

Decisions That Please God

The [Hebrew] midwives . . . feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do (Exodus 1:17).

Scripture: Exodus 1:8-21

Song: “Where He Leads Me”

During World War II, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans were rounded up and sent to internment camps. Many were US citizens forced to leave their homes and livelihoods. For years, they were confined in remote camps surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers.

After hundreds of years in the land of Egypt, the Hebrew people began to be persecuted and mistreated. Pharaoh did not see or treat them as fellow humans made in the image of God. However, God had promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation, numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands on the seashore (Genesis 22:17). So, in spite of Pharaoh’s abuse, the Hebrew population continued to grow. Desperate to curtail their numbers, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all newborn boys among their people. But the midwives made the decision to honor God and let the boys live.

The midwives’ obedience was risky, but God rewarded their faith. Their names are recorded in Scripture, and God blessed them by giving them their own families. Today we can choose to honor God as they did, not fearing the outcome but trusting God in all circumstances.

Father, I will choose to honor You today, no matter the cost. In Jesus’ name, amen.

February 12–18. **Denise Scott** lives in Wentzville, Missouri. She serves in a caregiving ministry, helping folks who are going through a difficult time.

What Kind of Follower Are You?

[The disciples said,] “Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (Matthew 8:27).

Scripture: Matthew 8:18-27

Song: “I’ve Anchored in Jesus”

I’m considering following some social media influencers I’ve discovered. There’s a foodie who can teach me to cook, but there are no samples to taste. I can watch a fitness coach build muscle and work his core, all without breaking a sweat myself. And with my favorite camping influencers, there’s no tent for me to buy. I can just watch the duo’s adventure on a screen and then go sleep in my bed instead of a bag.

Like some internet surfers, there were followers of Jesus who were half-hearted in their desire to join Him in ministry. They expressed a desire to follow Him but really just wanted to maintain their status quo. Selflessness and sacrifice weren’t their priorities. However, even though the 12 disciples got things wrong sometimes, they were truly committed to following Jesus. They were in the boat with Jesus when a storm hit. The danger was real (Luke 8:23), and they panicked. But when they heard Jesus speak and immediately calm the wind and waves, they were both terrified and amazed at His supernatural power. They knew He was the right leader to follow.

Just as the weather on the Sea of Galilee changed without warning, our life circumstances can change without notice. When storms crash into our lives, we know that Jesus is still the one we need to be following. He’s not sleeping or uncaring. He’s still in control.

Father, help me to follow You wholeheartedly. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Clarification and Comfort

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Scripture: John 14:1-11

Song: “God So Loved”

When a father in the military is deployed overseas, his young child struggles to understand what’s happening. “Why does Daddy have to leave?” “Where is he going?” Even if the child is told that Daddy will be gone for a year, he or she doesn’t really understand how long that is until a birthday and a Christmas have passed. The child feels sad and confused.

In today’s passage, Jesus’ disciples were feeling much the same way. In the previous chapter, they had received a trio of troubling disclosures from Jesus: (1) one of the disciples was going to betray Jesus (John 13:21); (2) Jesus would be with them only a little while longer (John 13:33); and (3) Peter was soon going to disown Jesus three times (John 13:38). We can tell from their questions that they needed clarification. It wouldn’t be until after the events of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection that they would understand Jesus’ words, “I am the way” (John 14:6).

Jesus is, indeed, the way. If, like the disciples, you have questions and doubts, you can take them to Jesus. If you’re tired of soldiering through life alone or have lost your way, you can come to Jesus. If you need comfort today, seek Jesus.

Father, I believe in Jesus. I believe He is my way to You, my way through this troubled world, and my way to Heaven. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Responding to Jesus

Jesus answered [Pilate], “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above” (John 19:11).

Scripture: John 19:1-11

Song: “Softly and Tenderly”

When I met my future husband, he gave me a lot of eye contact. Over time, he made me feel special. But I’m not sure we would have fallen in love and married if I’d been withdrawn and given him the cold shoulder. Likewise, it’s hard to have a relationship with Jesus without being responsive to Him.

In today’s passage, we see how the soldiers responded to Jesus. Instead of believing that He was the King of kings, they mocked Him by making Him wear a crown of thorns and by hitting Him over the head with an imitation scepter. They stripped Him, slapped Him, and spat on Him (Matthew 27:27-30). Pilate’s response to Jesus was to find Him innocent. Pilate tried washing his hands of Jesus’ blood (Matthew 27:24). Then he ordered Jesus to be flogged. Although it looked as if Pilate was the one in power, Jesus said, “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18).

Yet Pilate was accountable for his response to Jesus, just as each of us is accountable for our response to Him. Perhaps He wants you to confess a sin, accept forgiveness, or give forgiveness. Perhaps He is calling you to respond to Him in some other way.

Father, grant me courage and humility to respond to Jesus right now as He deserves, to honor Him as is fitting. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Leading Well, Caring Well

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care . . . not because you must, but because you are willing (1 Peter 5:2).

Scripture: 1 Peter 5

Song: "Gentle Shepherd"

Mary Teresa Bojaxhiu (1910–1997) was small in stature but tenacious in service. Known to most as Mother Teresa, she was credited with helping the poor, sick, and dying in India and around the world. In her lifetime, she received many honors, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The author of today's passage had credentials of his own. Peter was leader of the early church and an apostle, an eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry. Peter encouraged church leaders to serve willingly and humbly, following the example of the chief shepherd, Jesus. Church leaders could be sure that God's grace and strength would sustain them even through hard times. A faithful shepherd must also tend to his own well-being by casting anxieties on Jesus and pursuing personal prayer, worship, and Bible study to maintain a thriving relationship with God. Leaders needed to resist temptation, setting God-honoring boundaries and fleeing enticements when necessary.

Peter's instruction for church overseers provides guidance for all Christians who lead, whether for a parent, Bible study facilitator, teacher, or coach. Faithful leaders can be sure that their labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58) and that they will be rewarded for their work (Revelation 22:12). Peter's most important credential was the same as for all believers: being united with Christ.

Father, help me faithfully lead and nurture those You've assigned to my care. In Jesus' name, amen.

Trust Builder

[Daniel] was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent (Daniel 6:4).

Scripture: Daniel 6:1-15

Song: “Be Thou My Vision”

If you have a U.S. \$1 bill on hand, you’ll find the words “In God We Trust” printed on the back. Odds are, however, that you won’t find a U.S. 1864 two-cent coin in your pocket. It was the first coinage to carry the national motto. A government may print “In God We Trust” on its currency, but it can’t imprint trust in God on people’s hearts.

Daniel had learned to place his confidence in God. The chapter previous to this week’s passage refers to Daniel’s wisdom and ability to solve difficult problems. He was trustworthy and performed his work with excellence. Other government officials tried to dig up some dirt on Daniel but could find none, so they set a legal trap that landed him in a lions’ den. But this was not Daniel’s first test of faith. As a youth, when first brought to Babylon as an exile, he faced a number of serious challenges to his faith as he served in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Though a captive, Daniel served in a position of influence, but he did not rely on that position nor on the king who placed him there. Daniel was bold enough to respectfully speak God’s truth even to kings. Every time he trusted God, he experienced God’s faithfulness. We, too, need to view our trials as opportunities to grow in trust. Like Daniel, we can know that whatever happens, God will be with us.

Father, help me to keep choosing You and Your ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Prayer and Praise

[King Darius wrote,] “He [the God of Daniel] is the living God. . . . He rescues and he saves” (Daniel 6:26-27).

Scripture: Daniel 6:10-11, 14, 16, 19-23, 26-27

Song: “How Great Is Our God”

It’s easier to talk to your father if you have a good relationship with him. You feel free to ask him for help, but your relationship is about more than just what he can provide—more than using his truck or borrowing his money. You value spending time with him. And because you respect and trust him, you find opportunities to say, “Thanks, Dad, I appreciate you!” Talking to God is like talking to a loving father.

Daniel prayed daily, not just during crises. Those who conspired against him found him guilty of giving thanks and asking God for help. Though he tried, King Darius couldn’t save Daniel. It seemed as though his doom was sealed as tightly as the lions’ den. But the next morning, Daniel shouted to the king that God, the creator of lions, had shut the mouths of the beasts and protected him. King Darius broke out into a decree of praise to God: “In every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel” (Daniel 6:26). God rescued His servant and revealed himself to an entire nation, beginning with its ruler.

Before bringing your requests to God today, consider beginning with praise, focusing on God and who the Bible says He is: for example, *God, You are kind, powerful, and forgiving.*

Father, I renew my commitment to daily prayer and giving thanks to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.