

Day 1

Look at the first two views of redemption from the weekend message outline;

**1] a righteous PATH to God and
2] a right POSITION before God.**

Read Mark 10:19-21. This man's view of redemption could be described as a righteous path and position before God, but we're told that the "man went away sad." Why did he turn away from following Jesus and receiving eternal life?

When you take a college course, the professor distributes a syllabus outlining what will be studied, what's required to receive a specific grade and what you can expect when you've completed the course. A specific path is outlined and your position as a student ("A" student, "B" student, etc.) is clearly laid out.

How do these views of redemption resemble following a class syllabus? What are you relying on to get the grade? The syllabus has been handed out and you are meticulously checking off the assignments... Baptized? Check. Pray? Go to church? Others? Maybe you aren't concerned about the assignments at all – you said a prayer and you're counting on being exempt.

PATH and POSITION - Where's the focus? What's missing?

Read Matthew 15: 8-9. Ask God today, "Where is my heart?"

Day 2

The Holiday Inn Express "Stay Smart" ads imply that because you stay at their hotel you can do anything. I took Biology and dissected a frog – I even made an A in the class. I'll be performing surgery after service next week... any takers?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 and John 3:5-6. Six months after completing that class, I couldn't name one part of a frog other than "frog legs." We're masters at listening to the lecture, reading the material and on-demand regurgitating without ever allowing the "letter" to actually permeate our soul and take up residence. In other words, we do the PATH, get in POSITION, but nothing's done with our person. We can do life by PATH and POSITION but we will not find life.

Jesus calls us to follow Him - to cultivate a new heart - to become the person that actually desires righteousness and naturally leans toward truth and goodness. What's your desire for this life? Do you want to actually become a righteous person?

"The most important task of your life is not simply what you do, but who you become."
John Ortberg

Day 3

Read Matthew 9:9 and John 8:12. In the time of Jesus, it was customary for gifted students to approach a rabbi and ask "May I follow you?" If the rabbi didn't believe the student had what it took to be his disciple, he'd encourage him to pursue a trade of some kind (perhaps fishing or collecting taxes). But if the rabbi believed this student could actually be like him and do what he does, he'd agree



and the student would become his disciple. Within the context of our western culture, we're likely to view the relationship between a disciple and his rabbi much like that of a student and teacher, coach, or pastor. The latter are those we learn from, seek advice from and perhaps even admire. We gain knowledge from them and add it to our own. Our desire is to know what they know. A disciple follows a rabbi in order to become like him and to do what he does.

How do you relate to Jesus? As a student or a disciple? How could relating to Jesus as His disciple change your perspective about a struggle you're currently going through? How could it change a fear you may have?

Consider shifting your prayers to something like, "God, take where I am today and use the hard things, the good things, even the uncertain things to make me different. Make me lie down tonight a better person than I am this morning."

Day 4

Read John 5: 39-40. Where will we find life? And what kind of life is it?

I have a box in my car with a lady's voice that gives me directions. (You know, a GPS.) But that doesn't mean I trust her. I often think she doesn't have all the facts and is therefore wrong. I don't always turn left when she says to turn left.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
John 10:10

I'm tired of just getting by. Deep within my soul, I know I was meant for much more – we all are. The definition of the word thrive is "to grow or develop vigorously; flourish." I like those words. Those words capture a life that is full – an abundant life. Do you want to thrive? Jesus wants to show us how to thrive and flourish as we live this life. Do you trust Him?

If you aren't in a small group, consider finding one. Join others who are following Jesus as His disciples. Consider using the JW curriculum which will walk you through the teachings of Jesus over the next several months.

Day 5

Back to that box (GPS) in my car... She says "Take the next left." I know in fact I should take the next left, but don't want to go that way. So I try another route.

Read Matthew 11:28-29. A yoke can be like a harness or bridle which encloses the head of an animal, in order to guide it. It can also be a frame, fitting the neck and shoulders of a person for carrying a pair of buckets. A rabbi used the word "yoke" to describe his interpretation of the Torah (how to live and receive the kingdom of heaven).

Have you ever tried to bridle a horse? It just isn't going to happen until the horse surrenders its head for the bridle to be placed over it. To follow Jesus we must trust that His way, His yoke, is the best - but we must also surrender to it.

Pray today "Father, I place my life in your hands... as I'm faced with decisions that are difficult, when I'm in relational conflict, when I'm tempted, when I want to give up, when I don't understand."