

## Joshua Daily Devotionals



### Week Six: Inner Transformation Happens through Active Passivity

**Monday, 5/25**

A phrase that gets passed around from time to time in Christian circles is “Let go and let God.” It’s a little truism that invites us to just take a deep breath and let the worries of the world roll over us, safe in the knowledge that God is in control.

It’s a good word to us as nervous, busy creatures, who sometimes forget that God is in control, but it’s also not entirely what we’re called to do.

Our combined study in the book of Joshua, and in the writings of Francis Schaeffer, has demonstrated that the people of God cannot force growth to happen mechanically, we only grow through personal relationship with God.

So let go and let God, right?

Almost.

Schaeffer uses Jesus’ mother Mary as an illustration that describes our relationship with God as “active passivity.”

He writes of Mary: “We are in the same situation in that we have these great and thrilling promises we have been considering, and we are neither to think of ourselves as totally passive, as though we had no part in this, as though God had stopped dealing with us in the here and now as men; nor are we to think we can do it ourselves.”

“Letting go and letting God” doesn’t mean we’re supposed to go full couch-potato-Christian.

An active passivity aligns with the Biblical understanding that we are to “Wait on the Lord” that we are to “watch and pray” that we are to actively “trust in the Lord” and “Exhort one another to good deeds.” All of this is done actively, while understanding that it is only God who can accomplish the work that is to be done.

“How have you seen God work through “active passivity?”

Please read: 1 Timothy 6:12

**Tuesday, 5/26**

As the Israelites continue to trust in God for victory over their enemies, a strange theme becomes clearer and clearer; when the Israelites follow God, they are unstoppable in battle when they go their own way, they are defeated.

From the battle around Jericho, to the defeat and then, subsequent victory over Ai, Israel is learning the lesson of “active passivity.” Actively relying on the strength of God, instead of on their own power.

In Joshua 10 Israel is drawn into battle against the combined might of five Canaanite kings. They are in a strange land, surrounded by enemies, but God tells them “Do not fear.”

They have every reason to fear, except for the promises of God, that they must actively choose to wait upon. It is only through the presence of God that the Israelites survive.

God supernaturally intervenes as the Israelites go to battle. Israel’s enemies are thrown into chaos, hailstones fall from the sky, and the sun stands still in the sky. The enemies of Israel are utterly defeated, and scripture tells us, “There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.”

The temptation we have, as we face many kinds of battles, is to assume we’ve got to do it on our own. Any number of things can cause us to think this way, but what we learn from the Israelites is reliance on God is ultimately the only hope we have.

When was a time when you had to actively wait on God? What was hardest about it?

Please read: 1 Peter 4:11

**Wednesday, 5/27**

One of the examples that we're given in scripture of what it looks like to follow God faithfully is in the example of Mary.

When Jesus' mother was told that her life would be something other than what she expected, that she would be the mother of God, she could have responded in a number of ways.

She could have raged against it. Remember that she was a young girl, recently engaged to Joseph, anticipating a marriage with him, and a life with him, and all the usual things that entails.

It wouldn't have been a white picket fence and all that, but there would have been an expected path to her life that was suddenly, and radically upended. She could have said no.

She could also have seized on the promises she was given and tried to make Jesus' birth happen on her own. She could have heard the plan and tried to take over.

But as Schaeffer points out, "She could not bring forth a child without a man, by her own will, any more than any other girl could do." But Mary didn't try to take control and exert her terms, or her force, or her way into the situation.

What Mary says is, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word."

Mary chooses to participate in the promise of God, without trying to do it on her own terms.

When has God asked you to practice "active passivity" in your life? Was it easy or difficult for you?

Please Read: Isaiah 40:28-31

**Thursday, 5/28** Insights from Francis Schaeffer's *True Spirituality*

TS 50 – God is the doer - 2 Corinthians 9:8

The active passivity, waiting on God's strength instead of relying on our own, that Schaeffer describes and that we've seen the Israelites practice in Joshua 10, can be hard for us to practice for a few reasons.

First, it can be incredibly difficult to acknowledge our own inability, especially in things that we we're good at on our own.

When the Israelites encountered Ai in Joshua 7 and 8, they were veteran warriors who had successful military campaigns all over the promised land. Familiarity made it easier for them to pursue victory apart from God.

Second, practicing active passivity is difficult because it requires us to truly believe that God's promises are good. We have to believe that he is a good father, that he does love us, that he is concerned for us, and is willing and able to contend for us.

It would be incredibly bad tactics to leave the result of a battle to something that isn't there.

When we put our lives in God's hands, we're confronted with the question, "Do you believe the promises of God enough to live it out?"

Can you think of a time when you were forced to acknowledge your own inability, or to consider what you believed God would really do?

Please read: Matthew 10:29-31

**Friday, 5/29**

Jon Owen was a 17th century theologian who once wrote, “Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.” This reminder that we are at war with sin is important to remember in our day to day lives, and the consequences of giving up will quickly become apparent in our lives. The urgency of living life in a posture of battle can’t be overstated.

But how does this action-oriented posture of killing sin mesh with what we’ve been reading this week? How can we be “actively passive”, relying on God’s action on our behalf, and still “be killing sin?”

Romans 8:13 tells us, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

The operative power in this passage, and in our own lives, is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are actively able to fight sin, and put to death the deeds of the body, and it is only through the passive reception and reliance on the Holy Spirit we are empowered to do so.

Schaeffer writes, “If we are to bring forth fruit in the Christian life, or rather, if Christ is to bring forth this fruit through us by the agency of the Holy Spirit, there must be a constant act of faith, of thinking, “Upon the basis of your promises I am looking for you to fulfill them, O my Jesus Christ; bring forth your fruit through me into this poor world.”

How have you seen the Holy Spirit at work killing sin? Either in your own life, or in the lives of others?

Please read again: Romans 8:13

**Saturday, 5/30**

The battles that Israel have fought demonstrate to us both God's insistence on perfect holiness, and our complete inability to accomplish that holiness apart from God. Like the Israelites before us, the call to holiness confronts us with a task that we could never accomplish.

Our battle against sin is one that we have long since lost and are powerless to overcome. In Psalm 51:5 David says that he was born sinning. And the bad news is we just get more and more practice as life goes on.

Apart from God we become increasingly, creatively evil, and we're told that when sin is fully grown it leads to death (James 1:15).

Like Israel before us, we are invited to either rest in the strength of God or be driven before the enemies of God and perish. Israel learns that every battle that is to be fought can only be fought through the strength of God.

Like Israel before us, we're invited to learn that the only way that we could ever defeat the powers of Satan, sin, and death is through the power of Jesus. The only way that we can win the battle against sin is through the direct action of God on our behalf.

It is only through reliance on the power of God, it is only through the grace that Jesus freely gives, and only through the ongoing empowerment of the Holy Spirit that we can walk in the righteousness that we were created for.

Please Read: Romans 8:31