



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

APRIL 15, 2018

Discussion Guide

WHAT WE WANT AND WHAT WE SAY WE WANT

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED SOMEONE TELLING YOU ONE THING BUT MEANING SOMETHING ELSE? HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THE DIFFERENCE? WHAT WAS THIS LIKE FOR YOU?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE CONCEPT OF LITURGICAL WORSHIP. TAKE CARE TO DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF INTENTIONALLY STRUCTURING HOW ONE WORSHIPS AND WHAT ONE DOES IN WORSHIP.
- READ MATTHEW 6.25-34 ALOUD. PAUSE AND READ

THE TEXT ONCE MORE PAYING CAREFUL ATTENTION TO HOW JESUS COMPARES AND CONTRASTS OBJECTS OF DESIRE.

- ACCORDING TO JESUS, WHAT ARE THE COMPETING OBJECTS OF DESIRE WITH WHICH WE ARE CONFRONTED? SEE TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE IN THE TEXT.
- WHAT DOES JESUS ENCOURAGE HIS FOLLOWERS TO DESIRE? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DOES HIS ENCOURAGEMENT SPEAK TO OUR OTHER DESIRES?
- THAT JESUS MENTIONS VARIOUS THINGS COMPETE TO BE THE OBJECT OF OUR DESIRE INDICATES THAT MAINTAINING RIGHTLY-FOCUSED DESIRE CAN BE DIFFICULT. IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DO YOU EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTLY MAINTAINING A RIGHTLY-FOCUSED DESIRE?
- JESUS INDICATES THAT THE PRESENCE OF ANXIETY CAN BE A WARNING SIGN OF WRONGLY-PLACED DESIRE. HOW MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DO YOU FIND PULLS ON YOU MOST STRONGLY AS THE OBJECT OF YOUR DESIRE? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, ARE YOU ABLE TO NOTICE WHEN THIS DESIRE TAKES FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE?
- IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT WORSHIP IS A WAY TO INTENTIONALLY CALL OURSELVES BACK TO GOD AS THE PRIMARY OBJECT OF OUR DESIRE. IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT THIS WORK? CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER WAYS TO REGULARLY CALL YOURSELF BACK TO DESIRING GOD?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY DISCUSSING THE EXPERIENCE OF COMPETING DESIRES AND HOW YOU MIGHT ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER IN DESIRING GOD. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER AND BLESSING ONE ANOTHER AS YOU END YOUR TIME TOGETHER.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

LITURGICAL WORSHIP

LITURGICAL WORSHIP TYPICALLY REFERS TO SCRIPTED RITES, CEREMONIES, PRAYERS AND SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH AS OPPOSED TO PRIVATE DEVOTION. UNDERGIRDING LITURGICAL WORSHIP IS THE DESIRE TO WORSHIP IN AN INTENTIONAL MANNER SO AS TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROPERLY EXPRESS DEVOTION AND HAND OFF FAITH TO THE WORSHIPER. IN THE CHRISTIAN CONTEXT, LITURGICAL WORSHIP CONSISTS OF SIGNS, SYMBOLS, AND SACRED ACTIONS WHICH ARE MEANT TO REFLECT AND PRAISE GOD'S SELF-REVELATION IN CHRIST. OFTEN, LITURGICAL WORSHIP IS CONTRASTED WITH NON-LITURGICAL WORSHIP, THE FORMER BEING REFLECTED IN SCRIPTED RITES AND THE LATTER BEING REFLECTED IN CONGREGATIONS WHICH HAVE NO FORMAL OR SCRIPTED RITES OF WORSHIP. HOWEVER, SUCH A DISTINCTION IS FALSE BECAUSE UPON CLOSE OBSERVATION, CONGREGATIONS WHICH PRACTICE SO-CALLED FREE WORSHIP (NON-SCRIPTED) VERY OFTEN HAVE AN UNSPOKEN FRAMEWORK FOR CARRYING OUT WORSHIP WHICH IS CLOSELY FOLLOWED. THIS REALITY SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT WHILE WE OFTEN THINK OF LITURGICAL WORSHIP IN ITS DENOMINATIONAL FORMS (EX. THE ROMAN LITURGY), LITURGICAL WORSHIP CAN AND OFTEN DOES TAKE LOCAL OR CONGREGATIONAL FORMS.

THE PRACTICE OF WORSHIPPING IN A SCRIPTED FORM HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE. IN THIS SETTING, A FORMAL FRAMEWORK FOR WORSHIP DEVELOPED CONSISTING OF PRAYER, SINGING, TEACHING, ALMSGIVING, AND PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE. IN ADDITION, THE JEWISH PEOPLE FOLLOWED A REGULAR RHYTHM OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND FEASTS, WHICH THEMSELVES CONSISTED OF SCRIPTED ELEMENTS. ONE SUCH EXAMPLE IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER MEAL. EARLY CHRISTIANS CARRIED THIS PRACTICE WITH THEM WHEN THEY LEFT THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUES, ORDERING THEIR WORSHIP USING THIS SAME FRAMEWORK. THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT, CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS SEEN TO INVOLVE PRAYER (1 TIMOTHY 2.1-2, 8), SINGING (EPHESIANS 5.19), TEACHING/PREACHING (ACTS 2.42; PHILIPPIANS 1.15-18), THE COLLECTION OF AN OFFERING (1 CORINTHIANS 16.2), PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE (1 TIMOTHY 4.13), AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S TABLE (1 CORINTHIANS 11.17-34). MOST LIKELY, THE EARLY CHURCH DID NOT HAVE A STANDARD FRAMEWORK FOR WORSHIPPING ACROSS ALL CONGREGATIONS. MORE LIKELY, EACH LOCAL CONGREGATION DEVELOPED ITS OWN UNIQUE LITURGICAL STYLE AND FRAMEWORK. ONE SUCH FRAMEWORK MIGHT BE SEEN IN THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORSHIP OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTS (ACTS 2.42). HOWEVER, WITH THE RISE OF DOCTRINAL CONTROVERSIES IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES, A NEED FOR STANDARDIZING THE WORSHIP LITURGY BECAME IMPORTANT IN

ORDER TO SAFEGUARD ORTHODOXY. WHEN CONSTANTINE LEGALIZED THE CHURCH IN THE FOURTH CENTURY, LEADING TO AN INFLUX OF FORMER PAGANS, THE NEED FOR A STANDARDIZED LITURGY WAS SOLIDIFIED BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO PROVIDE SYSTEMATIC READINGS AND RITES WHICH EXPRESSED PROPER DEVOTION AND HANDED OFF FAITH TO THOSE WHO WERE WORSHIPPING.

WHILE THE TECHNICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LITURGICAL WORSHIP INVOLVES THOSE RITES AND CEREMONIES AS CONDUCTED BY THE CHURCH IN OPPOSITION TO PRIVATE DEVOTION, ONE MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THE LITURGICAL PRACTICE OF SCRIPTING OR INTENTIONALLY STRUCTURING IN THEIR PRIVATE ACTS OF WORSHIP. BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THIS INTENTIONALITY MIGHT BE FOUND IN PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING WORSHIP GIVEN TO THE COLOSSIAN CHURCH. IN HIS EXHORTATION, PAUL ENCOURAGED THIS CHURCH TO BE INTENTIONAL NOT ONLY WITH THE STRUCTURING OF THEIR CORPORATE WORSHIP BUT IN THE CONDUCT OF THEIR DAILY LIVES (COLOSSIANS 3.16-17). PAUL ADMONISHED THESE BELIEVERS TO ORDER THEIR DAILY LIVES IN SUCH A MANNER THAT THEY REFLECTED THE VERY CHARACTER OF CHRIST. THE BENEFIT OF SUCH INTENTIONALITY WITH ONE'S PRIVATE DEVOTION OUGHT TO BE IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS AS IT IS THE SAME AS FORMAL LITURGICAL WORSHIP. THE INTENTIONALITY OF LITURGICAL WORSHIP IS OF GREAT BENEFIT BECAUSE IT PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK NOT JUST FOR EXPRESSING PROPER DEVOTION, BUT IT ENSURES A REGULAR RHYTHM OF READINGS, RITES, AND CELEBRATIONS WHICH REMIND THE WORSHIPER OF GOD'S TRUE CHARACTER AND REDEMPTIVE ACTIVITY IN CHRIST. LIKEWISE, ALLOWING THIS SAME LEVEL OF INTENTIONALITY TO INFORM ONE'S PRIVATE ACTS OF DEVOTION AS WELL AS ONE'S DAILY LIFE PROVIDE THESE SAME REALITIES, ADDING ADDITIONAL REMINDERS AND EMPHASES POINTING THE BELIEVER TO ORIENTING HIS LIFE AROUND GOD.

THE TEXT

MATTHEW 6.25-34: *WHAT IS DRIVING US?*

JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT IS HIS MANIFESTO DESCRIBING LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. RATHER THAN REFLECTING A FUTURE ETHIC, JESUS USED THIS SERMON TO DESCRIBE HOW LIFE WAS TO BE LIVED IN THE PRESENT BY HIS FOLLOWERS. IN THIS SERMON, JESUS INDICATED THAT DESIRE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN LEADING HIS FOLLOWERS FROM THE LIFE THEY PRESENTLY LIVED TO THE LIFE HE DESCRIBED (MATTHEW 6.19-24). SPECIFICALLY, A SINGLE-MINDED DESIRE OF GOD SERVED TO SHAPE THE DAILY ACTIVITIES AND AGENDAS OF A PERSON SO THAT THE DEEPEST PARTS OF THEIR BEING WERE TRANSFORMED TO REFLECT KINGDOM REALITIES.

JESUS CONTINUES HIS DISCUSSION OF THE POWERFUL ROLE DESIRE PLAYS IN TAKING UP A KINGDOM LIFE WITH HIS DISCUSSION OF ANXIETY, FORMALLY LINKING THIS DISCUSSION TO THE PREVIOUS VERSES WITH THE GRAMMATICAL LINKAGE OF "THEREFORE" (MATTHEW 6.25). ON THE SURFACE, THIS LINKAGE TO THE FORMER

DISCUSSION OF DESIRE CAN EASILY BE MISSED BECAUSE OF THE FOCUS ON THE TOPIC OF ANXIETY. IN JESUS' DISCUSSION, ANXIETY IS THE SYMPTOM OF A PRIDEFUL LIFE, A LIFE IN WHICH A PERSON SEEKS TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES RATHER THAN RELYING UPON GOD. WHEN A PERSON SEEKS TO LIVE BY THEIR OWN MEANS THEY BECOME QUICKLY OVERWHELMED BY THE REALITY THAT THEY DO NOT CONTROL THE FUTURE. RATHER, THE FUTURE IS UP FOR GRABS AND MANY POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES ARE LESS THAN GOOD. THIS LEADS A PERSON TO A FORM OF MENTAL STRIVING (ANXIETY) IN WHICH ALL POSSIBLE FUTURES ARE IMAGINED SO THAT PRESENT STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO AVOID NEGATIVE FUTURES. HOWEVER, UNDERGIRDING THIS DISCUSSION OF A PRIDEFUL LIFE IS THE ISSUE OF DESIRE. ACTUALLY, JESUS' ENTIRE DISCUSSION OF ANXIETY IS BUILT UPON THE FRAMEWORK OF DESIRE. THE VERY EXAMPLES JESUS USES FIND THEIR HOME IN NATURAL PHYSICAL DESIRES FOR THE BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE: FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER, ETC.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTICE THAT NOWHERE DOES JESUS STATE THAT IT IS WRONG TO EXPERIENCE OR PURSUE THE FULFILLMENT OF THE NATURAL PHYSICAL DESIRES COMMON TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE. RATHER, JESUS AFFIRMS THAT THESE DESIRES ARE REAL, GOOD, AND NECESSARILY FULFILLED (MATTHEW 6.32). WHAT JESUS DOES SEEK TO REDIRECT IS THE MEANS BY WHICH HIS FOLLOWERS SEEK THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE DESIRES. A PRIDEFUL LIFE SEEKS TO PROVIDE THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE NEEDS ON ONE'S OWN STRENGTH RATHER THAN RELYING UPON GOD. HOWEVER, ONE CAN DIG DEEPER INTO JESUS' FRAMEWORK OF DESIRES TO DRAW OUT REALITIES TAUGHT IN THE PREVIOUS VERSES, SPECIFICALLY JESUS' REMINDER THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WERE TO HAVE ONLY ONE OVERARCHING DESIRE IN THEIR LIVES, THE DESIRE FOR GOD (MATTHEW 6.24).

GRAMMATICALLY, JESUS' DISCUSSION OF ANXIETY IS TIED TO THE REMINDER THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WERE TO CHOOSE A CENTRAL DESIRE. A PERSON WAS TO CHOOSE WHETHER TO DESIRE GOD OR THINGS OF THE EARTH (MAMMON). THE REALITY OF THIS CHOICE IS REVEALED IN JESUS' DISCUSSION OF ANXIETY AS JESUS CONTRASTS THE PURSUIT OF ONE'S PHYSICAL DESIRES WITH THE PURSUIT OF GOD. ONE CAN CHOOSE TO PURSUE THE MEETING OF PHYSICAL NEEDS, SOMETHING WHICH THE PAGANS DO (MATTHEW 6.32) OR THEY CAN CHOOSE TO PURSUE GOD AND THE REALITIES OF LIVING IN HIS KINGDOM (MATTHEW 6.33). SIMPLY PUT, ONE CAN CHOOSE TO DESIRE GOD OR THE THINGS OF EARTH. JESUS NOTES THAT WHILE IT IS NOT WRONG TO EXPERIENCE NORMAL HUMAN DESIRES, LIFE IN THE KINGDOM IS NOT TO BE DRIVEN BY SUCH DESIRES (MATTHEW 6.25). RATHER, LIFE IS ABOUT MORE THAN ONE'S PHYSICAL NEEDS. WHEN A PERSON CHOOSES TO DESIRE GOD FIRST (MATTHEW 6.33), HE DISCOVERS THAT ALL HIS OTHER NATURAL DESIRES ARE FULFILLED BY GOD. HERE JESUS RESTATES THE COMMON OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING THAT IN

THE PURSUIT OF GOD ONE DISCOVERED THE MEETING OF HIS EARTHLY DESIRES (PSALM 37.4).

JESUS' DISCUSSION REMINDS HIS FOLLOWERS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHTLY-FOCUSED DESIRE AND A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF DESIRES COMMON TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE. HOWEVER, THIS DISCUSSION SHOULD ALSO SERVE TO REMIND BELIEVERS THAT THEY WILL EXPERIENCE A STRUGGLE BETWEEN THEIR PHYSICAL DESIRES AND THEIR DESIRE FOR GOD. IN FACT, IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE UNAWARE THAT ONE'S PHYSICAL DESIRES RATHER THAN A DESIRE FOR GOD IS GUIDING ONE'S LIFE. JESUS' TEST FOR THIS IS THE PRESENCE OF ANXIETY. THE PRESENCE OF ANXIETY CAN REVEAL NOT ONLY THE PRESENCE OF PRIDE BUT ALSO A STRIVING AFTER THINGS OF THIS EARTH WHICH REFLECTS A DESIRE FOR THINGS OF EARTH ABOVE GOD. THIS REALITY MIGHT BE DISCOVERED BY SIMPLY ASKING, "ABOUT WHAT AM I ANXIOUS?" IF THE ANSWER INVOLVES EARTHLY THINGS, THIS REFLECTS THE PRESENCE OF MISPLACED DESIRE.

IN OUR MODERN SETTING, MISPLACED DESIRE HAS BECOME MORE NUANCED, PARTICULARLY IN OUR WESTERN CONTEXT. IN THESE CONTEXTS, THE BELIEF THAT GOD WISHES PEOPLE TO BE HAPPY AND COMFORTABLE HAS WORKED ITS WAY INTO OUR WESTERN THEOLOGY, CONTRARY TO THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCING SUFFERING IN IMITATION OF CHRIST. WITH THIS THEOLOGY IN HAND, MODERN BELIEVERS THEN CO-OPT GOD INTO THEIR PURSUIT OF WEALTH, PRESTIGE, OR THINGS WHICH CREATE COMFORT OR EASE. GOD IS APPROACHED "IN FAITH" IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THESE THINGS WHICH ARE ACTUALLY THINGS OF EARTH. WHAT THIS THEOLOGY DOES IS DISGUISE WHAT IS IN REALITY MISPLACED DESIRE FOR EARTHLY THINGS BECAUSE GOD IS BEING APPROACHED FAITHFULLY IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN THEM. A MODERN BELIEVER MIGHT UNCOVER THIS KIND OF THINKING BY ASKING, "WHAT DO I WANT MORE, GOD OR _____?" THIS QUESTION CAN REVEAL THE DESIRE FOR WEALTH, HEALTH, POWER OR OTHER SUCH THINGS OVER GOD.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

WHAT I WANT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE WHAT I WANT SHAPES MY LIFE. I AM COMING TO LEARN THAT ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, BECOMING LIKE JESUS RESTS UPON A WHOLE-HEARTED DESIRE FOR JESUS. IT IS WHEN I WANT JESUS THAT I BEGIN TO BECOME LIKE HIM, MY LIFE BEING SHAPED BY MY DESIRE FOR HIM IN SUCH A WAY THAT, SLOWLY AND SURELY, I AM FORMED TO BE LIKE HIM FROM THE INSIDE OUT. THIS MUCH IS CLEAR TO ME. WHERE IT GETS STICKY IS IN MAINTAINING A WHOLE-HEARTED DESIRE FOR JESUS. HONESTLY, I WANT A LOT OF THINGS AND MOST OF THEM ARE NOT JESUS. SOMETIMES, I WANT THEM MORE THAN JESUS. THERE ARE DAYS WHEN I WANT PEOPLE TO SEE ME. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I WANT A CHECKING ACCOUNT THAT IS FAT. THERE ARE DAYS WHEN I WANT TO BE BUFF AND BEAUTIFUL. I WANT THESE THINGS. IT IS NOT WRONG

TO WANT THESE THINGS. FORMS OF THESE DESIRES ARE COMMON TO OUR HUMAN EXPERIENCE. THE PROBLEM ARISES WHEN I WANT THEM MORE THAN JESUS. GENERALLY, I CAN NOTICE WHEN I WANT THESE THINGS AND MY WANTING IS OUT OF PROPORTION. A GOOD SIGN MY DESIRES HAVE BECOME MISPLACED IS WHEN I GET ANXIOUS. ALL IT TAKES IS A SIMPLE QUESTION, "WHY AM I ANXIOUS?" AND MY TRUE DESIRES COME TO THE SURFACE. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES MY DESIRE IS NOT THAT CLEAR. THIS IS THE CASE WITH MY EXPERIENCE OF STILL'S.

STILL'S DISEASE HAS DEVASTATED MY LIFE, RAVAGING MY BODY SO THAT IN A MERE 18 MONTHS I HAVE GONE FROM RUNNING ULTRAMARATHONS TO WALKING WITH A CANE SOME EVERY DAY. EVERY DAY FEELS LIKE I HAVE A BAD CASE OF THE FLU, AND EVERYDAY THINGS LIKE OPENING A JAR OR A BAG OF CHIPS HAS BECOME DIFFICULT. I AM STILL TRYING TO WRAP MY BRAIN AROUND WHAT IS HAPPENING. SIMPLY PUT, I AM IN PROCESS. THE MORE I EXPERIENCE THIS DISEASE THE MORE I LONG TO BE WELL. SOMETIMES I PRAY, "GOD, I WOULD LIKE TO RUN AGAIN." WHILE IT IS NOT WRONG TO PRAY THIS PRAYER, I AM NOTICING THAT SOMETIMES THIS PRAYER COMES FROM THE WRONG PLACE, A MISGUIDED DESIRE. I NOTICE THIS WHEN I PAUSE AND ASK, "WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME, THAT I HAVE GOD OR THAT I RUN AGAIN?" IT IS HERE THAT I DISCOVER MISPLACED DESIRE HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT, CLOAKING ITSELF IN MY PRAYERS, PRAYERS UTTERED IN FAITH. IT IS PRESENCE OF THIS MISPLACED DESIRE THAT GIVES ME THE MOST PAUSE WHEN PEOPLE CHIDE ME FOR NOT PRAYING MORE FERVENTLY FOR HEALING. WOULD I LIKE TO BE HEALED? OF COURSE. DOES GOD DESIRE MY PHYSICAL HEALING? DOES HE WANT ME TO BE FREE FROM PAIN? NOT NECESSARILY. WHAT HE WANTS IS THAT I WANT HIM MORE THAN FREEDOM FROM PAIN, MORE THAN RUNNING AGAIN.

KEEPING MY DESIRE RIGHTLY FOCUSED IS NO SIMPLE TASK. ONE MOMENT I AM LONGING FOR GOD AND THE NEXT MOMENT I WOULD SETTLE FOR A DOUBLE-CHEESEBURGER. NO. I WANT A DOUBLE-CHEESEBURGER MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE. WHERE DID MY DESIRE FOR GOD GO? IT IS NOT WRONG TO BE HUNGRY, BUT WHY DID I SUDDENLY SHIFT IN SUCH A RADICAL DIRECTION, MY PHYSICAL HUNGER TRUMPING MY HUNGER FOR GOD? I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION, BUT WHAT I AM DISCOVERING IS I NEED SOMETHING TO CATCH ME, TO REMIND ME OF WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT BEFORE I GET TOO CAUGHT UP IN MY DESIRES WHICH ARE OTHER THAN GOD. I AM LEARNING THAT WORSHIP IS ONE OF THE MOST HELPFUL OF PRACTICES IN THIS REGARD, WORSHIP WHICH REGULARLY AND CONSISTENTLY REMINDS ME OF WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE IS DOING. FOR WORSHIP TO WORK IN THIS WAY FOR ME, MY WORSHIP MUST BECOME PART OF MY DAILY EXPERIENCE. I MUST SURROUND MYSELF WITH CONSTANT REMINDERS OF WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE IS DOING. WITH THESE IN MY LIFE, I CATCH MYSELF AND COME QUICKLY BACK TO CENTER, QUICKLY BACK TO BEING

HUNGRY BUT HUNGRY FOR GOD MORE!

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WHAT DO I WANT? THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK OURSELVES ON THE JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP BECAUSE WHAT WE DESIRE MOST SHAPES OUR LIFE THE MOST. BUT DO WE KNOW WHAT WE REALLY WANT? THE RIGHT ANSWER ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH IS THAT WE MUST WANT JESUS IF WE WANT TO BECOME LIKE JESUS, BUT DO WE REALLY WANT JESUS? OF COURSE, WE DO, OR AT LEAST WE SAY WE DO. BUT LET'S BE HONEST. WE UTTER THE WORDS. IS THERE ANY SUBSTANCE TO THE WORDS?

THE SUBSTANCE TO OUR STATED WORDS OF DESIRE IS REVEALED IN THE DAILY ACTIONS OF OUR LIVES. YOU SEE, WHAT WE DESIRE MOST SHAPES HOW WE MOVE THROUGH LIFE. THAT HOW DESIRE WORKS, IT MOTIVATES US IN OUR PURSUITS, DRIVING US AFTER WHAT WE WANT THE MOST. SO, WHAT IS IT THAT WE DESIRE, NOT JUST WHAT WE SAY WE DESIRE? ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE DESIRE MOST CAN BE TO ASK THE QUESTION, "WHAT MAKES ME ANXIOUS?" OUR ANXIETY REVEALS WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO US, WHAT WE FEEL WE CANNOT DO WITHOUT. HOWEVER, WE MUST LOOK DEEPER THAN OUR ANXIETY IF WE TRULY WISH TO SEE THAT WHICH WE DESIRE. WE MUST LOOK TO ACTS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION. MISGUIDED DESIRE CAN HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT, CLOAKING ITSELF IN OUR ACTS OF DEVOTION. WE CAN FERRET OUT THESE DESIRES BY ASKING OURSELVES ABOUT OUR MOTIVES AND WHAT WE ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT IN THE ANSWERING OF OUR PRAYERS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR LIVES. WHEN WE ASK THESE QUESTIONS, WE OFTEN DISCOVER THAT WHAT WE SAY WE WANT AND WHAT WE WANT ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS, WHICH THEN LEADS US TO TAKE STEPS TO CULTIVATE RIGHTLY-FOCUSED DESIRE. HOWEVER, THIS WEEK, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO FIRST CONSIDER WHAT IT IS YOU TRULY DESIRE. CONSIDER ASKING YOURSELF THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES ME ANXIOUS?" THIS QUESTION CAN REVEAL SURFACE DESIRES WHICH MAY BE MOTIVATING AND DRIVING YOU. SECOND, CONSIDER ASKING, "WHAT DO I WANT MORE, GOD OR _____?" YOU MIGHT ASK THIS REGARDING YOUR PRAYERS OF PETITION AND YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF GOD OR MAYBE EVEN YOURSELF. YOU MIGHT TAKE NOTE OF THESE OR JOURNAL THEM AS A WAY OF HAVING A RECORD TO WHICH YOU RETURN AS WE TAKE STEPS TO CULTIVATE A RIGHTLY-FOCUSED DESIRE.



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