



For the Week of March 25, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:  
Authority

Daily Life Notes for Individuals & Couples

## Introductions

Welcome to this week's **Life Notes**. Today's passage is all about the relationship between Father and Son and what that means to you and to me. Prepare to be encouraged and challenged.

The passage is copied in its entirety below, but it's great to use your own Bible so you can make note of things that interest you or speak to you in some way. It's always good to read a passage at least twice, so that your mind begins to get involved with what the Holy Spirit is saying. It's also great to read a second version so you can compare what's going on. The following is the NIV, but *The Message* gives an entirely different perspective, as does *Voice*. The *New American Standard Version* is a more word-by-word translation, so that's helpful, too. You can see any of these on most Bible online sites.

**Note:** Saturday is used as a "sabbath" day experience, but you might work on Saturday and be off some other time during the week that would be more appropriate to celebrating rest. Please feel free to adjust the **Life Notes** schedule to fit your own.

## the Word: John 5:16-30

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

Jesus: *"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."*

For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus (to the Jews): *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it."*

*"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."*

*"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

*"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.*

*"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*

## Monday: connecting the dots - confessions of a healed man

As you begin your time today, go back to 5:1 and read all the way through 5:30 at least twice, listening thoughtfully for what God is saying to you. Journal any new ideas that come to mind or anything you learned last week that's still in the forefront of your awareness. Spend some silent time simply receiving God's goodness, love and presence in your life.

The first part of John 5 talks about a man who is healed even when he doesn't want to be healed. This is such an important story for us. Do we see the story as being about some pitiful man thousands of years ago? Or do we recognize ourselves in the story? Do we see our unwillingness to truly allow God to heal us from the inside out? Do we trust Jesus with our very lives? Do we trust Jesus to have a purpose in our painful experiences? Do we trust him to have our wellbeing at heart? Do we trust him to supply all of our needs? Do we receive the opportunities he gives us?

*In what way(s) has God given you a fresh start in your life?*

Just one more thought to explore. The man had an identity before Jesus healed him - 38 years at the same location, people got to know him, right? Once healed, the man was free but he also had to take responsibility for his life for the first time. This happens to us all. God leads us through difficult times and takes us deeper in our faith walk, but the growth also demands something of our attitudes and our actions. This next "examen" question might not apply to your life right now, but it might... Spend today journaling, praying, talking with God about your life from this vantage point.

*What responsibilities do you sense God asking you to shoulder right now that you gratefully bear?  
What responsibilities do you sense God asking you to shoulder right now that you resent,  
grudgingly bear or wish you could avoid?*

(hint...it can be gratifying to be a leader but difficult to ask someone we've hurt for their forgiveness... particularly if we sense that we were wronged as well)

As you complete this time today, whether you're alone with God or with someone you love, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a deep sense of yourself and your relationship with God and others this week. Pastor Mark talked to us about submitting to Jesus and to what he wants for our lives. That isn't an easy way to live. But Jesus never leaves us alone or without light or living water. We're equipped, so pray to recognize what God is doing in, around and through you this week.

Remember from Psalm 84, our very lives are the roads God travels. He is definitely leading us each step of the way.

## Tuesday: religion, meet Jesus

Begin your time today getting comfortable and ready to receive. Write down any distractions that are roaming around in your head - things you need to remember or do. Empty your mind as much as possible for a few moments and prepare your heart to hear from God.

Read John 5:15-18 three times. Read the verses in various translations if you have them available. I'll include the *Message* and the *Voice*.

### The *Message*

The man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. That is why the Jews were out to get Jesus—because he did this kind of thing on the Sabbath.

But Jesus defended himself. "*My Father is working straight through, even on the Sabbath. So am I.*"

That really set them off. The Jews were now not only out to expose him; they were out to kill him. Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was calling God his own Father, putting himself on a level with God.

### The *Voice*

The man went immediately to tell the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the mysterious healer. So they began pursuing and attacking Jesus because he performed these miracles on the Sabbath.

Jesus: *My father is at work, so I, too, am working.*

He was justifying the importance of his work on the Sabbath, claiming God as his Father in ways that suggested He was equal to God. These pious religious leaders sought an opportunity to kill Jesus, and these words fueled their hatred."

John 5:16 and 18 describe the frustration of the Jewish leaders. Basically, Jesus bothered them. And he bothered them over and over and over again. They couldn't figure him out - he was nothing like the Messiah they'd anticipated. He talked to objectionables, healed insignificants and did not respect the Jewish leaders' idea of the Sabbath at all. He chose to hang out with those who were not qualified for "the ministry" at all. He literally drove them crazy.

*What bothered the Jewish leaders about Jesus? Write down their stated objections and then what you think might have been behind those objections.*

*Jesus was Jewish, so why did Jesus heal the ungrateful man on the Sabbath?*

*What are some obvious things that the Jewish leaders were blind to or missing in the situation? (hint: who and what did they really care about and who and what did they fail to care about?)*

*What are some “whos” and “whats” that you also might be blind to today?*

*How does this blindness affect your life with Father, Son and Spirit? With those you love? With objectionables? With insignificants?*

As you close your time with Father, Son and Spirit today, ask Jesus to show you where God is working right now...where he specifically is asking you to follow. He might be asking you to care about someone in your life or he might be asking you to learn how to be alone with him and simply “be.” Know that God is at work right now - and his work involves you and your life. Journal any thoughts that come to mind now or throughout the day. Pray for eyes that see what God is doing and the willingness to join him. Journal any thoughts that come to mind - anything you sense God speaking to you.

## Wednesday: the ultimate relationship, part 1

Jesus literally did nothing without his Father. Nothing. The following verses are Jesus' explanation to the frustrated religious leaders. Read the passage again - aloud is almost always best.

*"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

*"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*

*"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*

*"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.*

*"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."*

Note all the interconnections and ties that bind. God the Father and God the Son are one. This relationship, commitment, connection is mind-boggling for us. Their relationship is the perfect dance of the trinity that we can't yet fathom. Pastor Mark taught us that...

...the son can do nothing by himself,  
...the father loves the son and shows him everything he does,  
...the father both trusts and entrusts his work to the son,  
...the father wants the son to be honored,  
...the son loves to please the father,  
...the father and the son are one,

Pastor Mark talked to us about submission, and he began with the relationship that exists in the Godhead - God as Father, God as Son and God as Spirit. True submission grows out of relationship, and Jesus unfolds that relationship for us in this passage.

*"It can be unequivocally stated that the central most important theme in the personal life of Jesus - the theme that lies at the very heart of the revelation that he is - is his growing trust, intimacy and love of his Abba, his heavenly Father. The interior life of Christ was completely Father-centered. The master clue for interpreting the gospel narrative, the foundation of Jesus' compelling demands, the source of his towering zeal was his personal experience of God as Abba."*

Brennan Manning, *A Glimpse of Jesus*

*How would you describe the relationship between Father and Son?*

*How did this Father/Son relationship impact the life of the disciples and others who were closely following Jesus?*

*What about the Spirit? In your understanding, how does God the Spirit fit into the picture?*

*What role(s) are Father, Son and Spirit playing in your life right now?*

*What role(s) do you feel Father, Son and Spirit desire to play in your life, if you'll open that door?*

Conclude your time today in silence with Father, Son and Spirit. Seek to relate to each person of God - allowing each to speak God's heart and mind into yours. We know we're asking a difficult thing of you. We aren't taught to do this in either our secular or believing culture in the West. We are busy and we seek to know and be correct about what we know rather than seeking to listen, understand and build authentic relationship. See if you can sense God's abiding presence as you still your activity for a few moments.

## Thursday: the ultimate relationship, part 2

As you begin your time today, begin with a word with Father, Son and Spirit. Invite God's love for relationship to guide your time as we better understand God the Father, God the Son and the grateful dance of submission.

Read the words of Jesus again, John 5:19-30, to put that special relationship between God the Father and God the Son into your mind.

Pastor Mark revealed the intricate relationship between Father and Son, and he revealed the chain of authority this passage unfolds for us.

*"The Father has authority over the Son. The Son submits to the Father. Jesus has authority over us as Lord, life-giver, and judge, and we are to honor him and submit to his authority over us."*  
Pastor Mark

Jesus joyfully submitted to the Father in everything. The Father joyfully shared everything with the Son. Jesus was co-equal with God in everything, and Father, Son and Spirit each have roles that they play in the Godhead. Submission is not one exerting power over another - it is an act of respect and love that grows out of relationship and role. We submit our lives to Jesus, just as Jesus submitted to the Father.

*What makes it so difficult to submit?*

Robert Mulholland, in *Invitation to a Journey* writes,

*"Almost from the moment of birth we engage in a struggle for control of that portion of the world in which we live. Can we get our parents to provide for our needs and wants when we want and how we want? Can we get our playmates to play our way or will they control us to play their way? Can we control situations and others to fulfill our agenda, or are we manipulated into serving others? Can we create enough of a security structure around our lives that we will be able to control life's adversities? If you do not believe that control is a major issue in your life, study the ways you respond when someone or something disrupts your plan for the day. Our constant struggle with the issue of control is a crucial part of our spiritual pilgrimage."*

We might try to argue his points, but without much success. It is difficult for us to release control. It is difficult for us to discuss "submission" without equating it with losing a measure of control. But what if submission to Jesus is, instead, all about love? What if it's about the dance of relationship and the privilege of discovering our place in the Kingdom?

*What is difficult for you about the idea of submitting your will to Jesus?*

*How would submitting your will to Jesus change the next hour of your life? The whole day? This week?*

We retain our humanity as Jesus-followers, so we aren't going to perfectly submit. But we can be in the process of submitting...we can live lives that are intentionally moving deeper into relationship with Father, Son and Spirit. We simply have to trust that God knows better what we need than we know.

In giving up control, we gain life in the kingdom - for eternity, and right this minute. This is part of what Jesus was saying to the religious leaders. We can wrestle with God throughout this life, or we can release ourselves to experience his love and see through his mind and with his heart. God longs for us to be in relationship with him, his way.

*What do you sense you need to release right now, today, in your present life, in order to live with an attitude of submission to Jesus?*

*What do you sense you'll need to continue releasing?*

As Pastor Mark said, *"The creator of the universe and the Savior of the world has a better design for your life than your sinful heart can dream up. The lasting, sustaining joy you're seeking through everything else will never be found there because it can only be given by your Creator who made you and loves you and longs to bless you."*

God longs to bless you, right this moment. As you finish your time with him, receive his blessing. Commit to submitting to Jesus...to following him...to releasing your life, moment by moment, to the only true God who loves you deeply and forever.



## Friday: the beautiful dance of spiritual formation

We've spent this week looking at the love between Father and Son - a love that motivated the Son to step into life with you and with me and literally experience what we experience. We've spent this week seeing how much it delights the Son to submit to the Father, and the Father to give everything to the Son. As Jesus followers, we are part of this dance of love.

Today, we want to meditate on Jesus and submitting ourselves to his love and will. We want to think about what it means to learn to listen and respond to God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. We've provided some thoughtful quotes, and we ask that you simply take time to read each one - thinking, praying or journaling as you hear from God. At the end, we encourage you to write a letter to God, describing your heart's commitment right now. Keep the letter close for these next weeks and months so you can see God's love and truth unfold in you.

*"Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ, a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world- in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did."*

Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*

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Holy One,  
there is something I wanted to tell you  
but there have been errands to run,  
    bills to pay,  
        arrangements to make,  
            meetings to attend,  
                friends to entertain,  
                    washing to do...  
and I forget what it is I wanted to say to you,  
and mostly I forget what I'm about,  
    or why.  
O God,  
don't forget me, please,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ...  
O Father in Heaven,  
perhaps you've already heard what I wanted to tell you.  
What I wanted to ask is  
    forgive me,  
        heal me,  
            increase my courage, please.  
Renew in me a little of love and faith,  
    and a sense of confidence,  
        and a vision of what it might mean  
            to live as though you were real,  
                and I mattered,  
                    and everyone was sister and brother.

Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace*

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*"The hidden work of God is a nurturing that prepares us for what appears to be a quantum leap forward. What we see as the quantum leap may actually be only the smallest part of what has been going on in a long, steady process of grace, working far beyond our knowing and understanding, to bring us to that point, where we are ready for God to move us into a new level of spiritual awareness and a new depth of wholeness in relationship with God in Christ."*

Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*

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*"Spiritual formation is our willingness to stay involved with our own soul - that place where God's Spirit is at work stirring up our deepest questions and longings to draw us deeper into relationship with him."*

Ruth Haley Barton, *retreat*

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*"When only our mind 'sees' and our heart remains blind, we remain spiritually ignorant. Therefore, spiritual formation calls for the ongoing discipline of descending from the mind into the heart so real knowledge and wisdom can be found."*

Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: The Way of the Heart*

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*"When Christianity becomes something other than entering into and living out the story of God, it becomes something other than Christianity. God's story isn't over; it is still being told today. Each one of us has the potential to become both a chapter of history and his story."*

Steven James, *Story*

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*"Jesus, the real Jesus, is earthshaking. He will both calm your soul and send a tidal wave of truth crashing through your spirit. As soon as you try to figure him out or wrap your mind around him, you'll get lost in the mystery of this man."*

*child of heaven,  
son of earth,  
fragrance of light,  
strength of eternity.  
former of worlds,  
shaper of souls  
storm of glory,  
love of God.  
tamer of tempest,  
raiser of the dead  
offender of the religious,  
befriender of the outcast.  
lion of conquest,  
lamb of sacrifice.  
hero of the ages,  
talebearer of eternity.  
king of all kings,  
servant of all servants.  
calmer of consciences,  
disturber of the peace."*

*"He is the mystic, majestic, mysterious Jesus. Holiness wrapped in humanity. When you try to prod at him, he prods at you. And when you finally meet him face-to-face, he'll shake your world. That's what happens when the veil is lifted and you finally glimpse his terrible, irresistible, glorious, soul-consuming love."*

Steven James, *Story*

## Saturday

We encourage you to let Saturdays be a “mini Sabbath” moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in Life Notes for the day you have off. It’s really important to learn to simply “be” with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an “agenda.”

Sabbath simply means “cease” and “rest.” So, today, spend moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. “Cease” all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

Couples, if possible, spend some Sabbath moments together reading, taking a walk, drinking coffee outside, sharing a song you both like, inviting friends over and cooking for them, taking a drive or a bike ride, exercising, watching a movie. Whatever you might like to do to truly rest, do it together. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life together this week. Just let the time unfold. Sense God’s love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Families, spend a Sabbath day together. Let different members of the family choose what to do each week. Simply enjoy God’s company together. Or maybe serve somewhere as a family or invite neighbors over, simply because you care.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He’ll delight and amaze you.