

**DAY** **JAMES 2:19-26****1**

It's a common tool that comedy writers use: the beautifully dressed woman with the spinach in her teeth. She left home with every hair in place and makeup perfectly applied, and she believes she looks good. But when she smiles at her date, there is that green fleck messing up her smile. It's so glaring; how could she not see it? James is telling believers that we can sometimes be similarly self-deceived. We look at our lives and see someone who said he or she believed in Christ and is therefore good. Ready to receive the gifts God offers, including eternal life. But if we don't show our faith through our giving and serving, then we have deceived ourselves. James says faith without works is dead. Look in the mirror again; is your faith alive or is there green gunk in your teeth?

DAY **LUKE 14:25-33****2**

Have you ever looked at the buildings around Courthouse Square in Scranton? The irony is, we have these beautiful historic buildings because when the coal market in Scranton dissolved after WWII, Scranton didn't have the money to tear down the old and build new, the way most cities do on a regular basis. What would Scranton be if the town council had torn down the old buildings without counting the cost first? It's a silly question because they wouldn't do that, and they didn't. And yet many people want to follow Jesus without counting the cost. Jesus tells us that we must be willing to give up everything for His sake. If we don't consider carefully, we'll be ridiculed as someone who tore down a building without the money to rebuild. But as you count the cost, be confident that following Jesus is worth it!

DAY **JOSHUA 24:14-18****3**

We've just finished graduation season. What do we often do when speaking to graduates? We give them advice and encouragement. We want to give them wise words that they can take with them into the future. Joshua is having a similar moment with the Israelites. He is about to die. He worked alongside Moses as Moses led them for 40 years through the desert. Then Joshua led them as they conquered the Promised Land. Now Joshua is giving them his last words, wise words to take them forward. He doesn't encourage them that they are strong. He doesn't tell them they can achieve anything they desire. He tells them they must make a choice: follow God or follow idols. You can't do both, and there is no in between. This is the most important thing he wants them to remember. We must choose as well. What do you choose?

DAY 1 KINGS 18:21-39

4

It is easy to drift into spiritual apathy. The world is pulling us in all directions, and it is easy to choose what is good instead of what's best. The Israelites had drifted into such spiritual apathy, but then they went a step further and began worshipping the idol, Baal. The prophet Elijah jumps in to help them find the way back to God. It's a fabulous, dramatic moment on the top of Mt. Carmel. After the prophets of Baal spend all day dancing, chanting, and sacrificing to their false god, Elijah steps forward and God shows His power. God showed His power that day by burning a soaking wet pile of wood and an ox. Two thousand years ago God showed His power – and His love – by sending His Son to a cross to die for our sins. The people fell on their faces and worshiped God. How will we respond?

DAY 1 PETER 4:12-19

5

American Christians do not face persecution the way Christians in other parts of the world do. The persecution we sometimes face is much more subtle. Co-workers turn up their noses at Christians who maintain their integrity. Maybe we even miss out on a promotion or the ability to close a deal. Sometimes friends or family choose to mock us or disassociate with us. These trials are hard to handle; we feel isolated and ashamed. Peter tells us to hold our heads up. Don't be ashamed! Peter tells us there will be trials and persecution. If we suffer for our belief in God, then we glorify God. God is faithful. We may suffer here on earth for a little while, but we will receive eternal life as a reward.

AppNotes are available on our Facebook page, Monday-Friday.

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