who were given the opportunity

to see themselves as they really are—like the humble criminal—confessed their need for forgiveness. Jesus' forgiveness of the criminal at His side reminds us that when we recognize our sinfulness, and acknowledge who Christ really is, we can receive the salvation Christ offers.

Apply the Word

Are you more likely to protest your innocence or to recognize the sinful state of your own heart? Coming clean—with ourselves, with others, and with God—takes courage! Pause, this week, to take an honest look at the condition of your heart with the help of God's Spirit. Confess your sin to God and accept the grace and forgiveness He offers.

Pray with Us

Please join us in praying for the Moody Radio Production Services team: Joseph Carlson, William Davis, Jon Hemmer, Joshua Klos, and Chris Papendick. May the programs they produce have a lasting influence on listeners' lives!

Being in Jesus' Family: James, the Brother of Jesus

In some families, sports provide the bond that ties a family together. They enjoy playing, coaching, and watching sports together. The family of professional football quarterbacks Archie, Peyton, and Eli Manning is one example. In other families, music is the shared interest. Family members sing and perform and compose and direct. The Von Trapp family, whose lives were depicted in the celebrated musical *The Sound of Music*, was a family like this. What, though, did it mean to be a member of Jesus' family? More importantly, how did Jesus define who was included in His family?

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, after calling His disciples, Jesus' family did not yet understand the mission for which He had been called. They didn't understand His obedience to His Father. In fact, they thought He was out of His mind! (see Mark 3:21). The same evening, gesturing

toward the crowd gathered to hear His teaching, Jesus articulated to those present that His "mother" and "brothers" were those who did the will of God. It was a theme that would run throughout Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:19–21).

Do not merely listen
to the word, and so
deceive yourselves.
Do what it says.

James 1:22

At least one of Jesus' half-brothers, the son of Joseph and Mary, heard and implemented this important teaching. James was the author of the epistle by the same name, and he did become a disciple of his brother. He heard and internalized and practiced the message he had received from Jesus about

doing the will of God. After Jesus' death and resurrection, James wrote, "Whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do" (James 1:25). Those who belong to Jesus' family will take God at His word.

Apply the Word

The fullness of grace that Jesus offers includes the power to respond in faith and obedience to God's Word. Jesus was less concerned with the label a person wore—Jew, Gentile, Samaritan—than with their response to His Father. Spend time in prayer for people God has placed in your life. Ask the Lord to show you how you can follow Him and do His will.

Pray with Us

As we continue to keep in prayer Moody Radio Production, please add Lee Rugen, Christopher Segard, Deb Solomon, Joel Swan, and Steven Tabor to your list. Pray that the team will continue to work with energy, wisdom, and insight.

Question and Answer

By David Rim, Professor of Theology



I have always been told that God knows the future. If that is the case, how do you explain God's choice to create us knowing beforehand that Adam and Eve would sin? On that same note, why should I even ask God for things when He already knows my future?



That God knows the future is a proposition with widespread support in the Scriptures. This means that God created Adam and Eve while knowing not only that they would eat of the forbidden fruit but also knowing the devastating effects of their action toward countless generations that came after them.

In answer to the question of *why*, perhaps the closest biblical answer is that such a situation was exactly what God wanted in order to demonstrate the riches of a grace that has been so lavished upon us. In becoming one of the least of us, to be born beside farm animals, and to walk the path that ultimately led to Calvary to be nailed to a cross, God revealed to mankind on earth and to the angels in heaven what kind of God He really was. For all of eternity the Second Person of the Trinity will exhibit the marks of His everlasting love. God deemed the tragedy of the Fall as being worthy of the opportunity to display the glories of the cross.

As to your question concerning prayer, some have responded that we ought to

pray because the Bible commands it, that we should because Jesus did, or that when we do there is a peace that wells up within us. All of these answers are good, but I'd like to add one more. Are we so absolutely sure that the future is predetermined by God in such a way that our prayers will not make a significant difference? What if it is the case that we do not receive because we have not asked? (James 4:2). Hezekiah prayed and was given an extra fifteen years of life (2 Kings 20). What if he had not prayed? Would the results have been the same? Now think of the unimaginable possibility that one of your beloved ones was suddenly diagnosed with a terminal illness. Would all of the theological perplexities concerning prayer make a difference when something that close to our heart strikes us? Or do we cry out to God, not wanting to take the slightest chance that my lack of prayer may somehow contribute to their lack of healing? In other words, the intensity of my love for a child or a spouse or parent should overwhelm all perceived theological obstacles to prayer. I pray, even when I do not understand the mysteries of prayer, because He is able and I am not.



The Old Testament affirms God's faithfulness to His people. In places like Isaiah 49:16, we read, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Isn't this in conflict with Christians who hold to a replacement theology? I do not subscribe to it, but I'd like to learn more.

Continued on next page

I pray, even when I do not understand the mysteries of prayer, because He is able and I am not.

Continued from previous page



The relationship between Israel and the church is a complex one. Interwoven among the theological issues are the obvious political implications. Let me make several points that might help us to better understand those who see the covenantal promises given to Israel being transplanted to the church. First, in the Gospels we find the life of national Israel being recapitulated in the life of Jesus. The obvious place to start is with Matthew. Just as Joseph was sent into Egypt to preserve the family of Jacob (i.e. Israel), so Joseph the human father of Jesus was sent into Egypt to protect his Son. As Israel was brought out of Egypt, so we have a new exodus in Jesus (“Out of Egypt I called my Son” in Hosea 11:1/Matt. 2:15). A massacre of infants is associated with both events: Pharaoh in his attempt to kill Moses the perceived deliverer and King Herod’s attempt to kill Jesus the future king of the Jews. Jesus experiences a testing of His faith as a Son in the wilderness for forty days, just as Israel experienced the temptation to doubt in God’s fatherly provisions in the wilderness for forty years. As Jesus was led by the Spirit, so Israel was led by cloud by day and fire by night. The Sermon on the Mount given on a mountain parallels the giving of the Law to Israel on Mount Sinai.

Second, Isaiah speaks of a servant of the Lord upon whom God will place His Spirit and who will not falter until He brings justice into the land (Isa. 42:4). He will be pierced for our transgressions (Isa. 53:5). Most evangelical theologians see in Jesus the fulfillment of these prophecies concerning the servant. But Isaiah also refers to this

servant as Israel (Isa. 44:1). The question has sometimes been asked, *Is the servant Jesus or Israel?* Perhaps one can argue that it is a reference to Jesus as a kind of Israel—one who is a perfect representative of Israel.

Third, we need to keep in mind that certain conditions (i.e. faith) must be satisfied for one to experience the blessings of the divine covenants. For many proponents of replacement theology, Israel’s failure to satisfy their end of the conditions led to these covenantal promises being fulfilled in Jesus, who is the faithful Israel. All those who enter into a new covenant relationship with Jesus will inherit these promises, just as those who were members of national Israel had under the old covenant (e.g. Matt. 21:43). This would make the church a “new” or “spiritual” Israel. Jesus’ choosing of the twelve disciples, in parallel to the twelve tribes of Israel, seems to be a clear indication of this.

But this is where the theological divide occurs. Opponents of replacement theology see these conditions as requirements that specific generations must meet in order to experience the covenantal blessings. But in terms of God’s promises to Israel as a whole, they are understood as being unconditional. This is how passages like Romans 11 are interpreted. Specific generations of Jews have missed out on the blessings poured out at the first coming of the Servant of the Lord. But this does not nullify God’s promises to Israel as a people group, for as Paul writes, the calling of God is irrevocable. No matter how we interpret the details of this text, one thing is for sure: there is hope for Israel, for one day “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26).

An Unlikely Follower: Mary Magdalene

A popular advertisement technique features dramatic “before” and “after” pictures. One touts balding men who’ve “regrown” thick hair. An ad for a weight-management product shows a three-hundred-pound woman who’s now half her previous size. Another shows a teen’s face covered in acne until he uses the advertised product. In the “after” picture he’s been treated—and then airbrushed—to perfection. Advertisers use the method because it touches something in us that longs for transformation.

One of the most dramatic before-and-after stories in the Gospels is the transformation of Mary Magdalene. When Jesus encountered her she was possessed by seven demons! (Mark 16:9). Considered unclean by those in her community, she would have been marginalized both socially and spiritually. After Jesus drove the demons out of her, Mary became one of His most

devoted followers. In fact, mentioned in the Gospels more often than many of the twelve disciples, she’s the only one described by all four Gospel writers as the first person to bear witness to the resurrection. Mary was one of several women who supported Jesus with the financial resources she had, and she stuck with Him until the end: present at the cross, the tomb and—joyfully!—at Jesus’ resurrection.

Therefore, if anyone
is in Christ, the new
creation has come:
The old has gone,
the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Like so many who encountered Jesus during His time on earth, Mary’s life was dramatically transformed. Having been touched by Him, her life and her resources were given over to Jesus’ ministry in the world. Her “after” picture showed a woman who was growing to look more and more like her Lord. In this respect, Mary Magdalene’s journey becomes a template for all those who follow Jesus today.

Apply the Word

Encountering Jesus transformed the life of Mary Magdalene, and it is meant to transform lives today as well. What is your “before” picture: who you were, or would be today, without Christ? How has Jesus transformed your life? In what ways is He still working to conform you to His image?

Pray with Us

Today and tomorrow let’s focus our prayers on the staff of Moody Radio Chicago Programming and thank God for their dedication to broadcasting His Word. Would you include Brian Dahlen, Mark Elfstrand, and Monte Larrick in your prayers today?

Put Back into Community: A Man Who Was Unclean

At the close of 2002 and into 2003, the first dangerous communicable disease to emerge during the twenty-first century was Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS. Having originated in animal populations, SARS migrated to humans, crossed national borders and nearly became a pandemic. Symptoms included fever, headache, cough, and trouble breathing. One of the preventive measures used during the outbreak was quarantine. By containing those who had been exposed to the virus, its potential to spread was limited. But before the virus was recognizable, it was unknowingly transmitted between continents by passengers on transoceanic airline flights.

When a man touched by an impure spirit entered the temple on a Sabbath, his affliction was undetectable. Because those affected by disease, disability, and demonic possession were identified as “unclean” and often isolated from their

communities, he would not have been granted access to the synagogue if his condition had been recognized. Though the man slipped in during a lucid moment, once Jesus began teaching, the demon possessing him shouted out in response to Jesus’ authority. When Jesus rebuked the spirit, it shook the man violently and then leapt out of him with a shriek.

The people were amazed at his teaching.

Mark 1:22

What Jesus did for the man was akin to declaring him healthy and disease-free. Once delivered, the man was free to engage again with his community. Not only delivered from demon possession, he was also delivered from isolation and loneliness. Jesus’ healing touch in the life of this man, as it had been with so many others, was pervasive, transforming his mind, heart and even relationships. Not only was the man restored mentally and emotionally, he was also restored to his family, friends, and community as a member who was fully accepted and embraced.

Apply the Word

Have you been taken out of relationships? Perhaps you have a health condition that has limited your availability, or maybe a broken relationship has kept you from others. Jesus doesn’t just restore our relationship with God, but also our relationships with others. Seek reconciliation, or explore ways that you can connect through letters, email—and prayer!

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for Moody Radio Chicago Programming, please put David Mitchell, Roy Patterson, and Julie Roys on your prayer list. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire the programs they bring to our listeners on the airwaves and on the Internet.

Surprised by Jesus: A Man Healed

Recent studies say that pessimists tend to be more satisfied with events in their lives than their optimistic counterparts. The reasoning is that these adherents to a “glass half empty” mindset have lower expectations for happiness or success. When negative things happen pessimists respond, “Well, I expected that.” And when positive things happen, they are pleasantly surprised. One German study even found that pessimists might live longer because they are more cautious and risk-averse, since they are perpetually aware of bad things that might happen.

At once the man
was cured.

John 5:9

day, the streets would have been packed with people. There were so many people, in fact, that he was having trouble getting to the edge of the pool. On the day that Jesus passed by, the man’s aspirations were no higher than that some generous stranger might offer to help lower him into the water.

When the man saw Jesus, he recognized only a man who appeared physically strong enough to drag his frame into the water. He had no idea that he had requested the favor from the One who was able to heal body and soul. And yet at Jesus’ command, the man was healed beyond his wildest expectations.

Having low expectations was also the case for a man who experienced a disabling condition for thirty-eight years. The man in our text today was poised with other individuals living with disabilities at the edge of a pool called Bethesda, which was known for its healing properties. Because of the religious festival in Jerusalem that

Jesus did not just heal his body, however. He followed up with this man in the temple and exhorted him to forsake his sin as well. Jesus transforms our expectations from glass-half-empty to rich, abundant lives of blessing others and praising Him.

Apply the Word

Pessimism may be a way to manage our expectations, but we have the mind of Christ to see spiritually. Our God specializes in impossible cases, from healing the paralyzed body to freeing the sinful soul. Ask the Lord to restore your vision and expectations for how He wants to work through your life, and praise Him for what He has done for you.

Pray with Us

Frank Leber, vice president of Information Systems, requests your prayers for the teams he oversees on our Chicago campus. Thank the Lord for the people willing to serve Him with their expertise that enhances the ministry of every department at Moody.

Set Free for What? A Sinner Named Barabbas

The story is told about two men who were identical twins. They shared DNA, and they were both raised by their father who was a violent alcoholic. After each of the young men left home, their lives took dramatically different paths. One chose to stay away from alcohol, attended college, got married, landed a good job and started a family. His brother, however, was also an alcoholic like their father. He was kicked out of college for failing grades and poor behavior. Unable to hold a job, this second brother continued to suffer physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. When asked about the choices he had made in life, both twins gave the same response: “Given what I grew up with, how could I choose anything else?”

When Pontius Pilate released a prisoner named Barabbas, this man found himself suddenly spared from a death

sentence. Pilate, who recognized that Jesus was innocent and that the chief priests were motivated by their own self-interest, had authorized the release of one prisoner to the crowds. In accordance with the custom, Pilate suggested releasing Jesus. The crowd, however, now bloodthirsty for Jesus, demanded another man for release: a violent prisoner named Barabbas, who was part of a murderous group of insurrectionists.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:36

What, then, became of Barabbas? The Gospels don't tell us the rest of his story, so we don't know how he responded to his second chance at life. Did he continue a cycle of violence? Or did he see that Jesus provided him with an opportunity at not just physical life but also spiritual life? In this way, the story of Barabbas challenges us to consider how we respond to the offer of new life through Jesus Christ.

Apply the Word

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been offered eternal life in fellowship with God. Have you accepted this gracious gift by trusting in the Person and work of Jesus to forgive your sins? You can talk to a pastor, trusted Christian friend, or call 1-888-NEED HIM. They will introduce you to the Savior who forgives sins and transforms lives.

Pray with Us

Alfredo Rios, Paul Siebold, and Roger Vinlasaca from the Engineering Systems department help maintain the facilities of our Chicago campus in good working condition, and we appreciate their service. Please include them in your prayers today.

An Intimate Friendship: A Fisherman Named Andrew

Earlier this year Justin Wijaya posted a photo of his grandparents to a social media site with the caption, “70 years together.” The photo showed a frail, elderly man in a hospital bed holding hands with an old woman. Wijaya explained that his grandmother has had various health problems for the past ten years, and now her husband has been diagnosed with advanced-stage leukemia at the age of 95. Yet they continue to care for one another. “My grandfather and old Chinese people are not very open about speaking their feelings about their loved one. For me action speaks much louder than words and throughout the years the unconditional love he has given to my grandmother, his children, and all his grandchildren are all the proof I need.”

One disciple who was with Jesus from beginning to end of His time on earth was Andrew. He and his brother Simon Peter

left their fishing nets to follow Jesus. In John’s Gospel, Andrew told Simon about Jesus! And throughout Scripture, Andrew was characterized by bringing people to Jesus. When crowds were hungry after hearing Jesus teach, he found a boy with some fish and bread.

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah.”

John 1:41

Along with the other disciples, Andrew had the privilege to spend private time with Jesus away from the other disciples. He was able to gain a perspective on the person of Jesus that few others had. He was among the very first to recognize Jesus as Messiah, and then was privileged to spend three years with Jesus. Not unlike a devoted spouse, who continues to discover new facets of his beloved over the years, no doubt Andrew was surprised again and again to discover just what type of Messiah Jesus was. And he didn’t want to keep the good news to himself—Andrew wanted others to know Jesus too!

Apply the Word

It’s impossible to keep deep love a secret. It will bubble up in our conversation, the way we care for our loved one, and in the way we plan our time. Is this true of us with Jesus? Do we talk about Him? Do we plan time to be with Him in prayer and in His Word? Does it change the way we live? We are able to love Him because He loved us first (1 John 4:19).

Pray with Us

Join us as we pray for Christine Gorz, vice president of Marketing Communications. The teams she oversees seek to communicate Moody’s vision and message to diverse audiences around the world through various channels.

Restored to Serve: The Mother-in-Law of Simon

When a sorceress disguised as an old hag begged at the castle door of a young prince, she encountered a rude, arrogant young man. She cast a curse upon him that transformed him into a hideous beast, and it would not be broken until he was able to love and be loved. In the classic fairy tale “Beauty and the Beast,” the prince was ultimately freed by a beautiful bookworm named Belle, who did grow to love him despite his gruff exterior. The spell broken, the prince was restored to rule his kingdom. As a result of the curse and his redemption, he was now a different type of ruler: one who was just, kind, and compassionate. The prince’s liberation affected not only him, but also others.

This fairytale echoes people’s encounters with Jesus. Set free from sin, disease, and disability, each was

delivered in order to be a testimony about Jesus. Early in His ministry, as Jesus called His disciples and began His healing work, the word about Him was spreading like wildfire. When He and His disciples arrived at the home of Simon and Andrew, Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever. Going to her, perhaps in a private section of the home, Jesus took her hand and helped her up. Being healed in her rising, transformed by Jesus’ touch, she immediately began to serve her guests.

What this woman experienced, in the touch of Jesus, was being set free to serve. Like a fairy-tale prince born to serve others with justice and compassion, she was delivered so that now she could serve others who also had physical and spiritual needs. As He did for so many with broken bodies and hearts, Jesus put her back into relationship with others.

The Son of Man
did not come to
be served, but
to serve.

Matthew 20:28

Apply the Word

Being saved by Jesus is meant to affect not only the one saved, but also those around him or her. In what ways have you been called to serve those around you? What gifts has Jesus given you to offer to others? These acts of service are supposed to be a testimony to God’s work in our lives, a way that we bear witness to His healing and restoration.

Pray with Us

Would you commit to prayer the service of Dr. Larry Davidhizar, vice president and dean of the Undergraduate School? Pray that the faculty and staff he leads will “walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful” (Col. 1:9).

Big Failure or Big Success? A Fisherman Named Peter

Billy Graham has been one of the most influential Americans for decades. His name has been synonymous with evangelism around the world. But forty years ago, no one would have thought his son Franklin would make much of his spiritual heritage. Franklin had already been expelled from one college and was living a life motivated by pleasure and excess. Even though he seemed intent on disgracing the family name and abandoning his father's legacy, God's grace came to Franklin. He accepted Christ in his 20s, and today serves with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse.

God truly is gracious to us, even when we are running as fast as we can in the opposite direction, as Franklin Graham can attest. Simon Peter could also relate to this amazing grace. He seemed to career from colossal failure to impressive success.

I tell you that you
are Peter, and on
this rock I will build
my church.

Matthew 16:18

When Jesus called him, Peter dropped his fishing nets to follow Jesus. The next time he left a boat to follow Jesus, obeying the invitation to walk on the water, he took a few steps before wavering and sinking. Peter rebuked Jesus, told Him how to do His job and even fell asleep while praying on the eve of the crucifixion. Peter insisted that though others might fail, he would never desert Jesus. Hours later he had denied Him three times.

Peter seemed like an unlikely candidate to be a powerful evangelist for Jesus. Yet after His resurrection, Jesus commissioned Peter to feed His sheep. Entirely aware of Peter's failures, the Lord affirmed three times that Peter was exactly the man for the job. Depending not on his own strength, but on Jesus, Peter became one of the most powerful witnesses to the grace of God through Jesus that the world has ever seen (see Acts 2).

Apply the Word

Peter's story teaches us that failures—even really big ones!—do not disqualify us from being used by Jesus to touch the world He loves. Are there some big ways that you have failed Christ? He offers forgiveness, grace, and restoration today. He has promised that He will purify us (see 1 John 1:9) and use us for His glory.

Pray with Us

Please uphold our students in prayer as they return to campus after summer break. Let's pray for the upcoming semester asking God to bless their lives on and off campus and draw them closer to Him as they study His Word.

Sent to Share Good News: A Man Possessed by a Demon

In 1988 Dave Dravecky was at the top of his game. He was a pitcher in the starting rotation for the San Francisco Giants. Later that year, though, Dave learned that he had cancer, and half of the deltoid muscles in his pitching arm had to be removed. Doctors predicted that he would never pitch again, but he was back on the mound a year later. Five days after his comeback, however, Dave's arm snapped in two while he was pitching. To prevent the recurrence of cancer, the arm was amputated. In the wake of this tragedy, Dravecky, a man of faith, began to travel the country sharing with audiences what he had learned.

Another suffering man, saved by Jesus, also shared with audiences how his life had been redeemed by Jesus. Running naked and mad, this man had been cut off from his community and was living among the tombs near his hometown

in the region of the Gerasenes. He met Jesus at the shore, while possessed by demons, Jesus delivered him from the demons that tortured him. The first witnesses who ran to tell others were those who had been tending the pigs nearby that became the collateral damage in the man's redemption!

Return home and
tell how much God
has done for you.

Luke 8:39

Curious folks from town came to see the spectacle for themselves. Unlike the Samaritans, however, who came to faith after hearing the testimony of the Samaritan woman, these people asked Jesus to leave their region. The healed man begged to join Him and His disciples, but Jesus had a different plan for him: stay put and tell others what happened. With transformation came the responsibility to share good news with others. Telling others about the marvelous works of God in Jesus is the natural overflow of a life that has been redeemed.

Apply the Word

Can you name what Jesus has done for you? Is it something you've shared with others? You don't need to have a testimony that includes cancer or demon possession in order to be used by God to touch the lives of others. Today, reflect on how your life has been transformed by Jesus and purpose to share this good news with someone.

Pray with Us

The safety of everybody on campus is important to Moody! Join us in praying for Public Safety officers on our Chicago campus: David Bloch, Thomas Jackson, Justin Jansma, and Ryan Jenkins. May the Lord protect them as they protect others.

Called to Be Made Clean: A Pharisee

A man in a rush to get to work quickly scanned the family kitchen for breakfast food. Spotting a few boxes of cereal, he grabbed the closest one and poured out a handful to eat as he dashed to his car. Rather than feeling the tumble of light, fluffy cocoa cereal balls, though, the man felt a small thud. When he looked closer at his hand, he realized that a small grey mouse had dropped in for a bite of cereal, but it was unable to climb back up the slippery box liner and had died in the cereal box. Although the outside of the box promised tasty breakfast food, the inside had been full of death.

This is similar to the condition of the Pharisees' hearts. One of them expressed disapproval when Jesus did not perform the ritual washing that was expected before a meal. Jesus replied, "You Pharisees clean the outside of the

cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness" (v. 39). He knew that people who turned to the Pharisees for spiritual nourishment received little more than a dead mouse.

Jesus identified that a shiny façade of goodness covered rotten insides. Jesus did not, however, stop at condemnation of their sin. Rather, He offered a cure for the spiritual sickness moldering in their souls: "Be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you" (v. 41). This prescription confirms that while maintaining the appearance of religious rightness, they had failed to execute God's justice and mercy. Jesus' will for them was that by repentance—turning from greed and turning toward ministry to the poor—new life would spring up inside them from the decaying compost of the old.

But now as for
what is inside
you—be generous
to the poor, and
everything will be
clean for you.

Luke 11:41

Apply the Word

For Christians who follow Jesus, ministry to the poor is a spiritual issue. Jesus confronted the religious leaders about their pride, greed, and legalistic rules that kept the poor away. Does your church minister to physical, spiritual, and relational needs of those at the margins of society? May we not be like the Pharisees, full of smug complacency that stinks like death.

Pray with Us

Continue to keep our Public Safety personnel in your prayers, that they would show Christ's love to everybody they communicate with and glorify God in all they do. Please mention Timothy Kirkpatrick, Beau Pieniak, Brian Stoffer, and Jerry Zeldenrust as you pray.

Proximity Does Not Save: A Resident of Nazareth

Born in Iowa in 1862 and raised in a home for orphans, Billy Sunday went on to play major league baseball. When he was converted to Christ in his twenties, Sunday left baseball to go into Christian ministry. In the early 1900s, he was America's most famous evangelist, holding large campaigns in America's biggest cities. Part of Sunday's appeal was his down-to-earth style. One of his most popular sayings was, "Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile."

Saving faith in Jesus Christ doesn't just ooze into our pores from the surrounding environment, and it can't be inherited from one generation to the next like a treasured heirloom. Just because our parents or grandparents were Christians doesn't confer salvation on us; we have to trust in Jesus for ourselves.

This was true even of Jesus' family and friends in His hometown of Nazareth. After Jesus taught in His home synagogue, the crowd wondered among themselves how He could have gained such wisdom. Though they had heard the teaching and even seen a few miracles, their hearts were not softened

to receive Him as anyone other than Joe and Mary's kid! Many in Nazareth could not comprehend that the carpenter they knew might be the One who could show them—and in fact *be*—the way to God. Rather than turning their hearts toward Him, as

Jesus' brother James eventually did, and believing that He had been sent by God, most rejected Him.

To be saved by Jesus has nothing to do with hanging around church! Rather, to be saved is to trust in Him as Savior. It is to believe that a Nazareth carpenter of humble beginnings is the Redeemer sent by God.

Isn't this the
carpenter? Isn't this
Mary's son?

Mark 6:3

Apply the Word

The good gift of being formed in the church doesn't negate the need to receive Jesus and trust Him for your salvation from sin, but it is a blessing to be introduced to Jesus at a young age by loved ones. If you have young people in your life, are you sharing this blessing with them? Only Jesus can save—but He can use you and the church to introduce them to faith.

Pray with Us

You can uplift the staff of Moody Radio Southeast in Chattanooga, TN. Pray that the radio ministry of Leighton LeBoeuf, Paul Martin, David Morais, and Juanell Rice will keep bringing God's love and healing to thousands of listeners.

Keeping by Letting Go: A Rich Man

In an Indian village, one naughty monkey would regularly plunder food from the home of a family. Entering through windows and other necessary openings, he would help himself to choice morsels. Though they tried to capture him, the family had been unsuccessful. One day—after attempting to sneak a sweet treat herself! the youngest daughter got an idea. Finding a heavy glass jar with a narrow neck, she placed several peanuts inside before her family left for the day. When they returned that evening, they found a frustrated monkey, grasping three peanuts, unable to extricate his clenched paw from the jar. Had he released the nuts, he could have scampered off to freedom. Holding them tightly, he remained bound.

The wealthy man who fell on his knees before Jesus was searching for redemption. He wanted to inherit eternal

life. When he asserted that he had kept the commandments since he was a boy, Jesus identified the one thing that the man lacked. “Go,” Jesus instructed, “sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (v. 21). Jesus knew that for the man to be truly free, he had to unclench his death-grip on all that he owned. Sadly, the immediate lure of possessions appealed more than the promise of eternal life. Sharing the monkey’s dilemma, he chose peanuts over true freedom.

He went away sad,
because he had
great wealth.

Mark 10:22

To be clear, Jesus had no intention of trapping the man! His heart for the people He encountered was for them to release their grip on anything that would keep them bound and keep them from Him. Jesus knew what each person needed—whether to pick up their mat, make restitution, relinquish possessions, or stay in a hometown as a witness to His salvation.

Apply the Word

Peanuts and possessions are not inherently evil—unless they are keeping us away from following Christ. For some, it will mean letting go of material wealth; for others, relinquishing the dream of a family that looks a certain way or having a certain level of safety and security. Is there anything to which you’re holding more tightly than to Jesus?

Pray with Us

In August our faculty prepares to welcome new and returning students on Moody’s three campuses. Join us in praying for Pastoral Studies Undergraduate faculty—Kirk Baker, Michael Boyle, John Koessler, and Pamela MacRae—on our Chicago campus.

Playing the Part: Judas

When Frank Abagnale was at the airport one day, he noticed a drop box where airlines and car rental businesses dropped their cash for deposit into a locked receptacle. Recognizing an opportunity, Abagnale placed a sign over the box that read: “Out of Service. Place deposits with security guard on duty.” Then, standing beside the box wearing an outfit he had purchased from a costume shop, he gladly received the businesses’ daily cash deposits!

I have betrayed
innocent blood.

Matthew 27:4

Though Abagnale appeared one way on the outside, it was all a show, a sham, a lie. Jesus identified this type of hypocrisy when He called Pharisees “whitewashed tombs” (Matt. 23:27). And as we see in our reading today, this condition afflicted even one of Jesus’ own closest disciples.

By all outward appearances, Judas Iscariot was a devoted follower of Jesus. Trusted to manage the disciples’ shared common purse, he was counted among

Jesus’ twelve most valued confidantes. When Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, poured expensive perfume over Jesus’ feet, Judas protested. He demanded of Jesus, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages” (John 12:5). Anyone overhearing his outrage would naturally surmise that Judas was both committed to the well-being of the disciples and also cared about the poor! The real condition

of his heart would only be revealed to all when he betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (see John 12:6).

The temptation to appear better than we really are was not exclusive to Judas. He had daily access to the Savior who could transform him, yet he chose to pretend to love Jesus while he pursued money instead. For Judas, what he truly was inside was eventually revealed to all the world.

Apply the Word

Do you present an appearance that you’re someone other than who you really are? Do you save ugly rage toward family members until you’re behind closed doors? Do you fluff up the cash you drop into the offering plate for the eyes of others? Rather than condemning, Jesus invites you to come clean about who you really are and receive forgiveness.

Pray with Us

Please continue to uphold Moody’s Pastoral Studies professors while you pray: Winfred Neely, Laurie Norris, and William Torgesen. They will be grateful for the prayers of the Moody family, as the new fall semester begins today on Moody’s Chicago campus.

Stop Doing and Start Being: Martha

One day, two women in a church small group connected in an unusual way. One commented how much she admired all of the creations—paintings and sewing projects and beaded jewelry—that flowed out of the second woman’s home. The creative woman, though, had always admired the order and cleanliness of the first woman’s home. When she confessed that, the two laughed. They recognized that they each had discovered different strategies to “manage” their worlds: one produced messes; the other cleaned them up!

One of the ways we try to cope with the stresses of life is to stay busy. Jesus’ friend Martha—the Martha Stewart of her day—was a homemaker extraordinaire. Like many of us, she managed her life and anxiety by getting busy. When Martha welcomed Jesus and

His disciples into her home, she went into overdrive to prepare for the meal. Frantic and exhausted, she envied and resented her sister, who sat quietly at Jesus’ feet listening to His teaching. Recognizing Martha’s tendency and her temptation to pin her worries on Mary, Jesus confirmed that Mary had chosen the better option.

Few things are needed—or indeed only one.

Luke 10:42

Notice that part of Martha’s problem was a failure to recognize context. Serving others through hospitality is important; in fact, it’s commanded elsewhere in Scripture (Rom. 12:13;

Heb. 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9). But Martha was more focused on managing than she was on worshiping. She wanted to prepare a lovely meal; Jesus wanted to feed her with spiritual food. This was an occasion where Martha didn’t need to be in charge. She too could sit at the feet of Jesus and receive the blessing of His teaching.

Apply the Word

Discerning when to be busy and when to be still is part of wisdom, and it is desperately needed. We are tempted to extremes of being either spiritual workaholics, as if our efforts alone will bring in the kingdom, or spiritual couch potatoes, unable to be bothered to serve at all. Ask God for His wisdom, knowing He delights to grant this request (James 1:5).

Pray with Us

Today is a good opportunity to pray for the upcoming school year, as well as for Moody president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, as he welcomes students, parents, and guests at the Convocation service on our campus in Chicago.

Radical Compassion: A Woman Caught in Adultery

When prisoners in the United States are condemned to die, their legal counsel has the ability to appeal for a stay of execution. The appeal has to cite some legal issue that must be resolved before the court's order is implemented. For example, a higher court may agree to review the decision of a lower court. A judge then issues an order that prevents the execution from being implemented. Some stays are ordered weeks or days before a scheduled execution and others just minutes before a prisoner is scheduled to die. For those waiting to hear whether their sentence will be commuted or implemented, the legal maneuverings are literally a matter of life and death.

When she was caught in the act of adultery, the woman in our text must have known what her punishment would be. She would have known that the Law of Moses said that she was liable to death by stoning. Rather than receiving legal representation,

the woman was brought before a crowd where her accusers sought Jesus' opinion in order to trap Him. Their sting operation to incriminate Jesus appeared to be a slam dunk: no matter His answer, they could rightly accuse Him: He would either be lenient with the Law of Moses, or He would be exposed to the crowds as no better than the religious leaders who condemned Him! In fact, this episode really wasn't about the woman at all. She became a pawn in the religious power struggle that the leaders wanted to have with Jesus. She was there only because they wanted to see Jesus trapped and ridiculed.

Unlike the religious leaders, Jesus had compassion on this woman, and her life was spared. This was no temporary execution stay. In the person of Jesus she encountered one who could set her free from death and sin. Jesus didn't ignore her sin, but He called her to forsake it.

Go now and leave
your life of sin.

John 8:11

Apply the Word

It may be tempting to join the religious leaders in condemning the sinful woman, but her story is the story of each one of us. We have all fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). In Jesus, each of us has been offered a taste of God's grace. Perhaps a few minutes of singing or listening to the beautiful hymn "Amazing Grace" will help you focus on God's goodness.

Pray with Us

Gordon Canaday, Jodi Murphy, and Christopher Wright, the staff of Moody Radio Northwest broadcasting from Spokane, WA, rely on your prayers in their day-to-day work. Thank you for your prayers and financial support of Moody Radio stations!

Learning to See God: Philip

During an official dinner held in honor of the Queen of England in 2010, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced that the government of Canada would make three gifts to charitable organizations on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen. The donations went to groups that serve disadvantaged children and military families. We understand this notion of doing something on behalf of someone else; we know that the prime minister and the queen are two distinct individuals and that an action on the queen's behalf doesn't imply that she herself performed the deed.

Anyone who has
seen me has seen
the Father.

John 14:9

Philip, one of Jesus' very first disciples, believed from the moment he was chosen and called that Jesus was the One sent by God who had been revealed in the Law of Moses (John 1:45). In fact, he quickly rushed off to tell his friend Nathanael.

And yet, at the end of Jesus' life when Philip asked to see His Father, Jesus' reply was startling. Philip still thought that Jesus was an agent of God, one who acted on God's behalf, without understanding that Jesus was both fully man and fully God.

People try to use this notion of acting on someone's behalf to understand the relationship between Jesus and God the Father. Even the disciples didn't quite understand that Jesus was not simply acting on behalf of God—He was God.

Though it's tempting to think that we understand the Trinity—how God is a unity of three distinct persons, yet is one God—the reality is as baffling and mysterious as Philip found it! Jesus doesn't just represent God. Jesus is God.

Apply the Word

Though artists like Michelangelo have attempted to render the likeness of an invisible God the Father, the face of God is seen clearly in one Person: Jesus. In fact, Jesus' words to Philip insist that we can know the Father through Him. Our study of the Gospels and the people who encounter Jesus helps us see what—and whom—God cares about.

Pray with Us

Please join us in prayer for the ministry of Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer. Ask the Father that He would guide Steven's leadership in all the strategic planning processes as he and his teams seek God's will for Moody.

An Unlikely Remedy: Nicodemus

While many “old wives’ tales” have been debunked by science—for instance, spicy foods don’t exacerbate ulcers, and going outside with wet hair won’t make you sick—other unusual remedies have actually been proven effective. Did you know that applying fresh tomato slices to a burn calms inflamed skin and reduces swelling? Have you heard that applying duct tape to warts, removing it overnight every five days, eventually eliminates them? Or have you ever tried applying crushed aspirin to soothe painful bug bites? Many have found that some unlikely treatments have proven to be just what healed the irritation or pain.

One remedy for sin-sickness, which Jesus offered to a Pharisee named Nicodemus late one night, certainly fell under the category of unlikely. Nicodemus was a rare figure in the Gospel narratives, because although he was part of the ruling religious council called the Sanhedrin, he

responded favorably to Jesus. Unlike so many of the Jewish religious leaders of the day, Nicodemus recognized that Jesus had been sent by God. This may be the reason that he came to hear Jesus teach at night!

No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

John 3:3

Jesus told Nicodemus that to see the kingdom of God, one must be born again. This conversation is, in fact, where the church gleaned our salvation language, describing just how it is that we’re made a new creation when we trust in Jesus for forgiveness of

sins. But Nicodemus was shocked by this language; he imagined a grown person being physically born again!

Jesus explained that those who believe in the One whom God has sent would be spiritually reborn. As difficult now as it was then to grasp such a complete transformation, it was and is the remedy for humanity’s spiritual sickness.

Apply the Word

Nicodemus recognized Jesus as the One who was the way to God. What he discovered was that everything in him would be transformed and made new. Jesus didn’t want to make him “a little bit better.” Jesus wanted to give him a whole new life! Praise God that He didn’t settle for a halfway salvation. He claims every part of our lives.

Pray with Us

Facilities Management department staff—Konrad Finck, James Miedema, Sarah Blakely, and Dannon Zurek—work on construction projects on Moody’s Chicago campus. Praise God for the completion of Moody Central, a one-stop student services center.

The Leader Will Serve: A Disciple

The hidden-camera television show *Undercover Boss* has aired in over twenty countries. It seems that every culture enjoys watching the chief executives of various companies take on the identity of a new employee in order to get a glimpse of their experience. The CEO of a national pizza chain might get scolded by a local franchise manager for not putting cheese on a pizza correctly. Or a hotel executive might be saddled with the job of getting rooms cleaned and ready for the next guest. The managers receive an insider's look at how their companies actually function and also have the opportunity to reward employees they might not otherwise have come to know.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. Like some of the employees who unwittingly worked side-by-side with powerful executives, Peter was shocked that the One he

recognized as Messiah would embrace the role of a lowly servant. Unlike some pampered white-collar bosses, however, Jesus' service was consistent with the life He had lived among them. In bending to embrace a dirty job, Jesus was modeling the lifestyle to which He was calling them.

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

John 13:14

Witnessing His service, each disciple would, in that moment or in ones to come, struggle to make sense of Jesus' words. Zebedee's sons, James and John, would remember how Jesus had rejected their mother's bid for power on their behalf. Another might recall Jesus' words, "So the

last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16). And the following evening, when Jesus confirmed "I am among you as one who serves," (Luke 22:27), the disciples' minds would return to Jesus' hands washing their dirty feet. The holy moment was one they would emulate even after His ascension.

Apply the Word

Jesus' call to His first disciples is the invitation He extends to us as well. Humble service isn't for the church janitor—it's for church leaders! In front of whom is Jesus inviting you to kneel and serve? Notice the opportunities Jesus provides and follow His example of service.

Pray with Us

In conclusion, let's lift up in prayer everything the Lord showed us in this month's study, *People Encounter Jesus*. Pray for the vibrancy and freshness of our prayer life, that we may encounter Jesus in prayer every day.

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Today's Devotion

A Stewardship of Grace

For those who love detective novels, a mystery means that there's a puzzle that needs to be solved. Those who figure out the clues can solve the mystery. But in today's passage, Paul uses the term mystery in a different sense. This mystery was a matter of revelation. The mystery that Paul wrote about was something "which was not made..."

This Month

For many of us, the first word that comes to mind when we think about our relationship with the church is complicated. The critic in us looks around on Sunday morning and notices flawed people. The judge in us notes the lack of spiritual zeal in fellow-parishioners, the theologian in us suspects insufficient depth in the pastor's sermon. The list goes on and on, and too often we get mixed in the...

Looking For More



This Month's Study at a Glance

A look at this month's devotions.



Today with Paul Nyquist

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