

Monday, August 6 – *“Others said, ‘This is the Messiah.’ But some asked, ‘Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?’” (John 7:41)* Sometimes we just don’t understand. Sometimes our preconceived notions block the possibility of something new and wonderful. Somewhere, somehow, someway, these people were taught that nothing good could ever come out of Galilee. Jesus was right in front of them but his home town was a stumbling block. They were unable to listen because they had already made up their minds. Now before we get too judgmental, let us realize that we are no different. There are things that you have learned in your life that are preventing you from fully embracing Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Take some time today and think about what preconceived notions are creating a stumbling block in your relationship with Jesus. As you do this, listen with a servant’s heart, seeking not to be understood, but to understand.

Tuesday, August 7 – *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)* Why should I strive to understand as opposed to being understood by listening to others with a servant’s heart? The answer is found in Jesus’s life and is all about desired outcomes. Jesus’ desired outcome is to save the world from sin. In order for this to happen Jesus had to come and live as one of us so that we could have a real connection to him. It wouldn’t work for Jesus to simply snap his fingers and magically grant salvation. We have to come to salvation of our own free will, through a relationship not coercion. Jesus didn’t need to die on the cross in order to save us, we needed Jesus to die on the cross so that we could be saved. What is your desired outcome? Shouldn’t it be the same as Jesus? Then why in the world wouldn’t we take our cues from Jesus and strive to understand before we are understood?

Wednesday, August 8 – *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)* What does it mean to “live for righteousness”? It means to strive to understand as opposed to being understood by listening with a servant’s heart and offering forgiveness to those who have hurt you while making amends for the harm you do to others. Notice that living for righteousness doesn’t mean that you are perfect, it simply means that you are forgiven. Your life thus becomes an exercise of extending this very same reality to everyone you encounter. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross you are healed. Healed of the pain you have experienced at the hands of others in your life and healed of the guilt you feel over the pain you have caused in other people’s lives.

Thursday, August 9 – *“He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.” (John 1:11)* I share this verse with you today because I don’t want you to become disillusioned. Jesus didn’t have smooth sailing with this whole understanding as opposed to being understood and forgiveness thing, and neither will you. If this was easy, then everyone would be doing it! People will reject you, take advantage of you, manipulate you and cause you more pain because of your decision to take up residence on Island #6. This is what Jesus experienced so why do we think it will be any different for us? Here is the catch: Fully knowing all of this Jesus still came and lived among us as one of us and died for us on the cross. If he can do that than I believe that you and I can strive to understand as opposed to being understood by listening to others with a servant’s heart. You and I can offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us and make amends for the harm we do to others.

Friday, August 10 – *“And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.’” (Matthew 9:2)* All week we have been talking about how hard Island #6 is going to be, so I wanted to end on a high note. In this story we read of just how powerful your faith can be in someone else’s life. Notice that the faith of the people carrying the paralyzed man moved Jesus. The same is true for you and for me. Your faith can move mountains. Your faith can heal diseases. Your faith can turn lives around. Your faith can bring someone to the throne of Jesus. This following Jesus thing is really hard, but the rewards are eternal. I pray that each of you reading this devotion today will know what it is like for Jesus to smile upon your faith and bless the lives of others because of it!

Entry Ticket: What is our definition of change from last week?

Island #6 - _____

_____ ears and _____ mouth

Offer _____

Make _____