

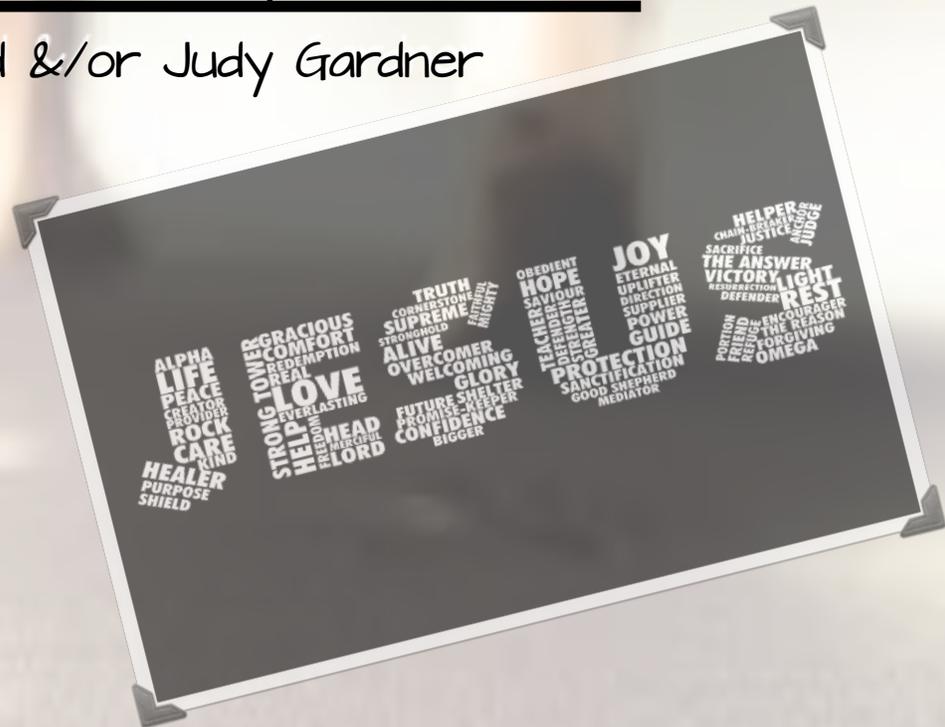
June 6-10, 2022 Edition

Following  
The Year Of Jesus Part 23

Who Do YOU Say That I Am?

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

June 4/5, 2022



When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

\*\*\* These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ,0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

\*\*\*\* Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside](http://www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside)). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

## **Monday:**

Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that... Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.

Galatians 6:4-5 (MES)

Try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities. Romans 12:3 (Ph)

**Reflection:** If we are to truly understand what humility is, it helps to know what humility isn't. Humility isn't a skilled person claiming to be incompetent or an intelligent person claiming to be stupid. It is simply seeing yourself as you truly are, in the context of reality. The Bible tells us that pride and arrogance are the opposites of humility. However, I think it's important to realize that pride can refer to more than one type of behavior, and can be good or bad. Pride in our children's artwork or pride in our community is encouraging and healthy. We can take pride in a job well done without becoming proud or puffed up people. I used to really struggle with this concept because the translators of the Bible often use the word pride when translating a certain Greek & Hebrew word. I thought it must mean that all pride is bad but then when I learned how to look up the meaning of Greek words the definition of the bad kind of pride always said, "arrogance". Why didn't they just translate it that way in the first place then?!?!?!?

It is only when pride crosses over the line into arrogance that we find ourselves in trouble. Arrogance claims more for itself than is true. Arrogance is a kind of self-delusion, a belief that we are better than we truly are. It is a mediocre performance claiming to be perfect. The arrogant say things like, "I am always right" or "I never need any help." Arrogance will never own up to a mistake because the arrogant think (falsely) that they are incapable of making mistakes (generally if they believed they did make a mistake that would be the end of the world for them). For the arrogant, problems and mistakes are always someone else's fault. In essence, arrogant people have lied to themselves about themselves.

Have you ever seen the movie *Welcome to Mooseport*? It's a comedy about a former president who ends up in a mayoral race against some hardware store guy in the small town of Mooseport. The movie begins with Gene Hackman (as the President) getting ready to leave the Whitehouse. There's a scene in which he's playing golf with some foreign ambassadors. The funny thing is that there are secret service guys hidden all over the golf course whose job it is to make sure that the president always wins his golf games. If the ball wanders into the bushes a guy in a black suit with an earbud scoops it up and throws it back onto the green. What cracks me up the most is that everyone in the scene knows what's going on except the president. He is genuinely impressed with his own golfing abilities and completely oblivious to all the people engineering his victory! Toward the end of the movie, when he is no longer president and the mayoral race is spinning out of control, Gene Hackman proposes to the hardware store guy (Raymond from "Everyone Loves Raymond") that they settle an important issue between them by playing a round of golf for it. But things don't go the way he expects because his wife intervenes and stops the secret service detail from helping him win. The problem is that Gene Hackman can't understand why he isn't playing as well as he always has. He keeps, as he puts it, "waiting

for the bounce.” All those years with the secret service guys helping him out have given him a false sense of his own golfing capacity. He had learned to expect the ball to bounce back out of sand pits and wooded areas and it just isn’t happening anymore!

The arrogant have a similar problem, although it’s not always brought on by someone making sure they always win/succeed. But whatever the root cause, the arrogant are continually mystified when something doesn’t go their way and they always blame someone else. It makes them (us?) un-teachable and that’s why it’s a sin that God detests so much. It’s why He is so committed to helping us develop the virtue of humility.

We all have skills and abilities; and it’s usually more fun to do things that we’re good at than to toil away on things we’re not so skilled at. But having skills and abilities is not what makes us valuable. There is an important difference between self-esteem and self-confidence. Self-esteem is an acknowledgement of our inherent worth as human beings. We are valuable because God created us and holds us dear to Him. We don’t have to “do” anything to have value. Self-confidence, on the other hand, comes from our ability to do something. I am confident in my ability to talk because I do it all the time. I am both skilled and practiced in speaking my mind (just ask Ed). I am not, however, confident in my ability to do complex math equations. I do not have the skill or education required to be confident in my abilities in that department. I can accept that. The problem comes in when we get our self-worth mixed up with our confidence in our abilities. When this happens we feel worthless anytime we perform poorly.

God doesn’t want us to base our self-esteem on our abilities – the attractive ones or the not so attractive ones. Think of it like you would a little baby. When my son was first born he was not good at much of anything. He couldn’t contribute to our family; he had no athletic ability; all he could do was eat and poop and cry. Does that mean that I didn’t value him? Far from it! He seemed like the most important person on earth to me because he was mine.

That’s the way God looks at each of us. He doesn’t need us to do things impressively in order for Him to value us. He loves us because we’re His. Once we fully embrace what that means, we can look at ourselves more clearly. We can cultivate a sane estimation of our capabilities and get over the need to claim to be more than we are. We still have work to do, but that work isn’t what makes us valuable. We can’t “do” anything that will make God love us more than He already does. As Max Lucado put it, “God loves you just the way you are... but He loves you too much to let you stay that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.” That means that we can afford to recognize our limitations and get over the impulse to be impressive all the time. Whew! What a relief!

If you’re looking for more read 1 Samuel 25:2-40. Why do you think Nabal was so confident in his position? How did Abigail’s sane estimation of everyone’s abilities factor into what happened? What was the result of Nabal’s arrogance? What can we learn from this story for our own understanding of humility?

**Prayer:** Father, today I ask You to open my eyes to how You see me. I want to have a sane estimate of my own abilities and not be arrogant. Teach me to be humble. In Jesus Name I pray, amen.

## **Tuesday:**

*God created people in His own image; God patterned them after himself... Genesis 1:27 (NLT)*

*Then the Lord God took dust from the ground and formed a man from it. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nose, and the man became a living person. Genesis 2:7 (NCV)*

*He is like a father to us tender and sympathetic... For he knows we're but dust.*

*Psalms 104:13 (LB)*

**Reflection:** We learned yesterday that our worth is not based on what we do. We don't need to be impressive to have value to God, ourselves or others. So where does our inherent value come from?

We have innate value because we are patterned after God Himself. We are like Him in ways that the animals can never be. We have the ability to create meaning, to appreciate beauty and to use our imagination to dream something up and then make it happen. We are inventors, poets, artists, architects, and musicians. We are creators like our Father. We are the sons and daughters of God, but we are not God. We are not all-powerful, all-knowing or perfect. We are His human children. We rely on God's power for our very lives. We need God's love to make us whole.

*Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. (Ephesians 1:4 MES)*

Without God we are simply not complete. Sometimes I think that God created us with a God shaped whole in our hearts because without it we wouldn't see the supreme value of having a relationship with Him. If we were born having everything we could ever want, being who we most want to be already, what would compel us to look beyond ourselves and reach out to God?

The reality is that we are humans and therefore only human. By that I mean, we make mistakes; we have our limitations; we don't always get it right. And that is ok. God has reached out to us through Jesus and filled in the cracks of our imperfections with His Son's grace. We stand before Him without flaw and above blame because we accept the gift of His Son. He has added His strength where we are weak so none of us has any reason to boast or claim to be more valuable than our neighbor. It is not our capabilities in which we should ultimately put our trust.

*We do not put trust in ourselves or anything we can do. (Philippians 3:3 NCV)*

*We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we can all be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we've done. (Romans 3:22 NLT)*

This gives us a foundation for great confidence but also great humility. We can have complete confidence because of God's generosity. We don't have to prove anything to anyone. We can let go of trying to be perfect. Being humble means trading up. We recognize that God's strength is so much more powerful than ours that we rely on it rather than ourselves. Not a bad trade!

If you want more read Acts 8:1-3 and 9:1-15. Then read 2 Corinthians 11:30-31 and 12:6-10. What is the difference between the confidence we see in Saul in the book of Acts and Paul's new confidence in 2 Corinthians. What can we learn from Paul's story about arrogance and humility?

**Prayer:** Father, I need to find that balance between basking in the glow of Your love for me and doing what You put me here to do. Please show me the fine line between working on my own & relying completely on You as a baby relies on his parents. In Jesus' Name, amen.

### **Wednesday:**

Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT)

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

1 Corinthians 13:4-6 (NCV)

**Reflection:** The Bible tells us that God is love, so if love is never boastful or proud, then humility is part of the very nature of God. That is why Jesus was willing to empty Himself of His power, even to be born a helpless infant in the arms of a teenage mother. To us it seems unthinkable that He would give up the power and glory He enjoyed in Heaven to come to this earth and become a humble servant. It's interesting that He was the one person on this earth who could truly claim to be great and yet he didn't think that a servant's life was beneath Him. God became human and moved into our neighborhood. He wasn't "too good" to get calluses on His hands. In fact, He made it His mission to serve.

In the final hours before His death, Jesus spent the evening with His disciples. He knew that He had time for just one more lesson, and then school would be out. So what did He do? What was His final message to His followers? It was a lesson on service, and Jesus didn't just talk about it, He did it. He took on the role of the lowliest of servants, grabbed a towel and washed their stinky feet!

You call me "teacher" and "Lord," and you are right because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. You know these things - now do them! That is the path to blessing. (John 13:13-17 NLT)

We are not asked to "boldly go where no man has gone before." (That was Star Trek, by the way.) We are asked to boldly go where Jesus has already gone. When we serve we are following in the footsteps of the greatest man who ever lived. He may not be asking all of us to wash feet, but He is asking all of us to serve. It's what makes us look most like Him.

The next time you see someone selflessly serving someone else look closely, do you see the family resemblance?

For those of you wanting more read John 1:1-18 and Philippians 2:6:-11. These are beautiful passages. The second one is a hymn of the early church. I would recommend reading these passages in several translations to really get a broad perspective on the poetry of this imagery. Then ask yourself what these images inspire you to do.

**Prayer:** Father, I can't understand how Your Son could be the most powerful being in the universe and the most humble being in the universe at the same time. Please show me how to be a powerful force for good in this world while remaining humble like Jesus. In Jesus' Name, amen.

### **Thursday:**

*Be careful! When you do good things, don't do them in front of people to be seen by them... Matthew 6:1 (NCV)*

*In Jerusalem during Passover many people put their faith in Jesus, because they saw him work miracles. But Jesus knew what was in their hearts, and he would not let them have power over him. John 2:23-24 (CEV)*

**Reflection:** It always starts out very innocently for me. Someone stops and takes a moment to acknowledge me for something I've done. I get a warm feeling knowing that I have made a difference in some small way. The Bible tells us to appreciate and encourage each other. A kind word does wonders for our energy levels! I am not alone in enjoying these moments.

If it stopped there it would be all to the good. But sometimes I find myself getting attached to those moments of appreciation. I don't want those well-wishers to lose their good opinion of me. I start to feel like my efforts only count when someone else sees them and approves of them. I begin to look around at others to see if I'm measuring up. Approval can become an addiction which leaves us enslaved to the opinion of others despite our best intentions.

The Bible doesn't warn us to be careful not to get caught doing good. We don't have to keep all our good deeds a secret from everyone, as I sometimes thought from what I heard growing up in church. It says we shouldn't do good things in order to get credit from people. It all boils down to our motives. Acknowledgement from others can be a good thing. It only becomes an addiction when we start to feel like we can't be ok without it. God knows that people are fickle. One day they love you and the next day you can't do anything right. Jesus reached out to the people of His day. He healed them and performed miracles to point them to His Father. But Jesus knew not to get too attached to people's good opinions of Him. At the end of the day, the opinions (either good or bad) of others aren't really worth that much. You certainly can't count on them. So whose opinion does matter?

Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember the Lord will give you an inheritance as a reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ.  
Colossians 3:23-24 (NLT)

In the long run, the things we do to serve others isn't even about them. It's about God and doing what He wants us to do. God is our only true audience, and He isn't asking us to treat people how they deserve to be treated. He's asking us to treat them the way Jesus would. We don't need to compare our actions with others. We compare our actions with Jesus. That reminds us that compared to His perfect example, we're just trying to take one baby step at a time. We don't want to waste time mourning because we don't do something as well as someone next to us, or don't measure up to someone else's standards. God's standards are all we care about, and we know that we only measure up to them when we're standing on Christ's shoulders!

If you want more read Luke 18:9-17. What is Jesus trying to get us to understand in the story about the Pharisee and the tax-collector? How does that theme relate to the verses that follow about Jesus welcoming the little children?

**Prayer:** Father, today I want to do whatever I do as though I was working for You. Show me how to work in such a way that I don't do it for praise from other human beings but I do it in gratitude for what You've done for me. In Jesus Name, amen.

## **Friday:**

You know that the rulers of the non-Jewish people love to show their power over the people. And their important leaders love to use all their authority. But it should not be this way among you. Whoever wants to become great among you must serve the rest of you like a servant. Matthew 20:25-28 (NCV)

Do not be like a ruler over people you are responsible for, but be good examples to them. Then when Christ, the Chief Shepherd, comes, you will get a glorious crown that will never lose its beauty. In the same way, younger people should be willing to be under older people. And all of you should be very humble with each other. "God is against the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." Be humble under God's powerful hand so he will lift you up when the right time comes. 1 Peter 5:3-6 (NCV)

**Reflection:** God isn't asking us to be humble so that He can see if we're cut out to be really great. To God the really great are humble. Humility isn't a means to an end with God, but an end in and of itself. When He sent His Son to show us what true greatness is all about, He sent Him to serve.

Jesus chooses to lead us like a shepherd, not to drive us. There's a story about a man taking a tour of the holy lands. The tour guide is going on and on about shepherding in Jesus day, and how the shepherd leads his flocks by teaching them to follow the sound of his voice. A good shepherd, he claimed, never drives his sheep – bullying them forward. He provides for their needs and watches over them. Because of this they learn his voice and follow him eagerly because he represents being well cared for. But only moments after

finishing his story, the bus comes around a turn in the town of Jericho and there is a man driving a flock of sheep forward. One of the men from the tour group is startled at the contradiction and looks at the tour guide who doesn't seem bothered at all by the scene. Finally the man has to ask, "Didn't you say that shepherds here don't ever drive their sheep, but lead them instead? What's the deal with this guy?" The tour guide smiled knowingly and said, "Oh that wasn't the shepherd. That was the butcher."

It's ironic to me to see people trying to bully other people to go the "right" way, especially in churches. If Jesus demonstrated the true nature of leadership by serving and caring for His people, teaching them to listen for His voice of guidance and then leaving it up to them whether to follow or not, why do we sometimes act like we're helping out by behaving like sheep-dogs, biting at people's heels when we think they should be going in a different direction? The answer is simple: we're human.

It is a natural human response to want to correct and control the direction of others. It may always be one of the first impulses that pops in our heads when we see someone doing something we think they shouldn't do. But Jesus tell us that true leadership is not about being the boss. True leadership is servant leadership. It is when we serve that we distinguish ourselves as leaders who truly understand the world the way God does. It is love that transforms people. Attempting to push people only makes them want to resist. That too is a natural human response.

God isn't asking us to approve of bad behavior. He's asking us to accept that people are human – that they are where they are in life, and we can't make them any different by pushing them. When we separate people from their behavior we can "love the sinner and hate the sin." After all, sin is just someone buying into a slick illusion that's hiding what's really good for them. Jesus knew that the best antidote to sin is to provide an example of God's truth being lived out in a life devoted to Him. So if you want to make a difference in the world, if you want to be a great leader who really influences those around you, try service. It works for Nordstrom's.

If you want more look up the following verses. What do they tell you about how God wants us to treat others?

Romans 12:9-14; Ephesians 5:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:22-24; Ephesians 4:31-32; James 3:13 & 17-18; Philippians 2:1-8

**Prayer:** Father, change my way of thinking about what makes a person "great". Show me how humility isn't just a pathway to greatness in Your eyes but that it is greatness in and of itself. This is such an opposite way of looking at the world. Teach me how to see this way. In Jesus' Name, amen.