



DAY 1

HEBREWS 10:19-25

Have you ever marveled at a four-year-old's excitement for life? The costumes and flair, the dancing and laughing. Children do as they please, living free from the fear of what others think. Unfortunately, over time, we lose our youthful confidence. We allow the opinions of others to influence us. We let our painful past overshadow our present. But it doesn't have to be that way. The book of Hebrews encourages us to live with that child-like faith. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, we have the confidence to come into God's presence. Our pasts have been erased, no more shame, no more judgment! More than that, because we are secure in Christ, we can encourage each other "toward love and good deeds." Now we can put others first because we are living with child-like confidence!

DAY 2

2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-13

Have you ever heard a parent say, "He's not sorry he did it, he's only sorry he got caught?" The implication is that the child would do the same thing over if he was sure he could get away with it! Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that there are two types of sorrow - worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. If we're honest, when we get caught in sin, we can act like a child that shows a defiance and a defensiveness towards his parent. But it doesn't have to be that way. As followers of Jesus, we can respond differently. Godly sorrow is recognizing we've fallen short, changing our mind about our actions, and trusting God's indwelling Spirit to help us live differently. Not only that, but we have the assurance of forgiveness and an eternal relationship with God!

DAY 3

JOSHUA 2

Just watch the news and try not to get overwhelmed by the enormous brokenness in our world. We tend to rank wrongdoing, but God does not. In our society, we think of Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin as among the worst. However, in ancient times, prostitution was ranked at the bottom. A woman who was once a prostitute was forever considered dirty and untouchable. That's what makes Rahab's story so compelling! In a pivotal moment in history in the nation of Israel, the part of hero goes to a prostitute who trusted God. Not only that, but she has a place in Jesus' lineage in Matthew 1. God used her and blessed her for her faith, "even though" she was sinful and dirty. He can use us, too! Rahab's story encourages us that our past does not have to forecast our future.

DAY ACTS 9:1-18

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Our past does not define us, and it does not have to foreshadow our future. However, God can use our past to reach people. Take Saul, who later became Paul for example – he started out as a Pharisee persecuting the Church. He was also a Roman citizen and became a key leader of the Church who had a unique talent for speaking both to Jewish people and to Romans. God didn't look at Saul's actions as a disqualification. God took his history and made it new. Whatever you see when you consider the mirror of the past – whatever sin, whatever hardship, whatever evil someone committed against you – God can repurpose it all to reach someone far from Him! Ask God today how He can use your past to positively influence someone's future.

DAY LUKE 2:1-15

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Have you ever heard the phrase “need to know basis”? Usually, that means you're on the outside, not significant or distinguished enough to have that information. Of all the people on earth that might have heard the angels' message of Jesus' birth, God chose the shepherds. These were the nobodies of their culture. They certainly weren't in any “need to know” circle. But they were the first to hear the Good News of Jesus' birth! We are all sinful, and we all need to hear the saving message of the Gospel. God gives us this message – and the perfect gift of His Son – because we need it, and because He loves us. Think about your circle of influence. Who in your circle “needs to know” this Christmas?

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

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