

**Daily God Walk
Life of Christ**

**His Ministry
Book 5**

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

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Who You Are As A Child Of God

Perhaps among the greatest disappointments to God has been our lack of understanding who we are. We very well know that we are sinners. Our faults, failures and limitations are glaringly before us. We have come to believe what the world has said we must be. Our environment, family, socio-economic level, and psychologists have all told us what we are and what we are to become. All of this is based upon the limited knowledge and reason of man. What follows is a gathering of scripture based ideas of what we are to God.

We have been held captive in a box that defines who we are as a person without God, and too often we carry that definition over into our life as a Christian. We forget that when we come to God we are “born again” and we become “new creations.” We are no longer held captive by the circumstances that have formed us into the person we have been; Who we are is now defined by the revelation of God’s will to us.

This book contains much of the information That God has given us concerning who we are in him as a new creation.

Affirming your faith in Christ:

Lord, I -here and now- take my stand of faith in You and say that:

1. I choose Jesus Christ as my God (He is Almighty, Creator and Ruler)
2. I choose Jesus Christ as my Savior (He died on the Cross for me)
3. I choose Jesus Christ as my Best Friend. (He Eternally Loves me and Accepts me)
4. I choose Jesus Christ as the most important Person in my life (Only He can give real meaning to my life)
5. I choose Jesus Christ as my Lord (to command and control my life)
6. I choose Jesus Christ as my Eternal Teacher (He knows Everything)
7. I choose Jesus Christ as my Only Guide (Only He is Trustworthy)
8. I choose my position in Christ (He has made of me a Child of God)
9. I choose to be Free in Christ (I am under no restriction to be saved)
10. I choose Victory in Christ (I can do all things He wants me to do)

Thank God I am Free!

Galatians 5:1 – It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

I thank God for what He has provided for me. Through what Jesus Christ did for me on the Cross of Calvary I can claim:

1. Freedom from my Old Sinful Nature
2. Freedom from all hurts, fears, guilt, and shame of my past.
3. Freedom from ignorance, defeat, resentment and condemnation.
4. Freedom from my self-centeredness, selfishness, self-obsession and egotism.
5. Freedom from the need and desire of all addictive substances.
6. Freedom from all compulsive and unhealthy behavior.
7. Freedom from all codependent relationships.

Having received Christ in my heart and life –through Faith, repentance and Confession- I acknowledge who I am (my identity):

1. I am His most wonderful Creation.

- ❖ **Ephesians 2:10** – For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

I am God’s creation, God doesn’t make any trash; I am made in his image for his glory

- ❖ **Psalm 139:13-14** – For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

The hand of the almighty has created me a unique specimen of his creative love – I will not cease to praise him for what he has done.

2. I am in Christ, and Christ is in me

- ❖ **John 14:20** - “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

We have become one with Christ. If I can accept it, I am Christ to those in my world.

3. I am a Child of God.

- ❖ **John 1:12** - “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

God has given me the right to become anything that a child of divine lineage can become.

- ❖ **1 John 3:1** - “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

We are both born and adopted by our Father; every promise he has given and is recorded in his word, is ours.

4. **I am a living Temple of God.**

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 3:16** - “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”

Religions around the world have built temples to house their gods and God has chosen to take up residence on the inside of his people; we are not only the people of God, we are the house of God.

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 6:19** - “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.”

We made a trade. We were living in a house of decay with no eternal hope; God chose to give us a house not made by the will of man, or the hand of man, one that is eternal. As the temple of God we are blessed with eternal life.

5. **I am a Partaker of His Divine Nature.**

- ❖ **2 Peter 1:4** - “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

As children of God we participate in the divine nature. We have been given access to the resources of divinity – to the extent that it is possible in the flesh, we have divine power.

6. I am an extremely significant as a person.

- ❖ **Ephesians 2:10** - “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...”

All of the creative craftsmanship of God has been brought to bear in the creation of man, in his very image.

- ❖ **Psalm 139:14** - “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...”

Not only was the hand of God evident in the original man, he watches over the formation, birth and life of every person who comes into this world; there are no insignificant no-bodies to God.

7. I am a joint-heir with Him of the Glory of the Father.

- ❖ **Romans 8:17** - “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

In this becoming process as the children of God we are also becoming heirs and co-heirs with Christ. As we grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ God releases more of his glorious inheritance into our lives.

8. I am a new person.

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 5:17** - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”

Thank God I am a new creation; I am not what I want to be, neither am I what I was and I am not what I am going to be. I am a new creation that is becoming like him.

- ❖ **Ephesians 4:24** “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life: to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The only way we can progress in this journey of becoming is to “put off” and “put on.” As we put off the old attitude, and adopt a new attitude we are becoming righteous and holy.

9. I am dead to sin.

- ❖ **Romans 6:8-11** - “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Just as Christ through his death defeated the hold of sin, so we through

10. I am victorious over fear.

- ❖ **2 Timothy 1:7** - “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

My confidence is in the power of God and I am not intimidated by this world

11. I am full of goodness, knowledge and able to counsel.

- ❖ **Romans 15:14** - “I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”

God’s word rests in me, therefore it is has made me good and complete and able to counsel others.

12. I am being conformed to His image. I am a prince in life.

- ❖ **Romans 5:17** - “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in and through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

13. I am justified by faith.

- ❖ **Romans 5:1** - “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Justified: just as if I’d not sinned. What a thought.

14. I am not ashamed of the gospel.

- ❖ **Romans 1:16** - "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile"

God's grace and power in me has taken shame and fear out of my life. I am confident in him.

15. I am born again.

- ❖ **John 3:3,5** - "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

16. I am His Ambassador.

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 5:20** - "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

17. I am an earthen vessel of God's treasure. (II Corinthians 4:7)

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 4:7** - "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

18. I am a servant of the new covenant. (II Corinthians 3:6)

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 3:6** - "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

My Characteristics:

1. I am forgiven of all sin

- ❖ 1 John 2:12 - I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.
- ❖ Colossians 2:12 - When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.
- ❖ Ephesians 1:7-8 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

2. I am loved immeasurably

- ❖ John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

3. I am accepted in the Beloved

- ❖ Ephesians 1:6 - To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (KJV).

4. I am pleasing to God

- ❖ Colossians 1:10 - And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

5. I am complete

- ❖ Colossians 1:28 - We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect (complete) in Christ.
- ❖ Colossians 2:10 - You have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

6. I am righteous by His blood

- ❖ 2 Corinthians 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

7. I am holy and blameless

- ❖ Colossians 1:22 - Now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

8. I am sanctified in the truth of God's word

- ❖ John 17:17 - Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

9. I am a saint

- ❖ Colossians 1:2 - To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

❖ Philippians 1:1 - To all the saints In Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.

❖ Ephesians 1:1 - To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.

10. I am as He is in this world

❖ 1 John 4:17 - In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

11. I am Victorious over Satan

❖ James 4:7 - Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

❖ Luke 10:19 - I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

❖ Revelation 12:11 - They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

12. I am Victorious over sin

❖ Romans 6:14 - Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

❖ Romans 6:18 - You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

13. I am more than a conqueror

❖ Romans 8:37 - In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

14. I am an overcomer of the world. I John 5:4

- ❖ 1 John 5:3-4 - This is love for God: To obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

15. **I am Free from all condemnation.**

- ❖ Romans 8:1-2 - Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

16. **I am a resident of Christ's Kingdom**

- ❖ Colossians 1:13-14 - He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

17. **I am bold and confident. Eph. 3:6**

- ❖ Ephesians 3:12 - In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.
- ❖ 1 Timothy 3:13 - Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

18. **I am able to do all things. Phil 4:13**

- ❖ Philippians 4:13 - I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Where I Am Positionally in Christ:

I am saved by His grace

- Ephesians 2:8 - It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.
- Acts 16:31 - Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

I am eternally chosen

- Ephesians 1:4 - He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

I am secure

- Hebrews 13:5 - God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."
- John 6:37 - All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

I am received into God's family

- John 1:12 - To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.
- John 17:9 - I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

I am protected from the evil one

- John 17:15 - My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

I am crucified with Him

- Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- Romans 6:3 - Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

I am buried with Him and

I am raised to walk in newness of life

- Romans 6:4 - We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

I am Free from the law of sin and death

- Romans 8:2 - Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

I am enthroned in heavenly places

- Colossians 3:1 - Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

- Ephesians 2:6 - And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

I am delivered from the domain of darkness

- Colossians 1:13 - He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

I am reconciled to God

- Colossians 1:22 - Now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.
- 2 Corinthians 6:18 - All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

I am provided for according to His riches

- Philippians 4:19 - My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise

- Ephesians 1:13 - You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

I am bought with the Highest Price

- I Corinthians 6:20 - You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

I am inseparable from God's love

- Romans 8:35-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As A Consequence of Who I am, What I am and Where I am:

I am enjoying His peace.

- John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

I am walking in a manner worthy of the Lord.

- Colossians 1:10 - We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

I am considered worthy to suffer shame for His Name.

- Acts 5:41 - The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

I am authorized to have power over demons.

- Luke 9:1,2 - When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach to kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

I am filled with power of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts.1:8 - You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

I am being guided by the Holy Spirit of Truth.

- John 16:13 - When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

I am walking by faith, not by sight.

- II Corinthians 5:7 - We live by faith, not by sight.

I am a sweet aroma of the knowledge of Christ.

- II Corinthians 2:14 - Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and

through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

I am being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory.

- II Corinthians 3:18 - We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

I am being renewed in the inner man day by day.

- II Cor. 4:16 - We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

I am blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

- Eph 1:3 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

I am healed by His stripes.

- Isa. 53:5 - He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.
- I Peter 2:24 - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

His Word Declares That I AM...

1. A child of God (Romans 8:14-16)

2. Redeemed from the hand of the enemy (Psalms 107:2)
3. Forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14)
4. Saved by Grace through Faith (Ephesians 2:8)
5. Justified (Romans 5:1)
6. Sanctified (I Corinthians 5:17)
7. A New Creature (II Corinthians 5:17)
8. Partaker of His Divine Nature (II Peter 1:4)
9. Redeemed from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13)
10. Delivered from the powers of darkness (Colossians 1:13)
11. Led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14)
12. Kept in Safety wherever I go (Psalms 8:14)
13. Getting all my needs met by Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:15)
14. Casting all my cares on Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:7)
15. Strong in the Lord and in the Power of His Might (Ephesians 6:10)
16. Able to do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)
17. An Heir of God and a joint Heir with Jesus (Romans 8:17)
18. An heir to the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:13-14)
19. Able to accomplish in Christ the Lord's Commandments (Deut. 28:12)
20. Blessed Coming in and Blessed going out (Deuteronomy 28:6)
21. An Heir of Eternal Life (1 John 5:11-12)
22. Blessed with all kinds of Spiritual Blessings (Ephesians 1:3)

23. Healed in my soul by the stripes on His Body (1 Peter 2:24)
24. Able to Exercise His Authority over the Enemy (Luke 10:19)
25. The head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13)
26. More than a conqueror (Romans 8:37)
27. Establishing God's Word here on Earth (Matthew 16:19)
28. An Overcomer by the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of His Testimony (Revelation 12:11)
29. Can daily overcome the Devil (1 John 4:4)
30. Not moved by what I see (2 Corinthians 4:18)
31. Walking by Faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)
32. Casting down vain imaginations (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)
33. Bringing every thought into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5)
34. Am transformed by renewing my mind (Romans 12:1, 2)
35. A laborer together with God (2 Corinthians 5:21)
36. The righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21)
37. An imitator of Jesus (Ephesians 5:1)
38. Light to this World (Mathew 5:14)
39. Blessing and praising the Lord at all times (34:1)

Day One

I Believe... Help My Unbelief

Jesus said, “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

- Mark 9:23-24

I think this father is typical of most of us. We do believe, but we’re not sure we truly believe that God will intercede in our situation. I believe God heals and I believe that God works miracles, but I am often afraid that he won’t do it for me.

This sincere father was trying to be totally honest with Jesus. He was so desperate to see his son healed and set free from the demons that afflicted him that he brought him to Jesus. He believed Jesus healed because he not only had heard about it but no doubt he had himself seen Jesus heal others – but now it was different. It was his son that he needed to believe for.

The father cried out, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.” You can hear in his declaration the anguish of years dealing with a problem that he thought would never be resolved. Now there is a chance that the boy might be delivered, and all he had to do was believe.

The pressure was on. He was asking himself, “Do I really believe Jesus can heal?” His answer was yes, he had become convinced that Jesus could heal. His next question was, “Will Jesus heal my boy?” His answer to that question was not nearly as strong. He wanted to believe and he needed to believe, but he just wasn’t sure. In desperation he cried, “Help me overcome my unbelief.”

When we face the situation where we believe Jesus can, but we aren't quite sure he will do it for us, then we must be as honest before God as this sincere father was. Many times I've said "Lord, I believe you can, but I'm not sure I believe you will for me - grant me the grace of faith to believe."

God may not always answer according to our perceived need, but he will always answer according to his plan for us and the situation.

Prayer: Lord, I believe; help me to overcome my unbelief. Grant me the grace of faith for every situation. I ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Message: When we face the situation where we believe Jesus can, but we aren't quite sure he will do it for us, then we must be as honest before God as this sincere father was.

Affirmation: Many times I've said "Lord, I believe you can, but I'm not sure I believe you will for me - grant me the grace of faith to believe."

Reflection: What are some of the reasons we can believe the Lord can do a particular work, but we seem to lack the faith that he will do it for us? When you come up with some answers begin to work on those issues and increase you faith.

My Thoughts:

Day Two

Prayer and Fasting Needed for Great Power

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer [and fasting],

- Mark 9:28-29

Peter, James and John were just returning with Jesus from the Mount of Transfiguration. As they approached the other disciples they saw a crowd around them and they were arguing with the teachers of the law. When the people saw Jesus they gathered around him.

A man in the crowd called out to Jesus asking him to heal his son of demon possession. In asking Jesus to heal his son he said, “I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” Jesus delivered the boy of the demons then went indoors with his disciples.

Once alone with Jesus the disciples asked why they could not drive out the demons. Jesus told them that the power needed to cast out demons required a life committed to prayer and consecration. We have learned that without prayer and consecration there is very little power to minister effectively in the kingdom of God.

What caught my attention about this passage is that while Jesus, with Peter, James and John, were on the mountain having a spiritual revelation these other disciples were down in the valley disputing with religious leaders. Isn’t that so much like us today? We enjoy discussing the fine points of our doctrine more than we enjoy spending time in prayer seeking the face of God.

The message of this passage seems to be that we are to be vigilant in our pursuit of the kingdom. We must not become sidetracked by those who would argue the finer points of the law while the spiritual work of the kingdom goes undone.

There is a great work to be done in the kingdom and we must commit ourselves to always being prepared to deal with the evil which is around us. That means we must set aside specific times of prayer and consecration so that we are synchronized with what the Spirit of the Lord is trying to accomplish.

Prayer: Lord, help me to realize the need to have a consistent prayer life so that I will always be prepared to do kingdom work. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We must set aside specific times of prayer and consecration so that we are synchronized with what the Spirit of the Lord is trying to accomplish.

Affirmation: I seek to be in synch with what the Spirit of the Lord is trying to accomplish today and I am committed to living consecrated and prepared to serve in whatever way he leads.

Reflection: Are you committed being saved or are you committed to serving in the kingdom? Some ask, "What is the difference?" Give it some thought and see if you can figure it out.

My Thoughts:

Day Three

When Is Faith Enough Faith?

The disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”- Matthew 17:19-21

How many times have you heard it said, or perhaps have said yourself, “Faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains?” We have all probably heard and said that more times than we can count. But there is another side to this mustard seed idea. That is, “When is faith enough faith?”

The disciples had been commissioned to go from village to village preaching the kingdom and while they were doing that they were given the ability to heal the sick and cast out demons. They had returned with great confidence in this new-found power. Now they are faced with an embarrassing situation. They couldn’t cast out a demon.

They had probably tried every “spiritual gimmick” they could think of but this persistent demon wouldn’t budge. Then, to top it all off Jesus told them they couldn’t get it done because their faith was inadequate. And, adding insult to injury, he compared their faith to a mustard seed and it was still too small.

When is faith enough faith? There were a few times when Jesus commented on those who had little faith and each of those times he was addressing people who should have had great faith, but in frustrated disappointment he would say, “You have so little faith.”

Faith is enough faith when we are not concerned about our personal reputation. Faith is enough when we are committed to God's will in the outcome, whether we are recognized as a healer or not. Faith is enough when we are focused on the approval of the Father rather than having the approval and recognition of people.

Faith is enough when we are doing the Father's will without pride when we see the victory and without disappointment when his will is not according to our expectation.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace of trusting you always. Help me to be measuring my faith but to be faithful to you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Faith is enough when we are doing the Father's will without pride when we see the victory and without disappointment when his will is not according to our expectation.

Affirmation: Enough faith is when I do what I am called to do with the firm expectation that God will do what he said he would if I obey him.

Reflection: Give some thought to these statements: Faith is enough faith when we are not concerned about our personal reputation. Faith is enough when we are committed to God's will in the outcome, whether we are recognized as a healer or not. Faith is enough when we are focused on the approval of the Father rather than having the approval and recognition of people.

My Thoughts:

Day Four

Discipleship Training Requires Focused Attention

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. – Mark 9:30

This verse is a great lesson on the value of small groups. Jesus could not take his disciples deeper into understanding when the crowds were pressing around him. He needed time to talk with them individually and to answer their questions.

I enjoy the corporate worship service when large crowds come together to celebrate their recovery from sin through faith in Christ. I love the singing, praying and the preaching of the Word of God. I wouldn't trade the joy of corporate worship for anything.

Neither would I trade the value gained from meeting in small discipleship groups for anything else. Jesus realized the value of small group teaching and that is why we read where he would take his disciples to a place of solitude where they could pray together and he could teach them the meaning of his teaching.

Small group meetings have been a part of my ministry for many years. I have discovered that real spiritual growth comes out of the experience of feeling safe to ask questions and share concerns among a group of people who are on the same journey of faith.

We all need responsible Christian friends who will open the Word of God to us taking us deeper in understanding his plan for our lives. I love my personal time with the Lord and I gain strength and faith by spending time alone with Him, but there is also great value in having friends with whom we can share our faith and our doubts.

I recently met with a friend for breakfast. We had a good time of fellowship then he began to ask questions. He would say something like, "Let me run this by you," then he would proceed to pose a problem or situation he was facing in his life. I was blessed that our relationship was at the point where we could trust each other with our deepest concerns.

Practice building relationships where you can grow and help others to grow in maturity and understanding.

Prayer: Lord, help to always see my need of others in my life. Amen.

Message: We all need responsible Christian friends who will open the Word of God to us taking us deeper in understanding his plan for our lives. I love my personal time with the Lord, but there is also great value in having friends with whom we can share our faith and our doubts.

Affirmation: I treasure my friends with whom I meet, share my life issues and pray together. That is koinonia.

Reflection: One of the beautiful components of small groups is accountability. When groups of people gather for fellowship, prayer and study of God's word, intimacy is developed. Think about how this concept has affected you.

My Thoughts:

Day Five

*Disciples Didn't Understand
About His Death*

He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask about it. – Mark 9:31-32

I was once in a ministry project that was doing well, but things were about to change. We had some internal difficulty and our facilities were being sold. There was a stressful time of trying to figure out how we were going to continue the ministry project. We had birthed this effective project and I felt ownership.

Then a man came by who said that he felt the Lord had told him it was over, the project was dead. We should bury it and move on.

We didn't agree with that at all. In fact we spent many months after that trying to resuscitate the work, but it really was dead and we finally had to abandon it. We were devastated. We felt we would spend the rest of our lives in that ministry and now it was over.

That must have been a little of what the disciples felt. Jesus was explaining to them that he would be betrayed and killed. They couldn't receive it. After all, they had left their fishing boats to follow him. He was all they had; now he was telling them that he would soon die. They heard the dying part but not the resurrection part.

In their despair they didn't see the bigger picture. The message he was giving them was not just about the death, but it was primarily about the resurrection. If it had not been for his death and resurrection the effect

of his life would be short-lived and he would just be a foot note in history - but he would also rise on the third day and it was his resurrection which would bring hope to the world.

When we feel like our work has died and our influence is destroyed we must take heart. Everyone I know who has grown and matured in service to God has gone through the death and burial process in their walk - and the faithful ones also experienced the resurrection.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the ability to see the joy that is just beyond sorrow. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Everyone I know who has grown and matured in service to God has gone through the death and burial process in their walk - and the faithful ones also experienced the resurrection.

Affirmation: I have learned that when I face challenges head on and persevere I am building character and the character I have developed gives me hope.

Reflection: How many times have we struggled with a task and finally gave up then someone comes along with just a little more effort and gets the job done? We are not called to just be starters we are also called to be finishers. Sometimes finishing well means letting go and letting God do the resurrection work.

My Thoughts:

Day Six

Where Did That Come From?

So that we won't offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-dracma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.

- Matthew 17:27

This passage speaks of a time when the disciples of Jesus were approached about paying the temple tax. When they were asked if Jesus paid that tax the disciples replied, "Yes, he does." But they also knew that they "lived by faith" and they knew there was no money for the tax.

Peter approached Jesus about the tax and Jesus told him to go fishing and the fish he caught would have a coin in its mouth and that coin would pay the tax. Where did the coin come from? It was God's provision.

Many years ago I owned a struggling business which seemed to be about 90 days from going under. In the middle of that I had a heart attack. Now, not only was my business not doing well, but I had this pile of bills from the doctor and the hospital. I was in despair and didn't know what to do.

One Saturday morning I was eating breakfast at a local restaurant while reading a book by Oral Roberts. It was an older book written in the earlier part of his ministry. I don't remember the title of the book but it was about trusting God to provide all of our needs. One phrase in the book jumped out at me as if God were speaking it himself. The phrase was, "Let God be your source."

I was so moved by that word that tears came to my eyes as I prayed, “Lord, I want to trust you to be my source, but I need you to give me a sign that you want me to surrender all to you and simply trust you.”

When I left the restaurant I went by my shop to pick up the mail. There was an unexpected letter from a friend. When I opened it there was a check for \$1000. I had never in my life gotten a check like that. It was unexpected and it was simply a gift. God had given me a sign.

Prayer: Lord, it isn’t easy to trust you when I face difficult times. Grant me the faith and the grace to trust you at all times. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we are obedient God will provide and often he provides in the most unexpected way. Trust him and you will see just how good his provision can be.

Affirmation: I have learned that trusting God in the good times gives me confidence to trust him in the hard times.

Reflection: What do you think was the purpose for Jesus providing the tax money in such a dramatic manner? Was it just to show off his power? Was it yet another sign to the disciples that he was the Christ? Or was it simply his way of paying the temple tax? Why do you think he did that way?

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Who Is First and Who Is Last?

“What were you arguing about on the road?” They kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” – Mark 9:33-35

I know a pastor who has a man carry his Bible to the pulpit when he is ready to preach. Then the man will stand beside the platform until the sermon is done. He will then carry the Bible as he follows the pastor to his office. When he is there he dutifully stands outside the office door waiting to serve.

Of those two men, who was the greatest? According to what Jesus said the man called “Pastor” was the least and the one who was his servant was the greatest. That is a lesson we all must learn; if we are to lead we must first learn to serve.

The disciples were no different than others around Jesus. They were the closest to him and they had no doubt that when Jesus set up his kingdom on earth they would be leaders in his kingdom. At another time there was a discussion about who would sit on his right who would be on his left. In fact, the mother of James and John had come to Jesus to request that her sons hold those positions.

Such is the nature of man. We tend to desire position, rank and power. We have seen others in authority and we are envious of that position. It was only natural that his followers would feel that way.

But Jesus was not forming a cabinet for an earthly kingdom that he could, with the might of government, rule over men. He was calling out men who would

learn the lessons of servanthood and who would give themselves for the kingdom which would not perish over generations with the change of leadership, but which would endure for eternity.

We have been called into that kingdom. We have been given the position of servant. Some of the servants in this kingdom lead other servants, but all of us are servants none the less and no one servant has the authority to lord it over another servant. We are called not to be first but to be last and servant of all.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to serve others in the kingdom well and the humility to accept the place where you put me. Amen.

Message: We have been given the position of servant. Some of the servants in this kingdom lead other servants, but all of us are servants none the less and no one servant has the authority to lord it over another.

Affirmation: God has called many to serve in a capacity of leadership. I have learned that whether serving to lead, or serving another who leads, I am still just a servant of the Lord and not a lord over servants.

Reflection: We would do well to remember the statement of Jesus, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." How do you see that statement being fulfilled in your life? What does it mean to be a servant leader?

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

Called To Be Children

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." - Mark 9:36-37

Jesus was no doubt a bit frustrated with his disciples who were arguing among themselves about who would be great in the kingdom. In response Jesus pulled a child to himself and began to teach them about kingdom position. He told them they must be as children themselves to have a part in his kingdom.

Now Jesus is taking the concept just a bit further. He had just been teaching about servanthood and now he was expanding that to include serving even the children.

He was teaching them that to receive the children, the very least among them, was equivalent to receiving him. Have you ever seen a person in a position of authority stop and give his undivided attention to a child? When that happens it not only affects the child but it also affects all those who see it.

Do you remember where President Bush was when the attacks of 911 occurred? Yes, he was in a classroom reading a story to elementary aged children. Those children will never forget the day that the president of the United States took time to sit in their class and read to them.

I don't think Jesus was just talking about the children. I believe he was talking about having a servant attitude toward all those whose station in life may not be the same as ours as well as those to whom

life has been cruel and left them impoverished and many times homeless.

Serving others is serving Jesus. Time used in helping those who are weaker and less fortunate is not time spent it is time invested. Yes, it is time invested in eternal stock with dividends that only eternity can reveal. Serving others is serving him and serving him is serving God. Jesus is teaching us how we can not only gain favor with others but he is teaching us to gain favor with God.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to see a persons place in life but to see their need - and grant me the grace to serve their need. Amen.

Message: Jesus was talking about having a servant attitude toward all those whose station in life may not be the same as ours as well as those to whom life has been cruel and left them impoverished and many times homeless.

Affirmation: I have found that serving others, regardless of their station in life, gives me great personal peace and a sense of helping God to achieve his purposes for his kingdom on earth.

Reflection: Jesus not only taught that we should become as little children, but he also taught that we must welcome those weaker ones because in doing so we are in fact welcoming him. How can you see that concept working out in your own life?

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

Watch Out For the Weak Ones

If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

- Matthew 18:6-7

Opportunities for offense are abundant, it's just a part of life, but Jesus is telling us to be careful not to offend one of the weaker ones. He had just given instruction about becoming as little children, now he is telling us to be careful not to offend the children.

This is a multi-layered instruction given by Jesus. First he is telling us to become as little children; then he is telling us to welcome the little children, which would include also those who are weaker; finally he is telling us that we must be careful not to offend the children, or weaker ones.

The message seems to be that we are to speak to others as we would like others to speak to us and to do the things we would like to see others do. If we live what we talk and consider how what we say affects others we may discover that we provide very few opportunities for people to be offended with us.

One technique I have used in talking to people is to first think about the outcome I want to see. Then I ask myself how I would respond if I were hearing the message through the lips of another. Would I be just a little angry? Would I be put on the defensive? Or would I be inspired to respond in a positive manner?

To be honest with you I don't always do that well, but I seem to hit it more often than miss it. The result is that the message you are trying to convey is received without having to go through so many obstacles.

Finally, become as a little child and welcome the children; then be very careful not to offend one of these weaker ones. All of this requires an abundant measure of Grace, but as you practice this grace you will find that his grace is more than abundant.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to be careless about what I say and do. Grant me the grace of considering others first. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We are to speak to others as we would like others to speak to us and to do the things we would like to see others do. If we live what we talk and consider how what we say affects others we may discover that we provide very few opportunities for people to be offended with us.

Affirmation: I follow the instructions of Christ to become as a child, to welcome the children and others who are weaker, and to be careful not to offend the weaker ones.

Reflection: A good way to minimize offense is to think of how others might receive what we are saying and how we would respond if we were hearing the same message given in the same way. Practice thinking about how what you are saying can be interpreted and ask, "Is this the way I would want to be talked to?"

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

A Radical Remedy For Sin

If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. - Matthew 18:8-9

For most of us, if we started chopping off the members of our body that led us to sin there wouldn't be much left. Do you think Jesus meant to literally cut off our hands or feet, or to gouge out our eye? I'm not so sure that he did mean it literally, but he certainly was telling us to surrender that member of our body to him as though it were dead.

The apostle Paul addresses this issue in Romans 6. In verse 11 he writes, "count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." He goes on to say in verse 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." Paul is agreeing with Jesus on this point. He is saying that we must "kill" the desire for sin. We do that by submitting ourselves to Christ and submitting to his life in us as if our old nature was truly dead.

One of the biggest problems we have in considering our old nature dead is that every cell in our body is flesh, and that flesh cries out for gratification. Have you ever heard the expression, "Flopping around like a chicken with its head cut off?" Have you ever seen a chicken with its head cut off? Strangest thing you've ever seen. The body will run around for bit jumping with the wings flapping as if to fly. It just lasts a few seconds but it is a little frightening to see.

Our old nature is like the body of the chicken flopping around, except it doesn't last for just a few seconds, it lasts as long as this flesh lives. So what do we do? We must count ourselves as dead. We must not listen to the cravings of the flesh for gratification. Surrender your entire body to God as if it were the body of Christ - because it is.

Prayer: Lord, I don't always do well at considering my old nature dead. Grant me the grace to live in Christ and surrender my old nature. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Message: We must count ourselves as dead. We must not listen to the cravings of the flesh for gratification. Surrender your entire body to God as if it were the body of Christ - because it is.

Affirmation: I have learned that living after the desires of the flesh leads to sin and separation from God, but living after the Spirit leads to righteousness and eternal life.

Reflection: Do you think Jesus meant for us to literally cut off the members of our body which lead us to sin? If we did that we would certainly not sin with that member, but, what about the thing that was in our heart which caused our member to sin? What do we do about that?

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

The Value of One Sheep

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? - Matthew 18:12

We have all heard the story of the one lost sheep and the effort of the shepherd to find it and return it safely to the fold, but have you ever thought of this story in the context of these verses in Matthew 18 that we have been examining? I think there is more to this little story than we usually see.

Jesus prefaced this story in verse 10 by making reference to the value of the weaker ones. "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in Heaven." Then he gives the story of the lost sheep.

On one hand it looks foolish for the shepherd to leave the 99 sheep unattended while he goes looking for the one lost sheep; but on the other hand the story is not about the 99 it is about the value of the one which is lost. There is value in every person who is in the kingdom, or who is potentially in the kingdom.

My wife and I have been called to work with a group of people that well illustrates this point. We have been working with people who are in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction (and with people who should be in recovery) for many years. One of the things we have learned is that not everyone attributes the same value to these people that we do.

They are the epitome of the crowd which moved Jesus to compassion when he saw that they were

harassed, helpless and like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). We have discovered that when you go through all that you must to find the one sheep which is ready for change that sheep is forever grateful that a shepherd has found it.

Take another look around you. Do you see folks that you might have looked down upon in the past because you didn't see them as Jesus sees them? I would encourage you to go after the lost sheep.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart for those who are weaker among us and those ensnared by the evil one. I want to be a sheep finder. Amen.

Message: Take another look around you. Do you see folks that you might have looked down upon in the past because you didn't see them as Jesus sees them? I would encourage you to go after the lost sheep.

Affirmation: Every sheep in the flock has value, but the one which strays and becomes lost requires more care and attention. I have chosen to care for lost sheep.

Reflection: The parable of the lost sheep brings up some interesting ideas to consider. First, there are the 99 that are still safe - what is done to see that they are safe while the shepherd looks for the one lost sheep. Then there is the lost sheep itself. What constitutes being lost? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

How To Win Over A Brother

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. - Matthew 18:15-16

How many relationship problems would be avoided if we just obeyed this one passage? It is true that sometimes people are purposefully trying to be offensive, but it is also true that many offenses are accidental and can be reconciled by simply approaching the offending party in a conciliatory manner.

I once had a brother come to a board meeting at the church to complain that I had snubbed him in the foyer after church. He was offended, and I couldn't figure out why. The board members heard him then reminded him that there were many people who were trying to get to the pastor for a hug or a handshake and he was greeting as many as he possibly could.

This brother could have avoided offence if he had just approached me at a time when my attention wasn't already focused on those around me. I certainly didn't intend to snub him, I truly like the brother a lot and would have not done anything to offend him.

On the other hand there are those times when someone will do something that is offensive and they too need to be approached in a conciliatory manner. If they see their error and repent you have won a brother. If they don't, then it is important to take the next step and approach them with a trusted leader to mediate between you.

Unfortunately, all too often we don't approach the one who has offended us but we take the offense to others and share our hurt with them with the hope that we will build support among our friends to stand against the offensive one.

If you want peace, do it God's way - If you want personal vindication at the expense of others do it your way.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to judge the motives of others before I counsel with them about my offence. Help me more committed to settling the offence than being vindicated. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Affirmation: I have made it a practice to not take offense at those who have been offensive choosing rather to take my concern to the other person with the hope that there has just been a misunderstanding.

Reflection: To avoid offense try taking the position that you have been misunderstood, or you misunderstood the other person and approach the other person with a conciliatory tone and see if you can't win over a brother.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

The Power to Bind and Loose

I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. - Matthew 18:18

We have heard this passage addressed many times, but I think most of us forget that Jesus spoke these words in the context of maintaining proper relationships with our brothers and sisters.

The Amplified Bible has an interesting way of approaching this passage. It reads, "Truly I tell you, whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven."

It is good to remember that when we begin to speak "binding" words about a brother or sister we are to be establishing on earth what is established in heaven. We should keep that in mind when we are pronouncing judgments on others. The Message reads, "Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this." That is powerful.

Is Jesus really telling us that we have the ability to affect another for eternity by the way we speak to them and speak about them? I'm not sure that is what is saying, neither am I sure he is not saying that. I do believe there is a serious caution being given here relative to the way we handle our relationships and how we settle disagreements.

If I am going to bind something to a brother or sister I am going to do my best to bind to them hope, grace, generosity and other gifts which reflect the nature of God.

The other side of this equation is the "loosing" side. What we loose on earth is loosed in heaven. The original word means to dissolve, to melt or to put off. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we found ways to dissolve conflicts, to melt away offense and to put off hurt feelings? Something to think about.

Prayer: Lord, help me to realize the words I speak to and about others are eternal. Help me to impart hope, grace, generosity and other gifts that reflect your nature. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Message: Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 18:18 in the context of maintaining proper relationships with our brothers and sisters. If we are going to bind something to a brother or sister we must do our best to bind to them hope, grace, generosity and other gifts that reflect the nature of God.

Affirmation: I have chosen to speak words of grace and hope over others binding them to the promises of God and loosening them from bindings of evil, fear and doubt.

Reflection: Give some thought to how this devotion explains "binding" and "loosing." How do you think your words could have an eternal effect on others?

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

The Power of Agreement

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. – Matthew 18:19

There is tremendous power in agreement. By ourselves we are often a lone voice crying in the wilderness, but when we join with other voices who speak the same message we speak we begin to become a team and a team can do more than the same number of individuals can do alone.

Most of us enjoy some type of music. In fact, I am listening to a music CD as I write this. Beautiful music is based on the principle that Jesus is teaching about being in agreement.

The Greek word translated “agree” is *sumphoneo*. Does that sound like another word we commonly use? That’s right, “symphony.” A symphony is made up of a number of instruments which read and play the same music that is written on a music sheet. There are many instruments and each instrument must play its part, but they are all reading the same script from the written music.

The trombone does not sound like the piano and the violin does not sound like the bass, but when they are playing the same music in harmony they produce a symphony that is pleasant to the ears and restful to the soul.

Jesus seems to be saying that we must come into agreement by having a common source for our actions. Remember, this passage was written in the context of dealing with relationships, even though it has other far reaching applications.

Whether we are trying to work out relationships, or just trying to achieve the purposes of the kingdom, we must make sure that we are reading the same music. We don't all have to sound alike, or to say things in the same way, but we must all be speaking the truth from the common source of God's word.

There is power in agreement, and that power is multiplied when we are in agreement on what the word of God has to say on a given subject. We should gather and practice being in agreement just as a symphony practices their music.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be in harmony with your word and others.

Message: There is power in agreement, and that power is multiplied when we are in agreement on what the word of God has to say on a given subject. We should gather and practice being in agreement just as a symphony practices their music.

Affirmation: I purpose to be in harmonic agreement with my brothers and sisters so that the purposes of our Lord may be completed in us and through us.

Reflection: How does being in agreement with others like the instruments in an orchestra? Is every instrument the same? Are they all the same shape? Can each make its own music if chose? How are we like the instruments in an orchestra?

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

Gather In His Name and He Will Be There

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. - Matthew 18:20

A brother and I were talking about a meeting we recently attended. Speaking about a certain person he said, "Didn't you just feel the presence of the Lord when he walked in?" Well, yes I did. The reason we felt the presence of the Lord was that we were gathered together in a common faith and in the name of the Lord.

We can have faith and stand alone. There are times that is required of us, but that is not the norm. We were made to be in relationship with others and when we are our faith is made stronger.

I think most of us have had times when we have had to stand alone in our faith and those were lonely times. But the times that give us most comfort are those when we are with others sharing the faith that binds us into the family of God.

Some time ago I did a study on the life of Elijah and made a startling discovery. As great a prophet as he was, with the hand of God so obviously upon him, he still fell prey to bouts of depression. It seems that he would be on the mountain of victory then slide down to the valley of despair. The one thing I noticed about him was that he was almost always alone. It was like he was the lone ranger fighting evil all by himself.

One time he was so discouraged that he told God that he was the only faithful one out there. God responded by saying, "I've got 7000 just like you who have not bowed their knee to Baal." It seems that he was discouraged because he was always standing alone.

When Elijah was gone he was replaced with Elisha. An interesting thing about Elisha is that you often read of him being in the company of the prophets and even consulting with other prophets on the best course of action. Something else I noticed is that you don't read where Elisha was discouraged or depressed. You also read where he did more miracles.

What am I saying? There is strength in uniting together with other believers and besides the natural benefits, Jesus usually shows up.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always remember my need of others and their need of your gifting in me. I ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Message: There is strength in uniting together with other believers and besides the natural benefits, Jesus usually shows up.

Affirmation: I follow the example of the book of Acts and gather often with others to discuss the Scripture, pray together and share the good things God is doing among us.

Reflection: Try to answer this question: Why didn't Elijah know about the 7000 who had never bowed their knee to Baal? Give some thought to the differences between Elijah and Elisha and what may have contributed to Elisha's success in ministry.

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

How Often Should We Forgive?

Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” - Matthew 18:21-22

Peter’s question about how many times should we forgive an offender is similar to the question of what to do after we have turned the other cheek. The point is not about keeping score, but it is about forgiving and not taking offense.

The message seems to be that we are to have an attitude of forgiveness for all people at all times. If a person has done something that is offensive to us, whether it was intentional or accidental, we have the obligation to forgive them. We are obligated to God to forgive them; we are obligated to the offender to forgive them; and we are obligated to ourselves to forgive them.

It is alarming how many relationships are broken over people being unwilling to forgive. A few years ago there was a murder in the area where I lived. There were few clues as to who did it until finally the case broke open. Two brothers had gotten an inheritance from their father and one brother felt that he was being cheated by his brother in the settlement. They argued over it until finally one brother became so enraged that he shot his own brother.

The craziest thing about this story is not that one brother killed the other, as bad as that is; but the craziest thing is that the surviving brother got no benefit from the murder because he was put in prison for the rest of his life.

This story is not typical, thank God, but it does demonstrate the point that not being able to turn things loose and to forgive those who have offended us winds up affecting us much more than the one who offended. When we don't release others from their errors then we carry the burden of their mistake.

Don't count the offense waiting for that magic number to be reached so you can respond to the offense, but rather practice forgiving the offender. Give the grace you would like to receive.

Prayer: Grant me a spirit of forgiveness so that I may forgive those who are offensive to me. Amen.

Message: When we don't release others from their errors then we carry the burden of their mistake. Don't count the offense waiting for that magic number to be reached so you can respond to the offense, but rather practice forgiving the offender. Give the grace you would like to receive.

Affirmation: I don't count the opportunities for offence waiting for the right time to respond, but rather, I count every offensive behavior an opportunity to show grace.

Reflection: The message of forgiveness is not about keeping score but about granting grace to the offensive ones. Practice giving grace to those who give you opportunity to take offense.

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

A Lesson in Forgiveness

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denari. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.”

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

The master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brothers from your heart.

- Matthew 18:23-34

This story represents the debt we owe for our sin. It is a debt we could never repay, but because we humbly came to God asking for mercy he extended it to us. We are forgiven.

Jesus introduces an interesting idea in this story. Is it possible that the debt of sin I owed, and was canceled by the mercy of God, could be restored to me if I do not forgive others when they offend me? Think about as you consider whether we should forgive others of their offences toward you.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be grateful for the forgiveness you gave me and grant me the grace to forgive those who offend me. Amen.

Message: Is it possible that the debt of sin I owed, and was canceled by the mercy of God, could be restored to me if I do not forgive others when they offend me? We should at least give that idea some thought as we consider whether we should forgive others of their offences toward us.

Affirmation: I realize the value of the gift of forgiveness I have received, therefore I offer that same gift to those who have been offensive to me. I forgive because I have been forgiven.

Reflection: In the story Jesus tells the message of forgiveness is made very clear: We will not be forgiven unless we are willing to forgive. That means on a personal level, a societal level, a governmental level, and on a global level. The spirit of forgiveness should know no boundaries.

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

Don't Be Quick To Reject Others

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us.” - Mark 9:38-40

I remember my mom telling about how she came to be in a particular arm of the body of Christ. Back in the 1930's when a tent revival brought out most of the people in a community because they didn't have much else to, there was a tent revival in the area where my mom lived.

She attended that revival meeting and saw God move in a mighty way, but she noticed that some of their doctrine was different than what she had been taught. She went up to the preacher at the end of the meeting and confronted him with some scriptures she felt would refute what he was teaching.

That preacher did a pretty good job of explaining those verses to mom so she went home and asked her pastor to explain the same scriptures to her. When he asked why she wanted to know about those verses she told him about attending the tent revival. Her pastor got angry and told her she was to stay away from those people because they were of the devil. Well, she didn't stay away and in the end she began going to another church.

The mistake that pastor made was that he thought he had a monopoly on understanding the Bible and anyone who didn't have the same understanding that he had must be of the devil. That was the problem the

disciples had. They thought that just because these other guys weren't traveling with them they should be condemned.

We must remember that there is room in the kingdom of God for a lot of variety and we must be careful not to judge others just because they prefer a slightly different variety. John Wesley used to say, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials freedom."

Prayer: Lord, help me to see how great is your kingdom, and grant me the grace to accept those whose understanding may not be exactly as mine. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: There is room in the kingdom of God for a lot of variety and we must be careful not to judge others just because they prefer a slightly different variety. John Wesley used to say, "In essentials unity, in non essentials freedom."

Affirmation: I have been judged, and because I learned the pain of being misunderstood and judged by others I have become very careful about judging another just because they are a bit different.

Reflection: A thought to remember; When we are judging another what does that say about us? It seems the core of judging others requires us to place a motive on their actions and that would imply that we can read their heart and mind, and we can't do that so let's not judge.

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

The Value of the Kingdom

He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” - Luke 10:2-3

There is a similar passage in Matthew 9 where Jesus is moved with compassion when he sees that the people are harassed, helpless and like sheep without a shepherd. In that passage he also told them to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his field. He followed that request by commissioning the 12 to go from village to village preaching the kingdom, healing the sick and the demonized.

In this passage Jesus is sending out another group of disciples. “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go” (v1). This time he is sending out 72 instead of 12.

It should be noted that Jesus was not sending his disciples out with just a rosy picture. Certainly they would have the anointing to preach the kingdom and to do miracles, but they would also be subject to the same scrutiny as Jesus and they would be as sheep among wolves.

There is a lesson he is trying to give us in the sheep and wolves analogy. Why did he call them sheep? He was sending them out to do a powerful ministry, why didn't he call them lions? Certainly they would be out on the field where they needed that kind of strength. Yet, he called them sheep. Was he saying, “Trust me as the sheep trust the shepherd”?

We, as humans, have the tendency when we see the enemy to rise up and resist with all of our might. We

even try to get the upper hand if we see the enemy soon enough. But Jesus said they were to be as sheep when the wolves attack.

God is not calling us to resist and to fight, he is simply calling us to serve, share the gospel and when appropriate release healing and deliverance to those who are ready to receive. Wolves will come, but that is not our worry. We must trust Him as sheep trust the shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to surrender to your will and your way and to trust you as sheep trust their shepherd. Amen.

Message: God is not calling us to resist and to fight, he is simply calling us to serve, share the gospel and when appropriate release healing and deliverance to those who are ready to receive. Wolves will come, but that is not our worry. We must trust Him as sheep trust the shepherd.

Affirmation: I know I am a sheep and not a lion. But I also know that I have the Spirit of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Reflection: Give some thought to question of why Jesus told the disciples to be as sheep, rather than lions. Even though he was giving them great power, he still wanted them to have a gentle spirit. Think about how that applies to you.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

Halfhearted Followers

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head."

- Luke 9:57-58

Why do you think the man wanted to follow Jesus and why do you think Jesus answered the way he did? We aren't given much of a clue as to why the man wanted to follow Jesus, but we may get an idea from the response of Jesus and the context of this passage.

When Jesus explained that he didn't even have a place to go for rest and refreshing the man seems to fade away. We have no record of him following Jesus. Perhaps the man thought that Jesus had a palace somewhere, what with all this talk about a kingdom there must be a palace. Or maybe he thought that Jesus at least had a mansion and perhaps he could just fit in somewhere.

Luke goes on to record a few others who would follow Jesus if the circumstances were just right:

He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." - Luke 9:57-62.

These all seem to be reasonable requests, but let's look a little closer. The first man was disappointed because there wasn't any real advantage to following Jesus. The second man wasn't wanting to go to his father's funeral, he was saying, "When my father dies I will follow you." The third man was wanting to go home and raise his children then he would follow Jesus.

We should give thought to the validity of the reasons we aren't ready to surrender all to God and his kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to follow you wholeheartedly and to not be distracted by this world. I ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We should give thought to the validity of the reasons we aren't ready to surrender all to God and his kingdom.

Affirmation: I have chosen to follow Jesus regardless of what changes I have to make and what things I have to give up.

Reflection: It would be good to ask yourself, "What am I willing to give up and what am I willing to live without in order to follow Christ with my whole heart." My experience shows that following Christ with a whole heart will cost you much so carefully consider the cost before you make any promises.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

Streams of Living Water

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

- John 7:37-38

In Scripture water, particularly flowing water, speaks of giving life and spiritual refreshing. Isaiah writes in chapter 44, “I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground” (3).

Isaiah goes on in the next verse to clarify that he is talking about a time of spiritual refreshing. He writes, “I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow like poplar trees by the flowing streams. One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘the Lord’s,’ and will take the name of Israel” (vs4-5).

The idea of spiritual refreshing being likened to water was a concept with which the Jews of Jesus day were familiar. Zechariah writes in 13:1, “On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and impurity.” He went on to say that, “On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter” (14:8).

The idea of flowing water had long been associated with cleansing, but it was always flowing from somewhere else; a stream, a river, a spring. Jesus was introducing an entirely new concept; life giving waters flowing from out of the inner parts of the believer.

Isaiah told us that God would pour out his Spirit on the people. Joel said the same thing in Joel 2:28, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." These prophets spoke of a time when God's spirit would be given to all who would believe.

We who have received Christ have been given His Spirit. It is that Spirit within that is a river of life which flows out to the world. We are streams of life.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the life of the Holy Spirit that flows from within me. Help me to share this life giving flow with others so that they may have your life in them. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We who have received Christ have been given His Spirit. It is that Spirit within that is a river of life which flows out to the world. We are streams of life.

Affirmation: I have become a river of life - it is the life of God flowing from within me. This river of life is for the healing and restoration of others.

Reflection: Notice this; Jesus did not say that we would be containers of the water of life like a lake or a cistern, but he said we would be rivers flowing with life. Ask yourself this question: Am I a river of life for those around me?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

Cast Stones Freely If You Are Without Sin!

If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. - John 8:7

Jesus had again gone to the temple to teach. The people were gathered around him to hear him when the Pharisees brought a woman before him that they had caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

The Pharisees were hoping Jesus would answer the question so they would have something with which to accuse him. Perhaps they thought he would just tell them to let her go, or at least give her a lesser sentence, after all stoning is rather harsh. But Jesus didn't even answer their question.

Jesus knew their heart and he knew that their righteousness was only a front and that they were indeed sinners just like the others who had gathered that day. Instead of answering them he just bent down and wrote something on the ground. No one knows what he wrote but some speculate that he simply began to list the sins that those accusers were themselves guilty of.

His only answer was, "If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Somewhere between what Jesus said and what he wrote on the ground he got through to these men who were quick to accuse this helpless woman and one by one they began to walk away.

There are two things that stick out to me in this story. One is the question of where was the man who was participating in the adultery. The other is that Jesus never condoned the woman's sin, he simply forgave her and told her to quit sinning.

There is a very important lesson on grace and mercy here. Before we ever feel that it is our place to become judge and jury of others we must be sure that we ourselves are not lawbreakers. If Jesus doesn't condemn repentant sinners, then neither should we.

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful you didn't judge me but took upon yourself my judgment that I might live. Amen.

Message: Before we ever feel that it is our place to become judge and jury of others we must be sure that we ourselves are not lawbreakers. If Jesus doesn't condemn repentant sinners, then neither should we.

Affirmation: I am learning to judge myself before I ever think about judging others. I am not without sin so I don't carry stones.

Reflection: What do you think Jesus wrote in the sand? He could have asked, "Where is the man?" Or he might have just been listing sins he knew the others were guilty of. What do you think? Consider how you feel about others who are doing the same things you do.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

Following Jesus Gives Us the Light of Life

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” - John 8:12

Jesus and the New Testament writers contrast light and dark in many passages. The concept is that light is good and darkness is evil. In one passage Jesus said, “Men love the dark because their deeds are evil” (John 3:19). Walking with Jesus is walking in the light - walking in the world without Jesus is walking in the dark.

What makes one way of life dark and another way of life light? Light is truth and darkness is deception. When we walk in the truth we walk in the light and are not deceived by the darkness. When we are not walking in truth we may try to convince ourselves we are in the light, but the effect of our walk is that we are in darkness.

The deception of darkness is that it keeps promising what it can't deliver. It promises peace and prosperity at the expense of truth and integrity. It promises friends and pleasure but delivers loneliness and pain. Darkness is the perception that we don't need God and that we can achieve all that we desire all by ourselves.

Jesus was telling the world that the message he preached was true and that the way of life he promoted would not only lead to being right with God but it would also lead to peace and prosperity.

If this is true, then why are there still so many people trying to do it on their own? It is the deception

of darkness. In John 1:5 it is written, “The light shines in darkness but the darkness has not understood it.” The spirit of darkness tells us the way of light is too hard for us and besides that we can achieve all that we desire on our own.

The truth is that man can achieve great things on his own. No other creature on earth has the creative capacity of man, but the ultimate truth is that all of those things will not answer man’s need for the peace that only God can give. Only walking in the light will give you lasting peace and contentment.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the light of Christ in my life. Help me to always choose the light of truth over the darkness of deception. Amen.

Message: Jesus was telling the world that the message he preached was true and that the way of life he promoted would not only lead to being right with God but it would also lead to peace and prosperity.

Affirmation: Everything outside of God and faith in Christ is darkness. I am a follower of Christ therefore I walk in the light and not in the darkness.

Reflection: Give some thought to the idea that the darkness promises what it can't deliver. How has that affected your life before you became a Christ follower? How fulfilled were you when walking in darkness as compared to how fulfilled you are now as a Christ follower?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

To Know Him is to Know the Father

Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” - John 8:19

It is amazing to me how many people claim to believe in God but they are not ready to accept that Jesus is the physical manifestation of God. They will say things like, “I believe in God, and I believe in Jesus. I believe Jesus was a good man and a good teacher,” but they won’t admit that Jesus was the embodiment of truth and the way he taught was the way to God.

The Jewish leaders believed in God, and they believed in a Messiah, but they could not receive Jesus as the Messiah or as the son of God because he didn’t fit their preconceived ideas of what the Messiah would be. And, when Jesus tried to explain to them that he was the Son of God and that he was the Son of his Father, who was the God they claimed to serve, they not only rejected him but finally had him put to death.

When they asked for Jesus to show them the Father they weren’t looking for the truth they were looking for a reason to condemn him for breaking their traditions. They had God neatly tucked away in the box of tradition and they could not accept anyone who challenged their tradition.

I find it interesting that we face the very same thing among some religious leaders today. If it didn’t come from their school of thought it must be wrong. Far too often a genuine move of God is put down as just a group of people responding to an emotion charged meeting.

Have we missed seeing the Father manifest because we denied the sovereign move of the Holy Spirit? Have we put handcuffs on God because we did not understand the Son?

It is true that we must be careful not to be fooled into accepting some spectacular thing as being from God just because it is spectacular, but on the other hand we need to be careful not to reject something the Holy Spirit is doing just because we've been taught that God doesn't do that today.

Prayer: I am grateful to know Jesus who has led me to the Father. Help me to follow Christ as he leads me. Amen.

Message: We must be careful not to be fooled into accepting some spectacular thing as being from God just because it is spectacular, but on the other hand we need to be careful not to reject something the Holy Spirit is doing just because we've been taught that God doesn't do that today.

Affirmation: I am careful to not be carried away by the spectacular but I try the spirit of every manifestation before I embrace it.

Reflection: There is much today that is called the move of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, some of it is at best emotionalism, and at worst charlatanism. How are we to discern between the genuine and that which is not genuine?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

The Truth Will Set You Free

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” - John 8:31-32

Usually when “Jews” are referred to in the Gospels the reference is to the religious leaders, the Pharisees and the priests. In the course of Jesus’ ministry some of those leaders had come to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. It was to those Jews Jesus was speaking.

Jesus knew that the religious leaders who had embraced him and his teachings would have a difficult time holding to his teachings. He knew that it would not be very long until most of these would turn against him and he was trying to prepare them for the times ahead.

These folks had come to Jesus believing him and looking for him to set up his kingdom because that was what their tradition taught that the Messiah would do. But Jesus was giving them a bit of a warning that it was going to be difficult to hold on to what they had been taught. He offers them the hope of truly being his disciples and to receive true freedom from sin and the tyranny of tradition.

“If you hold to my teaching,” Jesus said. A test of discipleship is whether we hold on to the truth when it begins to cost us something. Jesus knew that if they held on to the truth they had embraced they would be required to pay a great price, but the reward for paying the price was true freedom.

I remember the story of Polycarp, a bishop in the early church. He had been tied to the stake ready to be burned to death and he was given one last chance to recant. He replied, “Eighty and six years I have served him, how then can I blaspheme my king and savior?” With that he was martyred for his faith.

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” On that day Polycarp was truly set free.

Freedom is not based on where you are or your circumstances. Freedom comes from within. With Christ in us we are free.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the strength, and the grace, to hold on to the truth of Christ regardless of the cost. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: A test of discipleship is whether we hold on to the truth when it begins to cost us something. Jesus knew that if they held on to the truth they had embraced they would be required to pay a great price, but the reward for paying the price was true freedom.

Affirmation: I have learned that true freedom comes from embracing the truth and walking in it.

Reflection: What is the Truth, and how does the Truth make us free? Jesus told his disciples that a test of discipleship was if they held to his teachings and the reward for following his teachings is that they would be in the truth and the truth would make them free.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

The Son Sets Men Free From Slavery of Sin

They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves to anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. – John 8:34-36

The Law of Moses, and the interpretation of the law which became as important to the Jews as the law itself, held out a great hope to this nation of promise. All they had to do was live by the law and they would be received into the kingdom of God.

There was only one problem: No one could live by the standard that they had set up. They knew God required perfect obedience, but they had no hope of ever achieving that. They tried, and failed time and again. When they failed they offered sacrifice and tried again.

Jesus knew the problem. It wasn’t that the law was so onerous, it was that they were all slaves. They weren’t slaves to another man, but they were slaves to their own sinful nature. Perhaps they had never seen their sins as being slave masters, but indeed, that is exactly what sin becomes.

The freedom that Jesus was offering was freedom from sin. He was telling them that if they continued in his teaching and received the gift he would give, they would be free from the bondage of sin. All they had to do was grasp the truth of what he was saying and commit themselves to being his disciple and they would know true freedom.

The law was good in that it pointed to Christ, but of itself it had no power to save people from sinning. Jesus was offering that. He was saying that when people commit their lives to him he doesn't free them from responsibility to God's law but he does free them from the bondage of sin which prevents people from living out God's law.

Jesus wasn't offering religion - he was offering freedom from religion. He was offering an opportunity to be changed on the inside. When the son has set you free you are free indeed.

Prayer: Thank you for the hope that is Christ. I have committed my life to Christ and live for your glory. Thank you Father. Amen.

Message: Jesus was not teaching they were slaves to men but that they were slaves to sin. The freedom he offered was freedom from sin. He was telling them that if they continued in his teaching and received the gift he would give they would be freed from slavery of sin.

Affirmation: I have never been a slave to another person, but I have been a slave to my sinful nature. Thank God I have believed the truth and now I am free from slavery to my sinful nature.

Reflection: The argument given by the leaders was that they had never been slaves; they had always been free. But Jesus was not talking about being slaves to another person. Give some thought to what that has meant in your own life.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

Love God and Your Neighbor

An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all you mind;” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” - Luke 10:25-27

This man who was well schooled in the law had the right answer, but was he right in his heart? Jesus responded to his answer, “You have answered correctly, do this and you will live” (v28). But the next verse reveals the man’s heart. It reads, “But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor.’”

This man wasn’t seeking answers he was seeking justification. The reason he asked the question in the first place was not because he didn’t know the answer, but he was trying to find justification for his own attitudes and lifestyle. He knew that he must love God with his whole being, and that he must love his neighbor in the same way, but he wanted to love in his own way - in a way that was not too uncomfortable for him.

Now, before you get an attitude about this guy, let’s take a look into the mirror. First, let’s look at how much we truly love God. Do we love him with our heart, soul, strength and mind? If we do, what are the evidences of that?

If we were to ask your neighbor to explain to us what it is that you do that convinces them that you love God in that manner, what would they say? How do

the things you possess reflect your deep devotion to God? What about your time? How does the way you spend your non-working hours reflect your complete love of God?

When we look at ourselves through the eyes of another, or if we try to see our life as God sees it, we tend to get a different picture than we do when we see our life through our own eyes.

Examine your thoughts, your actions and your possessions to see if you truly do love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love you in such a way that others know it and to love my neighbor as I should. I ask in Jesus name.

Message: When we look at ourselves through the eyes of another, or if we try to see our life as God sees it, we tend to get a different picture than we do when we see our life through our own eyes.

Affirmation: I try to see myself not as others see me, or as I may see myself, but I try to see myself as God sees me. I have learned that when I don't love my neighbor I can't fully love God.

Reflection: It is interesting that people who know that loving God and loving their neighbor are not options and yet they have such a strange way of loving others. Have you ever wondered what your neighbor, or the homeless person on the street, would say if asked if they thought you loved them?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

Who is My Neighbor?

Which of these three do you think was neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." - Luke 10:36-37

This "expert in the law" had just told Jesus that it was as important to love ones neighbor as it was to love God. Then, in an attempt to justify himself he asked, "Who is my neighbor?" He probably expected the typical answer that his tradition taught.

The tradition of the day was that a neighbor was a person of our own tribal family or clan. It was those who live in my community and who are of the same belief as me. A neighbor was a widow who lived near, a poor person with a need who lived among them.

The last person that this learned Jew would consider a neighbor would be a Gentile, or even worse a Samaritan who was not only of mixed blood but they had also polluted the worship of Jehovah.

Jesus told this story to this educated man:

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own

donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

It was in response to this question that Jesus asked who was the neighbor and then said, "Go and do likewise." The neighbor isn't always clean, or pretty, or healthy - but if someone is in need he is our neighbor.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the ability to recognize my neighbor and the grace to love as I should. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Our neighbor isn't always clean, or pretty, or healthy - but if someone is in need he is our neighbor.

Affirmation: I have come to understand that a test of loving God is whether I love my neighbor and my neighbor is anyone I see that is in need and that I have the resources to help.

Reflection: There are groups of people that are easy for us to reject. When we see them we want to walk on the other side of the street. We want to speak sharply to them or let them know in some way how repulsive they are. When we respond to those thoughts and feelings we are showing our lack of love for God and for our neighbor. Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

A Time to Serve and a Time to Listen

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."
- Luke 10:38-42

This seemingly insignificant event has been a frequent subject for preachers. As Jesus and his disciples were going from village to village they came to the home of friends. Two sisters lived together and both had been impacted by the ministry of Jesus. Jesus stopped by to visit, and of course the sisters insisted that he and his disciples stay for a meal and they consented.

While Martha was busy preparing the meal Mary, her sister, sat at the feet of Jesus carefully listening to him teach. When Martha realized that Mary wasn't helping she complained to Jesus. To her surprise Jesus didn't agree with her. In fact, he gave her a mild rebuke saying, "Martha, you are worried and upset about many things." He was saying that there is a time to serve and a time to listen.

I think many of us today have a skewed idea of serving God. It seems that in most churches there is never enough workers, even though there is a constant appeal for volunteers. It appears that a huge part of

our Christian ethic is keeping people busy serving. The fact is that quite a lot of our serving is serving one another and the work of the kingdom far too often goes undone.

Perhaps if we spent more time sitting at the feet of Jesus truly hearing what he has to say then the work which we actually do will be more productive. If our focus is upon what he has said to do and we do that we will see that the work of the kingdom is achieved. We may also find that some of our programs and “busy” work become low on the priority list.

Prayer: Lord, help me to know when to listen and when to act. Give me the grace of wisdom that I might serve you well. Amen.

Message: If we spent more time sitting at the feet of Jesus truly hearing what he has to say then the work which we actually do will be more productive. If our focus is upon what he has said to do and we do that we will see that the work of the kingdom is achieved.

Affirmation: There are times when my service is simply sitting with my Bible in my lap reading the Word, praying and meditating upon the Word. It is then that my work in the kingdom gains clarity.

Reflection: It would be good to do three things. First, study to understand just what kingdom service is. Second, evaluate whether you are serving the kingdom, the institution, or yourself. Third, Make a plan to

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

Boldness and Persistence Pays Off

Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ “Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.” - Luke 11: 5-8

As with many of the parables Jesus told it is difficult to make a point by point application without raising questions that the parable was not intended to raise. Without getting into the point of the man not being prepared for visitors, or the point of how inconsiderate he was of his neighbor, we’ll take the story just as Jesus intended. In this parable Jesus was simply making the point that bold persistence in the kingdom of God pays off.

The next verses give further explanation to this example. Jesus said, “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

It is clear that Jesus is not talking about making a casual prayer about a trivial desire and expecting an immediate answer. By the example he gave he seems to be saying that the depth of our need and the sincerity of our request may be challenged. The test of our

sincerity is whether we keep knocking, keep seeking and keep asking.

There have been times when I have been asking for something which was important to me at the time, but as I continued to ask, seek and knock I began to realize that it really wasn't the thing I needed. There have been other times that there was a real need and the more I asked and knocked the more I realized how desperately I needed him. Those are the prayers he answered.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace of diligent pursuit of your will. Help me to continue asking, seeking and knocking. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: By the example Jesus gave he seems to be saying that the depth of our need and the sincerity of our request may be challenged. The test of our sincerity is whether we keep knocking, keep seeking and keep asking.

Affirmation: When I have had a real need that pressed me to continue asking, seeking and knocking, God always comes through.

Reflection: It is important that we realize when we are praying, regardless of how desperate the situation, God responds according to what is best for the bigger picture and that is what is best for us.

My Thoughts:

Interested in Small Group Ministry?

Have you considered using the Daily God Walk as a tool to use in a Bible study and discussion group? Many have and they have found that it is an excellent tool to use in small groups.

We have an edition of the Daily God Walk that we call Study Guide Edition and includes quality components that are good for personal devotion and for small group discussions.

In the Study Guide Edition each devotion is on two pages. The left page is the regular devotion and the right page is for going deeper in the devotion.

The second page includes The main point, or principle of the devotion; an affirmation of the principle; a reflection component for discussion and meditation on the devotion.

The bottom half of the second page is a place to journal your thoughts or to write down ideas you are inspired to study out, or to write down ideas for discussion in a group.

If you would like more information on using the Daily God Walk as a tool for a Bible study and discussion group go to the web page below:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups

From that web page you can actually download a sample Study Guide Edition. You are also welcome explore the ministries we offer from this site:

www.dailygodwalk.org