

WELCOME TO THE
OLYMPIC VILLAGE



2021

Royal Olympics

Devotional

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
DAY ONE: NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM HIS LOVE.....	4
DAY TWO: JESUS WANTS ME ON HIS TEAM	5
DAY THREE: JESUS SEES THE BEST IN ME.....	6
DAY FOUR: JESUS HELPS ME WITH MY PROBLEMS.....	7
DAY FIVE: JESUS LOVES ME NO MATTER WHAT	8
DAY SIX: JESUS KEEP HIS PROMISES TO ME	9-10
DAY SEVEN: DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.....	11

This devotional is intended to be part of an RFK Volunteer’s preparation to serve at a Royal Family Kids Camp Program. The daily themes and scripture passages are taken from the RFK Royal Olympics Curriculum. These themes and passages will be part of each day’s teaching. The overarching theme, “NOTHING CAN SPEARATE US FROM HIS LOVE” is based on Romans 8:38-39.

This last year we asked some seasoned RFK Camp Directors to write their devotional thoughts based on their experience in preparing for camp, leading volunteers, and reaching out to campers. We hope you will enjoy the passion and insights they have shared.

Formatting and editing by Linda Chenot and Robyn Freeman
June 2020

Editing by Yuli Kizler

May 2021

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM HIS LOVE

A principle taken from Romans 8:38-39

The Bible reveals God's eternal plan to redeem and dwell among His people. Life began in the Garden of Eden with a perfect relationship between God and man. However, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, sin separated Him from them. The Bible teaches that sin is a serious offense against God. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Sin separates. It separates us from God, and it separates us from each other. God provided the way to resolve this separation by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, the Bible says He took the punishment that we deserved upon Himself. This is the most incredible truth! God righteously judges us for our sin, but then He graciously paid the penalty He required pouring out His own blood to satisfy His right and just requirements.

Isaiah 53:4-6

Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

The Bible teaches that the only way to bridge the gap of separation between us and God is by putting our faith in Jesus Christ and trusting that His death for our sin pays the penalty of sin for us. If you would like to have a restoration of your relationship with God, you can do so by telling God what is in your heart. Confess the sin that separates you from Him. Ask Him to forgive you. Ask Him to give you His life in exchange for the sin you confess to Him. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Those who believe in Christ are in Christ. Further explanation of this truth is found in the following passage:

Romans 10:9-10

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

The children you will serve this summer have experiences of separation like most of us will never endure. The sins of the adults they live with have caused them to be separated from the only family they know. Sadly, their family members may not be trying to repair those broken relationships. God has called you to show His love to them. All of us are wounded and broken by the effects of sin and separation. God is constantly on the move to repair this brokenness between us and Himself. The promise of Romans 8:38-39 is for those who have trusted in Christ alone to pay their penalty for sin.

Romans 8:38-39

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

DAY ONE: NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM HIS LOVE

Romans 8:38-39

Romans 8:31 asks us as Christians, “*What shall we say about such wonderful things as these?*” Those *wonderful things* are described in verses 1-30: (1) no condemnation, (2) not being enslaved by sin, (3) God’s Spirit living within us, (4) being God’s adopted children.

1. Despite these wonderful things, what kind of challenges might we face, according to verse 35?
2. What does God promise us in verse 37?
3. What “fears for today” (v. 38) might our campers have?
4. What “worries about tomorrow” (v. 39) might our campers have?

Verse 39 says the love of God has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus. For boys and girls who have been abused, abandoned, and neglected, the only way they can comprehend the love of God is for it to be revealed to them in Christ.

5. How can God use us to reveal Jesus Christ to our campers?

I am writing this on Easter Sunday 2020. Today I received a texted photo from one of our camp counselors, Dana, who became a first-time foster parent to one of her campers (let’s call her Mattie) after last year’s camp. The photo showed Mattie with a basket full of Easter eggs.

At last year’s camp registration, Mattie’s former foster mom had to force her out of the car. Mattie then sat in a corner with her cap pulled over her eyes.

At camp, things changed as godly love was shown to Mattie. When Dana became ill and had to spend an evening chapel time in the nurse’s station, to my surprise, Mattie volunteered to come forward and pray for Dana. That 9-year-old girl from a terrible background was responding to Christian love with love.

Lance Colkmire - Director, RFKC #054 Cleveland, Tennessee

DAY TWO: JESUS WANTS ME ON HIS TEAM

Please take some time to read through **Luke 5:1-11** a few times to get a personal understanding of it and to prepare your heart to worship through your devotional time.

Here are a few “thought questions” to consider as you read through this text:

1. How does this passage help you better understand your own faith?
2. What sins do you unwittingly commit that reveal a lack of faith?
3. How does this passage help you to repent, and how does that comfort you?

In this passage, we see Jesus getting ready to teach the Word of God to many people pressing in on him (v. 1). It's clear from the beginning of this passage that many are seeking Jesus, and many are coming to faith. After He is done teaching, He tells Simon to cast out a net in the deep (v. 4). Simon, a man who claims Jesus as “Master” (v. 5), scoffs at Jesus and answers Him in a manner that my 14-year old daughter does when I tell her something is best for her and I know better. You get the picture of Simon kind of saying, “Seriously, man? We've been doing this for a while, but whatever, I guess I'll do it.” Simon, knowing with whom he is speaking to, shows a complete lack of faith in this moment. We then see his lack of faith get rebuked when he pulls the net up and the amount of fish is that taken in is almost too much for two boats (v. 7). Simon instantly repents for his lack of faith (v. 8). Then, the best part of this passage comes, Jesus tells Simon to not be afraid and instantly forgives him (v. 11). You know the passages in the Bible that start with, “But God”? This is one of those moments. But God, in His mercy and grace, instantly forgives the sinner who genuinely repents and follows Him (v. 11) Isn't it amazing that Jesus wants people like us, who think we already know everything, on His team? A great reminder that Jesus does not need us but desires us.

I don't know about you, but this passage has taught me a lot about my own faith and what I continue to hold on to for control. As if what God's Word tells me isn't enough at times! This is not a “Let go and let God” thing. God gave us His Word, His wisdom, and the ability to council with fellow believers to make wise decisions. However, when it comes to what the Bible clearly states about what we are to do out of obedience, there is no gray space.

Take a moment and reflect on your faith. How are you conveying that faith to the campers the Lord has graciously placed in your care this week? Is it a rock solid, unwavering trust of the Lord and His Word? Probably not in every case because we are not perfect, but will we seek the Lord in those imperfect moments? THAT, my friends, is an image that is so important for our campers to see. Imperfect humans striving after the holiness of God and admitting our mistakes when we need to. We, as Christians, are looking towards and emulating a gentle, patient, loving, and gracious Savior. Even when we fall short - Jesus still wants us on His team.

Jonathan Niles, Director RFKC #209 Columbus, Nebraska

DAY THREE: JESUS SEES THE BEST IN ME

Read **John 4:1-14**. Ask God to reveal to you His heart and what He is saying about you specifically.

Verse 4 says that “Jesus had to go”. Could this be that it was a divine appointment? Jesus was tired and still He cared and took time to meet with this woman. A divine appointment is a meeting that has been designed by God. I wonder how many I have missed due to my not listening to God; or because I was too tired or too busy. Have you ever been tired and not want to meet or talk with anyone? What do you think a divine appointment might look like at camp?

Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans, yet Jesus didn’t fall into the trap of worldly expectations or worry of what his connection with this woman would look like to others. He sees the best in all people. What fears or expectations make it hard to connect to people who are not like you?

The Samaritans were a race of people despised by Jews. The Jews did not think they had any worth in God’s sight. This woman was an outcast and looked down on. She was deemed unworthy and marked as immoral. She was devalued. She had a different lifestyle, different beliefs, and different standards. Have you ever felt different or that you don’t belong, an outcast? How does the way you see yourself compare with how He sees you?

BUT Jesus saw her as loved and gave her mercy and grace! Instead of telling her she was a failure and criticizing her way of life, He offered her living water promising her if she drank it, she would never thirst again. She would be refreshed and have eternal life. What does this teach you about God?

A farmer really understands the importance of water. When the land is dry and shriveling up, they long for rain to grow their crops. When the rain comes we see luscious crops, green landscapes, blossoming fruits, vegetables, and trees. The Water is precious and brings life and is ever flowing. What do you think Jesus meant by “Living Water”? Have you tasted this “Living Water”? Will you ask God for His living water?

John 4:1-14 tells us that God loves us despite our failures. God values us enough to seek us and find us. He welcomes us into intimacy with Him. God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to give us this “Living Water”. Let’s remember to see like Jesus and look past the differences in others. Imagine each camper and volunteer experiencing God’s love at camp! Everyone drinking the “Living Water”. Will you ask God to use you to impact those who are thirsty? He sees the best in us all.

Pray for this “Living Water” for His Holy Spirit to flow through you at camp. Thank Him for His love and how He sees you and values you; how He has called you to be His hands and feet to these kids. Pray that each camper and volunteer experience the Love of Christ and His Living Water.

Kenra Keddington, Director RFKC #049 Sandy, Utah

DAY FOUR: JESUS HELPS ME WITH MY PROBLEMS

If Matthew took the Personality Profile, I think he'd be a blazing Yellow! He was an incredible storyteller. In **Matthew 14:22-33**, we get an enthralling eye-witness account of Jesus' incredible love and patience for mankind. Everywhere Jesus went, people would run to him with their sick and hurting. Jesus would often spend time alone in prayer. You will be in high demand this week. Look for moments of rest and reflection and draw upon God's strength in prayer.

In Matthew 14:22, evening was approaching. Jesus sent his 12 apostles off after miraculously feeding 5,000+ people. Perhaps Jesus wanted them learn lessons to prepare them for a life of ministry. He sent them off with assurance they had completed a full day; He would meet them soon. Yet, He knew they were headed into a storm. Sometimes at camp after a full day, we look forward to rest, but a storm is on the way.

1. What difficulties and needs might you expect to see at camp week?
2. What have you been asking God to work in you and through you during this week?

From evening (perhaps 6:00-9:00pm) to the 4th watch (perhaps around 3:00-6:00am), Jesus was alone on the mountainside and the apostles were in the boat being beaten by the waves with the wind against them. Exhausted in fear and doubt, battered, beaten, and preparing for the worst, they screamed at the site of what appeared to be a ghost!

3. In what ways can you identify with the apostles' exhaustion, fears, feeling of panic? What current fears and doubts are you facing today?
4. What challenges you about Peter's response to Jesus? How have you cried out to Jesus?
5. How do Jesus' words in Matthew 14:27 comfort you?

Peter was the one to blurt out impulsively, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." (I have no doubt Peter's Personality Test would come back bright yellow as well! Impulsive, loud, adventurous!) Jesus knew Peter's heart. He knows each of us as well. He wants us to know He has our best in mind in all circumstances. Jesus was with Peter and grabbed him as soon as he started to sink. As Peter and Jesus returned to the boat, the wind and waves ceased, and the apostles worshiped Jesus.

6. How can you "turn your eyes" on Jesus in your exhaustion amid fear and doubt?
7. What words of praise can you offer Him through the storms you may encounter at camp?

Just as Jesus is with you, He knows each of our campers intimately. He is with them in their storm and will bring them to safety. How can you encourage our campers today with the encouragement God has given you? Be like Matthew and share your story of the greatness of God in your life.

Amanda Barton, Camp Director RFKC #285 Brandon, South Dakota

DAY FIVE: JESUS LOVES ME NO MATTER WHAT - Read: Matthew 26:30-35, 69-75; John 13-31-35

I can only imagine what Peter thought and felt when he heard the rooster crowing. It's not like he hadn't heard it before, but this time was different. As you read these passages, do you see yourself in Peter? I know I do. Wasn't it Peter in the garden just a few hours earlier cutting off the ear of a soldier in defense of Jesus? (John 18:10) Was Peter not the disciple that spoke, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Matt. 26:35)? What a bold statement to make, and then hours later we hear him saying, "I don't know the man" (Matt. 26:74). Before we judge the heart of Peter, let's try walking in his shoes.

Peter was operating out of fear. How often do we do the same thing? Fear can cause us to compromise everything we know and believe about Jesus. How might you and I have compromised our faith in Jesus? Out of fear, we don't speak up when a co-worker takes God's name in vain, or we shrink back at a family member when speaking of how they don't believe in Jesus. Maybe when God is asking us to love someone difficult, we look the other way. If you have walked with Jesus very long it doesn't take much to see that Jesus can be trusted. He is faithful to keep His promises, and He truly wants what is best for us. I believe Peter knew this. Perhaps he had a glimmer of hope when Mary came to him and the disciples the morning Jesus arose. In Mark 16:7 it says, "An angel told Mary at the tomb, 'Go and tell His disciples and PETER! Jesus is alive and He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he said.'" It was no mistake that the angel mentions Peter's name specifically. Even after Peter denying Jesus, it was a way of telling Peter, I LOVE YOU NO MATTER WHAT! "While we were yet SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US!" (Romans 5:8)

Our campers have been removed from their biological homes because of abuse or neglect. Many get kicked out of school or a foster home because of their aggressive behavior. They need to know, that JESUS LOVES THEM NO MATTER WHAT! Over the years we have seen children whose aggressive behavior give us reason to think about sending them home. By the grace of God, we have loved them through their pain. This is why we serve at Camp - so Jesus can love these children through us. Tyler was one of those campers. After the third and biggest meltdown of the day, Tyler said to me, "Well I guess you are going to send me back to the group home?" I went over, sat down by Tyler, gave him a side hug, and said, "Nope". He looked at me and said, "Really? Why?" I said, "God loves us no matter what you or I do wrong. We will keep helping you through these tough times of anger and frustration. If you start to feel yourself getting upset, tell your counselor, and we will run with you. If that doesn't work, go throw rocks in the lake, or punch the punching bag in the bump - n- crash room. Tyler we are here for you! Jesus loves you matter what!" After that conversation, we prayed. Tyler's aggression didn't stop entirely, but it did lessen. On Friday, when Tyler had to get on the bus, he was the camper who cried the hardest and held on to his counselor the longest. He had experienced that same love Jesus had given Peter. The same love Jesus gives us daily.

1. Now it's your turn, is there a time in your life that you felt like Peter? If so, give an example of what happened.
2. How did God bring you to a place of healing?
3. How will Peter's story and your own story help you better love the campers at Royal Family this summer?

Heidi Berk, Camp Director RFKC #028 St. Clairsville, Ohio

DAY SIX: JESUS KEEP HIS PROMISES TO ME - JOHN 21:15-19

There are many scriptures in the Word of God that pierce right to the heart of every believer, but none more than our text today. We observe the atmosphere of our passage out of the pure joy and excitement in the lives of Jesus's disciples. Jesus had risen from the grave. What remarkable joy there must have been. Everything Jesus had spoken came to pass just as He said. The disciples had been left wondering as to the meaning of much of what Jesus had said concerning His death and resurrection, but now the revelation of His words were alive in their presence.

We can only imagine the zeal and excitement in each of their lives. There was none more excited or enthusiastic than that of Peter. As we see in the scriptures leading up to our text, we see Peter leaping from the boat and swimming to shore to get to Jesus before anyone else. However, Peter must have been keenly aware of his recent failure to stand up for the Lord as he had declared he would. Perhaps he felt shame knowing he had rejected the One he swore to die for. Now despite the joy of seeing Jesus alive, Peter must honestly be faced with the depth of his commitment to Jesus. This time it would not be at the table of the world, but at the table (picnic blanket) of the Lord.

What grace and mercy we see as Jesus prepared a meal and a place of rest for the disciples! Especially for the one who had denied Him just a few days earlier.

How often have we found ourselves in situations much like that of Peter? Have you ever found yourself boldly standing up for Jesus - yet recoiling in fear when your faith is challenged? How gracious is the Lord to welcome us like He did Peter? We can be boisterous in our vows and commitments, only to be found weak and lacking when tested. Whether we have been faithful or not, may we find ourselves in the same seat as Peter seated at the Lord's picnic blanket.

We have a Savior that is faithful in every promise. Not only did His words come true to His death and resurrection, but also His commitment to forgive and bring healing into the lives of those who would trust and obey Him. Let us find ourselves at the threshold of decision. Our Savior is faithful to do all He said He would do. So, let us ask ourselves some of the same questions Christ asked Peter. May we find the revelation of answers not in the wisdom of the world, but by the Spirit of God.

1. How would we answer the question Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?"
2. What competes for our love of Him?
3. Where are your greatest challenges to follow Him?
4. How willing are we to share Him with others?
5. How would God describe our attitude as we come before Him for wisdom and understanding? Humble? Repentant? Entitled? Making excuses?

Peter had learned that his previous bold proclamations were rooted in his human strength. He understood the need to depend on Christ to excel to the high levels of commitment and loyalty he longed for. He understood that it was no longer him, but it was Christ through Him that would be needed. Jesus asked Peter,

"Do you love (AGAPE - highest form of Love, the love of the Father) me?" Peter could not say that his human love (PHILEO - brotherly, affectionate) was of the highest levels. His testimony was not of his human strength, but his desire to know and fellowship with Christ. Jesus didn't reject him for falling short of his claims. He challenged Peter to a new obedience and to feed His lambs. Isn't it amazing that Jesus would entrust His lambs into the hands of one who could only commit to a PHILEO love? Only as Christ's love shows through our hearts will other people experience THE AGAPE LOVE OF CHRIST!

As we fellowship this week with the staff and children of RFK, may it be that we live in AGAPE love with everyone. May Jesus be able to love others with our hearts, hands, words, and our listening ears. May we show love that is filled with compassion and forgiveness. May this love draw these children to follow Christ. May our tables and picnic blankets reveal the LOVE OF CHRIST!!

As we reflect on the tender mercy of Christ that brought healing and hope into the life of Peter, let us not forget that we too have fallen short and missed the mark. We are not a people to live in misery of regret and bitterness of the soul. We are a people who receive the tender mercy of Jesus to correct us and bring us back into alignment with God's kingdom. May we develop a longing to be at the feet of Jesus and enjoy His treasures evermore! May we go forth with hearts to bring about the hope and courage to the lives of these children. May they see Jesus in us despite having been let down, hurt, abandoned, or abused. May they find the love of Christ and the courage to follow Jesus even in trying times. Peter took to heart the love of Christ and went on so far as to lay down his life for his Savior. May God grant us the strength to give everything we have to bring hope into the lives of Foster Children.

Mike Ames, Camp Director RFKC #135 Pottsville, Arkansas

DAY SEVEN: ROMANS 12:21 - "DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD."

Read **Romans 12** in full to see this verse in context.

1. What are some concepts and themes of Romans 12 that stand out to you?
2. To what current life situation could you apply lessons learned in Romans 12?
3. Can you imagine how you might be challenged to live out the commands, promises and examples of Romans 12 at camp?
4. Where in your life do you struggle with being overcome by evil? How can you prepare yourself to overcome evil with good?

Romans 12 was written by the Apostle Paul. In verses 1-2 he tells us to be living and holy sacrifices to God. The Lord spoke to me through verses 4-8 where He is speaking about each person having been given different spiritual gifts. He urges us not to get frustrated when our gifts are not the same as someone else's. Whatever gifts we have been given should be exercised for the good of all. We are called to work in tandem with others. We are also instructed to have a godly attitude in all service to the Lord.

Paul concludes this chapter with verses 17-21: *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

Verse 21 reminds me to not be overcome with evil; don't fall into that negative trap. How do I overcome evil with good? I look at it this way: I try to see something positive in every day. Somedays you must look harder than others! I especially need to hear this on the final day of Royal Family KIDS Camp. The last day of camp is hard. The campers act out their emotions and fears with negative behavior. I must stay positive and confident that God is at work even when they display anxiety and aggression. I encourage you to ask God for the strength to trust Him despite the negative things that happen as we return the kids to their caregivers and foster families. Don't let the positive memories you made at camp be taken by evil. Pray that God will maintain the campers' positive memories made during the week of camp. I believe this is a great verse to write in our campers' Bibles or in their daily mail as well.

Trey Roberts, Camp Director RFKC #170 Norman, Oklahoma