

Faith In Community, January 15, 2006
THE JESUS JOURNEY: SEVEN THINGS TO PACK
“Put Down Roots”, Psalm 1

CHARTING THE COURSE

“Reading the Bible is an essential part of our Christian walk, but we must take care not to stop there. I must not keep coming to the Bible only for information about God and truth. I must also come so that the Bible might analyze me and tell me where I’m wrong and what changes are needed in my life. In fact, I would say that the essential difference between the Bible and every other book is that other books are meant to be read, whereas the Bible is truly meant to read us.”

--Richard Owen Roberts

PACKING TRAIT #1: LEARNER: A Learner grows intentionally in knowledge and wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. (5 minutes for the question below)

What teacher made learning an exciting adventure for you? How did you gain from the experience?

COME, FOLLOW ME . . . (20 minutes)

Read Psalm 1. This is the first song in God’s book of prayer and praise. It is one of several psalms which focus on true happiness, or the state of being “blessed”. What is the source of the psalmist’s happiness? How and why does God’s law bring about happiness for the psalmist?

What is the source of happiness, or blessedness, in each of the following scriptures:

Matthew 5:6
John 15:10-11
Psalm 119:30-32
Psalm 119:69-74
Proverbs 4:13

Consider the comparison the psalmist makes in verses 3 and 4. Share a time when God’s Word helped you stay firmly “planted” in difficult or confusing circumstances.

Often, when faced with a difficult decision, a Christian will ask, “what would Jesus do?” Share a time when you wished you had been better acquainted with Jesus’ instruction or example.

Re-read vv. 5 & 6. The psalmist makes a dramatic differentiation between the “righteous” and the “wicked”. Knowing that we are all sinners in need of grace, how do you distinguish between the two groups described here, and their ultimate destiny?

WHERE LEARNING CONNECTS WITH LIFE (15 minutes)

God’s revelation of Himself through scripture and through Jesus Christ, the Living Word, is a great gift. It is a clear message throughout the scriptures: learning the Bible, and learning the ways and the message of Jesus Christ, bring blessings that are both immediate and eternal. Rejecting this gift leaves us in a state of alienation from God, and without direction in a defective and confusing world.

Yet, it is also clear that simply reading scripture does not bring the blessing. We must allow the Bible to speak into our lives, to convict us and change us. Only then do we receive its power and blessing. Consider what James says about learning God’s Word:

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-- he will be blessed in what he does.

--James 1:22-25

Read Matthew 7:24-27. This is an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus expounded on well-known scripture to deliver its application in daily living and relationships. Notice that the strength of the foundation is not the Word of God, but the life that incarnates it. Where do you struggle most to bring your learning to life through obedient action? How can your small group or class help you shore up your foundation?

When Jesus sent his disciples out into the communities he commissioned them, saying:

As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.
--Matthew 10:7-8

We also have been given the message of salvation. We live under grace, having freely received the gift of salvation and the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. Just as the first disciples were sent to share their knowledge and the gifts given to them, we also are called to pass on all the gifts given to us in Christ.

Read Ephesians 4:11-15. How has God equipped the church and its people to thrive and grow to maturity?

Not all of us have gifts of teaching, preaching, pasturing and prophecy, yet each of us are gifted for ministry in the church. Take turns answering the following question: What knowledge, skill or spiritual gift has God given to you for helping others grow into the image of Christ? How would you like to use this gift?

STEPS IN MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

Open your devotional to the center page to find the “Jesus Journey” path. The signposts mark some steps we can take as Learners, to “grow intentionally in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The rocks along the path indicate the scriptures that guide our steps. Consider where you are on the path. Pray for the Holy Spirit to direct this reflection time. Look up scriptures as you are led. What step will you take to intentionally grow during “The Jesus Journey”? Circle the step and the scripture. If you are led to take a step that is not on the path, write or draw this in. Use this reflection page to guide you through the week. If there is time, share your “next step” with the class.

MARKERS IN THE ROAD

The Bible is often called a love letter, as it is the revelation of God’s love. One author has captured the essence of God’s message of love from Genesis to Revelation. Read aloud the attached “*Father’s Love Letter*”. Later, when you have time, use this as a reference in your study of God’s Word, to remind you that His message to you is the ultimate expression of divine love.

PRAYER AND CLOSING

As you close, pray for the steps we will take to grow intentionally through learning.