

Humble
Servant

DEVOTIONS
ON THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN
FOR TEENS

Book 2

Humble Servant

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*To my mother-in-law, whose life of service to others
has taught me so much about true humility*

INTRODUCTION

As God the Son, Jesus had it all. He had a perfect relationship of communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He had the worship of angels and the majesty of heaven. But he left that all behind to come to earth as a helpless babe in a filthy stable. Though he remained God, he humbled himself by taking on our human flesh.

This state of humiliation continued throughout his life on this earth as he suffered in body and soul. He experienced hunger and pain, grief and loss. In the first few chapters of John, we find questioning and hesitation about Jesus' claims to be the Son of God. But in John 5–9 we see a change in response: blatant rejection of Jesus and his message. This rejection is evident from the outright persecution that Jesus began to experience, along with false accusations of blasphemy and demon possession.

Jesus' humiliation was necessary to merit your salvation. It was an act of great love for him to humbly suffer for the sins of his people. As you read these chapters of John over the next thirty-one days, take note of the humble, obedient servitude that characterizes Jesus' earthly ministry. It is an example for you to follow in your own daily life. Philippians 2:5–7 tells us, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

But if you keep reading Philippians 2, you are reminded that Jesus' humiliation is not the end of the story. After his humiliation culminated with his death on the cross, he rose again and ascended into heaven. He now sits exalted at the right hand of God, where he reigns over all and receives worship. Though we

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are called to be humble servants on this earth, because of Christ's work, there is a glorious place prepared for us in heaven (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

The structure of each day in this devotional will be as follows: you will first read a passage from John, noting especially the bold-faced verse. Then you will be guided to think about what the passage means by reading the meditation. The "Ask Yourself" section will assist you in applying the truth of Scripture to your life. And finally, the "Praying to Your Heavenly Father" section lists three prayer prompts based on this passage that you can use as a starting point for your own prayer. The journaling space can be used to record your thoughts on the application questions and to write out your prayer.

This volume and the other three in this series are not a comprehensive commentary on the gospel according to John. Rather, they are meant to be a guide to systematically lead you through an entire book of the Bible while familiarizing you with the process of personal Bible study. If you have any questions about the verses that you are reading, I encourage you to talk about them with your parents and siblings, discuss them with godly friends, or go to an elder or pastor for help.

JOHN 5:1-9

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

DAY 1 – A HELPLESS CONDITION

The scene at the pool of Bethesda was a pitiful sight. All around the pool lay people who were sick or disabled—unable to care for or support themselves. Their only hope was for a miracle to cure them. They believed that an angel would come and stir the water and that whoever got in the pool first would be healed. But they had no idea that there was someone present who could heal their physical ailments with only a word—and more importantly—their spiritual ailments as well.

The man that Jesus would soon heal was part of this miserable crowd. He had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus asked him if he wanted to be healed, he explained that he would not even be able to get into the pool when the water was stirred because he had no one to help him. He was resigned to spending his life in this helpless condition. He was not seeking Jesus, but Jesus came to seek him out. Jesus healed his infirmity with a simple command.

Do you know what it feels like to be helpless? You are likely young, strong, and as healthy as you will ever be right now, so it may be difficult to imagine. Or maybe you have already dealt with a difficult trial in your life, and you understand the feeling all too well. Feeling helpless is an uncomfortable reality. But it is also a gracious gift from God.

It is only when you acknowledge your own lack of power that you can truly appreciate the power of your Savior. He is awesomely powerful but also wonderfully compassionate—both mighty and tender. He came to you when you were not just sick, but dead in sin. He worked in you a desire to be made well by his irresistible grace. He made you whole by his great power. And he gives you the strength to get up and walk in a way that is pleasing to him.

DAY 1 - A HELPLESS CONDITION

ASK YOURSELF...

Has God ever sent you a trial that made you feel helpless?

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How did this experience make you more aware of how much you rely on him?

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PRAYING TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

- *Praise* God for his omnipotence, his unlimited power.
- How do you try to trust in your own limited power?
Confess this sin.
- *Thank* God for coming to you in your helpless state and making you whole in Christ.

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JOHN 5:10-17

The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

DAY 2 – SABBATH RULES

How amazing was it that a man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years was healed? Wouldn't hearing of such a thing cause you to rejoice and glorify God? Yet the Jewish leaders completely ignored the wonder of this miracle and instead focused on the fact that Jesus healed the man on the sabbath day. They did not even ask the man, "Who healed you?" but rather, "Who told you to carry your bed on the Sabbath?" (v. 12).

When the Jews said that healing on the Sabbath was "not lawful," they were referring to their own man-made laws, not the laws that God gave Israel in the Old Testament. Over time they had expanded the prohibition of working on the Sabbath that God gave to include very specific rules banning almost every activity. This incident reveals the legalistic and hypocritical beliefs that they held about sabbath observance. They thought they could earn God's favor by not doing certain things one day a week.

Do you think about your own sabbath observance as simply following a list of do's and don'ts that your parents have set for you? It can be easy to get caught up in a legalistic view of the Sabbath and forget its true purpose. Keeping the Sabbath is not about idleness. Our Creator graciously gave us the Sabbath so that we have an entire day to set aside our earthly work for spiritual rest and work instead.

Jesus, as the Son of God, must also do the works of God on the Sabbath. His defense of his actions in verse 17 reminds us of the remarkable truth that our heavenly Father is not limited by a need for rest. Even though he rested on the seventh day of creation, he was not inactive. The entire creation would cease to exist if God did not continue to uphold and govern all things (Mark 2:27–28; Acts 17:28). What an incredible comfort this is for us weak, sinful humans who rely on him for everything!

ASK YOURSELF...

Is your sabbath observance just about following the rules that your parents have?

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How could you refocus your day on worship instead of rules?

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PRAYING TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

- *Praise* God for his continual work of upholding and governing the universe.
- Give *thanks* for the gift of the Sabbath.
- *Ask* him to reveal your own legalistic beliefs about sabbath observance.

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JOHN 5:18-24

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

DAY 3 – FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Do you ever think about owning a home someday? You have most likely imagined how you would decorate it or what you will put in the garage. But have you ever dreamed about the foundation? A solid foundation is not something that people usually share pictures of on social media or show off when they have guests over, but it is essential to a home.

The doctrine of the Trinity—that God is one being and three distinct persons—is probably not something to which you have given a lot of thought. It may even seem less important than other doctrines like election or justification. But the doctrine of the Trinity is a foundational truth of the Christian faith. If it is damaged by false beliefs, the truths of the gospel and grace will begin to crumble faster than a house with foundational issues.

Each person of the Trinity is essential for your salvation. It would be wrong to elevate one person over the others because they are united in their work. The gospel of John is rich in trinitarian language. The teaching of Jesus in these verses both emphasizes his deity and gives further explanation of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

The Son cannot act independently from the Father because they are one being. The Son acts according to the Father's will because the Father reveals everything to him in love, and the Son obeys in love. The Son has the power to give both physical and spiritual life because he is God. The Father has also entrusted the power of judgment to the Son as his representative.

But even though the Father and Son each have their own distinct personal properties, they both deserve equal honor as the one, true God. You cannot believe in only one or the other. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). Jesus makes clear that belief in all three persons of the Trinity is necessary for everlasting life.

ASK YOURSELF...

Have you overlooked the doctrine of the Trinity in your study of Scripture?

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What truth about God the Father and God the Son in this passage especially stood out to you? Why?

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PRAYING TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

- *Praise* God for the beautiful trinitarian relationship that he has within himself.
- Have you taken the doctrine of the Trinity for granted? *Confess* this sin.
- *Thank* God for the covenant relationship that he establishes with you.

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