

Youth Group Devotionals

February Special Devotional Series

College and Career Group

Introduction to the February Special Devotional Series

A new year is always a harbinger of all things new. It brings new mercies and graces of God, but it also brings changes. Of course, within the life of WCAC, this year will be a year of great change. We speak, of course, of Pastor Ben's new calling as the English Pastor of the St. Louis Chinese Gospel Church (SLCGC). Indeed, our loss will be to SLCGC's great gain. Yet, we must always remember that the church never revolves around certain individuals. God's church is always God-centered, not pastor-centered. WCAC will continue to move on and maintain her ministry to all people in the community with new people in leadership who will continue the story of how God continues to work through his people at the church.

Notwithstanding, Pastor Ben's departure to his new calling will not feel good to all of us. For all of us he has been such a great blessing, a faithful pastor, and awesome friend. Many college and even post-college students still come to him for advice regularly. No doubt, Pastor Ben has been an indelible participant in so many of our lives, having witnessed during his tenure as Youth Director and then as Youth Pastor the graduation of 8 high school senior classes. As a possible testament to the efficacy of his ministry, many of those who have graduated are now serving in various capacities not just in our church, but in churches across the country and, in some cases, outside the country. Thus, we think it'd be especially fitting to commission a special devotional series in thanksgiving to what God has revealed about Himself through Ben.

This month's devotional series, therefore, features many of us who have been with Pastor Ben in different seasons of his ministry life. It is important to remember, however, that the devotionals are not about Ben. They are not about how amazing Ben is – even though he is amazing. They are not about how important Ben is – even though he played important roles in our church and lives. They're not even about Ben himself, even though it is a special devotional series in thanksgiving to his service. They're about Christian truths that we read about in the Bible, which we have witnessed in Ben's life and ministry. It is our hope that when you read the Scriptures, reflect on it, and see how it has been lived out in Ben's life, you may be empowered to live the Scriptures out even more within your life, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we commend this month's special devotional series to you.

With blessings,

The WCAC Youth Group Teaching Ministry

A Daily Sacrifice

By: Becky Chen, former Doulos member (Class of 2005)



Read: Psalm 51: 16-17

This was a Psalm proclaimed by David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and was confronted by the prophet Nathan. I thought David's reaction to God was interesting after having committed such a great sin.

Often times in my own life, when I do something wrong, I want to immediately correct it. This applies to school work, spelling errors, even in relationships with family or friends. I don't know about you, but I'm a "doer" and I find that I always need something to do to feel better about situations I can't control.

From David's perspective, he obviously realizes there is nothing in his power (no donkey, chicken or cow) he can offer up to God that can please Him. However, David knows that God is only pleased by his broken spirit and contrite (repentant or remorseful) heart.

This is something I always need reminding of. Our God is not about empty sacrifices, but of sacrificing our will for the sake of His. When we are broken in spirit and come to Him with a repenting heart, it's an attitude of humility and acknowledging that God is able.

Hopefully this is an encouragement to you all. Let us come before our God daily sacrificing to him a broken spirit and contrite heart; always confessing that we are in need of Him in every hour.

Simply Gracious

By: Ezra Chang, former Doulos member (Class of 2006)

The question presented to me was this: "What has God taught you through Pastor Ben?" This is, thankfully, not the same question as "What have you learned from God through Pastor Ben?" Teaching is the transmission of knowledge, whereas learning is the reception and internalization of the same. The two do not necessarily come hand-in-hand; I need only look at my life to see that truth.

Ben has taught me much over the years; in fact, I've known him for eleven and a half years - fully half of my life. It's all still here, in my head; but you wouldn't know it, looking at my life. I remain a deeply flawed individual; I am undisciplined and lack self control, I am missing good judgment and say things I shouldn't, and to top it off I have a Baal-worshipper's knack for trying to straddle the fence when it comes my allegiance to Christ and the opposing inclination to serve myself to another helping of the world's pleasures. Within our culture, teachers are often judged based on their students. I implore you not to, in this case.

In my humble opinion, it is to Ben's credit that he has stayed with me, as well as others, seeing us as charges from God to lead along the path to righteousness. Even though most of the things he taught me, pursuant to that goal, haven't stuck, he displayed the fruit of the Spirit in the way he continued to pour into us. Through his example, I understand a little bit more what it is to follow Christ. I have glimpsed a shadow of God's love in the way Ben goes out of his way to mentor us.

Ben has mirrored Christ in the way he extends grace to me, and it is this concept of grace that I am most taken with. Grace is a concept so foreign to me, yet is the one thing I need and want most. Even as I go through an extremely dry season of my life, thinking back on all those years brings to mind one of the first passages I ever memorized, even before I became a Christian, Romans 3:23. With some of the surrounding text, it reads:

"But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption by Christ Jesus."

- Romans 3:21-24

The context to which this passage was directed was, partially, an incorrect understanding of salvation on the part of Jews in the Roman church. Paul needed to explain to them that they were no better than their non-Jewish brethren for all their rituals and the history those rituals supposedly represented. He makes clear that salvation comes not from our own actions, but from the sacrifice of Christ alone, given freely by God.

It is in this spirit (and in the Spirit) that I perceive Ben to have acted, in all our interactions. It is through grace that I must relearn to reinterpret my life right now, a lesson I have only recently perceived after so many years, and I am grateful to God for having taught it through Ben.

Let the Gospel Sink In

By: Jack Xu, former YG member (Class of 2005)

Read Galatians 5

Introduction to Paul's Epistle to the Galatians:

This letter was directed not to a church or a city, but to an entire region. It is evident that Paul has a history with this region, either planting the Christian movement, and/or helping it mature and grow. Recently, some false teachers have been leading the people astray. They stressed an observance for the Law of Moses with the help of Christ. They also were trying to undermine Paul's authority in order to become more powerful themselves. Paul has harsh words for the false teachers. In verse 12, he says that he wishes the people who are preaching circumcision would not stop at circumcision, but continue on and emasculate (cut it off, mutilate) themselves. This is the seriousness of the heresy.

Reflections:

- 1) Romans 4:13 says, "It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith." Even before the Law of Moses was given, "Abraham believed God, and it was *credited* to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3). In other words, righteousness was loaned to Abraham because he had faith. In his holy bank account, it read 'righteous'. Verse 4 says that "you who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ". Maybe by doing this devotional you are one step closer to holiness... silly right? But we seriously do believe that our holy bank accounts are lacking in funds, and but depositing good works we can make it read 'righteous'. What are you trying to deposit? What is your motivation?
- 2) Verse 6 says the only thing that counts is faith, expressing itself through love! We feel like we can't love all the time; we feel like we have to make up by doing more. Romans 3:24 says "*all* are justified *freely* by his grace *through* the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." If you have faith in Jesus Christ, you are now considered holy. Even during the times of your worst sin and depravity, at that very moment, God looks at you and considers you blameless. You were once a sinner that was saved by grace, and now you are a saint who struggles with sin. Realize the new life that you have with Christ Jesus and reflect on that.
- 3) In Romans 7:4 Paul says that we believed in Christ and died to the law, "that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." The end of Galatians 5 tells us that the fruits of the spirit have no law against them, that it is completely separate from the law. Fruits take time and grow, on plants that are well watered and in the light. Paul tells us that if we walk by the Spirit and keep close to God, we will be well watered and well lit. The truth is the more we let the message of the gospel sink in, the more we will walk by the Spirit. Remember the gospel and let it sink in. Take time to pray and to get closer to our God.

True Commitment

By: Leslie Ng, former Doulos member (Class of 2003)

Read: Matthew 16:24

Pastor Ben's ministry among youth began in 1999 during my freshman year in high school. The Youth Director had just stepped down and although Pastor Ben was working a full-time job at that time, he and a few young adults that had grown up in the church took up the reins of leadership. Pastor Ben continued to serve as a youth counselor when the church hired a Youth Director the following year and even when his job required him to work in Houston, he still remained devoted to the youth ministry at WCAC, flying back and serving faithfully at Youth Group each weekend.

His job eventually called him to Hong Kong for an extended period of time. While there he quickly found an opportunity to be a part of the youth ministry at a church and became very actively involved there. After some time, he returned to the States. The Youth Director at that time was called away from WCAC and Pastor Ben again decided to step into the role as youth leader during my senior year of high school. He eventually quit his job to attend seminary and pursue a full-time calling to his ministry at WCAC, where he has served so faithfully for so many years.

It has truly been a blessing to see how the Lord has led Pastor Ben on this journey and a privilege to serve under his guidance during these past 11 years. Throughout these years at WCAC, Pastor Ben has especially challenged me with his example of what it means to be a follower of Jesus whose life is marked by his deep commitment to serving the Lord. Following God's call requires us to be committed to a lifetime of service and this is a commitment that requires sacrifice and surrender--the surrender of our time, our possessions, our comfort, our future plans and careers, and our pride, among all else.

Are you truly committed to following Jesus and serving the Lord? If not, what is preventing you from full commitment? What aspects in your life still need to be sacrificed and surrendered to the Lord? Reflect and ask God to help you surrender these things.

Obedience to God

By: Spencer Chang, former YG member (Class of 2004)

I am one of the few people who have had the pleasure of both serving with Ben and having him as a youth group leader. As Ben prepares to leave for St. Louis, I want to reflect on what I remember thinking about when he made the decision to do ministry full time.

One thing that sticks out in my mind was Ben's decision to enter full time ministry. This is a vivid example to me (and certainly my first) of Godly obedience and faith, a characteristic and discipline that I often question in my own walk with Christ. While faith and obedience to God in your life might not lead to big decisions like Ben's, the ability to listen, decide, and be obedient to God comes from a repeated history of obedience. Read these verses on obedience and reflect on your obedience to God.

Read: I Sam. 15:22, Deut. 11:13, I Pet. 1:2

Write down, three areas where your obedience is evident, and pray thanking God.

Write 3 areas where you are not obedient, and pray for discipline and help in trusting and following him.