

Faith In Community, March 5, 2006
THE JESUS JOURNEY: SEVEN THINGS TO PACK
“Grow Together”, 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13
By Lisa Wohnlich

CHARTING THE COURSE (5 minutes)

"The relationship that exists within the Godhead is the basis for unity in every human relationship, be it marriage, family or the church" P.H.Reardon

"It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:16

“The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that at the core of reality lies not an isolated self but a community of humble love. So self-serving and disunity are not just wrong but doomed. To paraphrase G.K. Chesterton, this reality is like the law of gravity—we can never break it, we can only break ourselves against it.” John Ortberg

PACKING TRAIT #7: RELATER: A Relater models Christ’s love through relationships. (5 minutes for the question below)

How did you learn to love?

COME, FOLLOW ME . . . (20 minutes)

If authentic relationships are central to our becoming the person we were created to be, we need to learn more about this authentic relationship. We need to look no further than the Bible and the Trinity to discover all we need to know about relationships.

The Trinity

In John Orgberg’s article, “The Shyness of God” he makes the following statement:

How do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to each other? Are there lots of arguments over who's the most omniscient, the most omnipresent, or the oldest?

Read “Love’s Shyness” (This is included at the end of this lesson.)

The Trinity is often looked at as a confusing, perhaps unfathomable part of our Christian faith. We often dismiss it simply because we cannot understand it, but we must avoid this tendency. Studying the Trinity gives us a beautifully clear picture of God’s heart, of how much God needs us and how very much God meets our needs.

Do you think that God needs you as much as you need Him? If so, then what does it mean when you are too busy to spend time with Him?

Love

Now that we have a glimpse of how the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit express love towards each other. Let's take a look at perhaps one of the most well known passages of scripture.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

This passage can be broken into three sections.

The Importance of Love

Read vs. 1-3

Review the packing traits we have studied in this series. Based on this passage, where does Relater fit?

The Character of Love

Read vs. 4-7

This passage beautifully describes the perfect love. We are far from perfect people. Reading this passage often convicts us. Share with the group where you most often fail. Rather than sinking in despair, ask the Lord to send the Holy Spirit to help you love more perfectly.

The Stability of Love

Read vs. 8-13

The end of this passage assures us that Love is eternal. If Faith, Hope, and Love will remain, and Love is the greatest of all, what do think Heaven is going to be like? Look at your current life, imagine all the rest being stripped away – all your worries, pain, despair, material treasures etc., leaving only Faith, Hope and Love, – would you spend your life differently?

AT THE CROSSROAD: WHERE “RELATING” CONNECTS WITH LIFE (15 minutes)

Read 1 John 4:16

God **is** Love. The Trinity shows us that love requires a relationship. In the Trinity we see the infinitely perfect relationship – we see love moving inward amongst the three beings in relationship, and then outward as that love overflows onto the rest of the world, drawing it upward towards God Himself and thus meeting God's need for our love.

In addition the Trinity fulfills our needs. In “Searching Issues” Nicky Gumbel describes how each person of the Trinity meets one of our three deepest psychological needs. He says we need a point of reference, a role model, and a facilitator to help us become who we were created to be. Our point of reference comes from knowing who we are as we belong to the Father; Christ becomes our ultimate role model; and the indwelling Holy Spirit becomes our ultimate facilitator.

1. If our relationship with each Person of the Trinity so meets our deepest psychological needs, then could it not be that God, being who he is (a Relater), created us with this in mind? (from a discussion of the Trinity found at <http://www.christianity.co.nz/trinity8.htm>)

2. How does who we are reflect who God is?
3. In authentic relationships are we more like the person we were created to be?

STEPS IN MY PERSONAL JOURNEY (10 minutes)

Open your devotional to the center page to find the “Jesus Journey” path. The signposts mark some steps we can take as Relaters, to “model Christ’s love through relationships.” 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 (5 minutes)

Commit to memorizing Matthew 22:36-40. Write it down on one of the file cards. When you get home, write it down on the other 2 file cards. Place one file card where you will see it when you rise in the morning, one where you’ll see it during the course of your day, and one where you’ll see it when you finally stop to relax at the end of the day.

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:36-40

PRAYER AND CLOSING (5 minutes)

Share prayer concerns and remember to pray for one another this week.

FOR STUDY AT HOME

For Personal Prayer

Pray that the Lord will give you a deeper love for those you encounter every day.

As you listen to people, listen also for what the Spirit is saying. The Holy Spirit will lead you to be with people as Jesus would be with them if he were in your place.” John Ortberg in “The Life You’ve Always Wanted.”

For further reading:

1. “In the Word: The 'Shyness' of God” John Ortberg found online at <http://www.ctlibrary.com/6410>
2. “Perfect Love” by Ruth Meyers
3. “The 5 Love Languages” by Gary Chapman
4. “Exploring Christianity – The Trinity” found online at <http://www.christianity.co.nz/trinity8.htm>

Love's 'Shyness'

An excerpt from "In the Word: The 'Shyness' of God" John Ortberg found online at <http://www.ctlibrary.com/6410>

Dale Bruner, in an essay on the Trinity, begins with the person of the Holy Spirit: One of the most surprising discoveries in my own study of the doctrine and experience of the Spirit in the New Testament is what I can only call the shyness of the Spirit ...

It is, in short, the shyness of love. Bruner points out the ministry of the Spirit in the Gospel of John, a ministry constantly to draw attention not to himself but to the Son—the Spirit comes in the Son's name, bears witness to the Son, glorifies the Son (cf. John 14:26; 16:13).

The ministry of the Spirit could be pictured, Bruner says, by my drawing a stick figure (representing Jesus) on a blackboard. Then, to express what the Spirit does, I stand behind the blackboard, reach around with one hand, and point with a single finger to the image of Jesus: "Look at him, listen to him, learn from him, follow him, worship him, be devoted to him, serve him, love him, be preoccupied with him."

This is what Bruner calls the shyness of the Holy Spirit.

But when we look at the Son, oddly enough we see that he didn't walk around saying, "I am the greatest." He said, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing" (John 8:54). He said he came not to be served but to serve. He submitted to the Spirit, who Mark tells us "drove him into the wilderness." He told the Father in his climactic struggle, "not my will, but yours be done." Jesus, too, has this same "shyness."

Then there is the Father. Twice in the synoptic Gospels we hear the voice of the Father: once at baptism and again at the Transfiguration.

Both times his words are a variation of this message: This is my priceless Son. I am deeply pleased with him. Listen to him!

It is worth noticing, Bruner writes, that this voice does not say, "Listen to me too, after listening to him; don't forget that I'm here too; don't be taken up with my Son."

Because "God the Father is shy, too. The whole blessed Trinity is shy. **Each member of the Trinity points faithfully and selflessly to the other in a gracious circle.**"