



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

AUGUST 5, 2018

Discussion Guide

SAVED TO CONNECT

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

- WHAT WOULD REAL CONNECTING LOOK LIKE TO YOU? WHAT MIGHT YOU BE WILLING TO GIVE TO EXPERIENCE THIS KIND OF CONNECTION WITH OTHERS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

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 NATURE AND QUALITIES OF KOINONIA (FELLOWSHIP).
- READ ACTS 2.42-47 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE SEEKING TO IMAGINE WHAT IT MIGHT BE TO EXPERIENCE THE LIFE IT DESCRIBES.
- AS YOU READ ABOUT THE NATURE OF LIFE IN THE EARLY

CHURCH, WHAT PRACTICES STAND OUT TO YOU? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

- WHAT WOULD HAVE EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH BEEN LIKE? COULD YOU DESCRIBE?
- WHICH ASPECTS OF THE LIFE AND PRACTICES OF THE EARLY CHURCH CAN BE SEEN IN THE MODERN CHURCH? WHICH ARE MISSING? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- WHAT DID CONNECTING (FELLOWSHIP) LOOK LIKE IN THE EARLY CHURCH?
- CONNECTING (FELLOWSHIP) IN CHURCH IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BUT IT IS A WORK WHICH IS FOUND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTENTIONAL PRACTICE OF TOGETHERNESS. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT THIS CONTEXT OF TOGETHERNESS IS EASY OR DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE TODAY? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT MIGHT IT TAKE TO GIVE THE SPIRIT THIS CONTEXT OF TOGETHERNESS? HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO WHAT IT MIGHT TAKE TO GIVING THE SPIRIT THIS CONTEXT?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, MIGHT THE FOLLOWING QUESTION HELP YOU WORK THROUGH THIS RESPONSE: WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?
- YOU MIGHT CONSIDER CLOSING BY DISCUSSING THE FINAL TWO QUESTIONS IN AN OPEN-ENDED MANNER, FOCUSING ON HOW ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS REQUIRES A JOURNEY RATHER THAN A MOMENT. YOU MIGHT SPEND TIME PRAYING FOR AND ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER ON THIS JOURNEY.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

FELLOWSHIP (KOINONIA)

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THE WORD “KOINONIA” REFERRED TO A CLOSE UNION OR COMMUNION WHICH MIGHT BE EXPERIENCED BETWEEN PEOPLE OR BETWEEN PEOPLE AND A GOD. TODAY WE USE THE WORD “FELLOWSHIP” TO TRANSLATE THIS ANCIENT GREEK WORD, BUT FELLOWSHIP (A PRACTICE OF CONNECTING) IS PROBABLY BEST UNDERSTOOD AS AN ASPECT OF KOINONIA RATHER THAN A FULL DESCRIPTION OF THE WORD ITSELF. THE WORD IS DIFFICULT TO TRANSLATE INTO ENGLISH BECAUSE IT ENCAPSULATES NOT A SINGLE CONCEPT BUT THE MULTIPLE CONCEPTS OF FRIENDSHIP, DEVOTION, CARE, COMMUNION, UNION, AND CONNECTION. THEREFORE, SOME TRANSLATORS PREFER TO LEAVE THE WORD UNTRANSLATED SINCE NO SUFFICIENTLY ACCURATE GLOSS IS AVAILABLE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT USE THIS WORD TO REFER TO THE DEEP EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNION AND PRACTICE OF FRIENDSHIP AND DEVOTION BETWEEN THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE WORD DOES NOT OCCUR IN THE GOSPELS IN ANY CHRISTIAN CONTEXT. RATHER, THE FIRST USE OF THE WORD IS MADE BY LUKE IN ACTS 2.42 WHEN HE USES THE WORD TO REFER TO ONE OF THE FOUR PRIMARY PRACTICES OF THE EARLY CHURCH: TEACHING, FELLOWSHIP, THE EUCHARIST/LORD’S TABLE, AND PRAYER. THE CONTEXT SURROUNDING THIS USAGE IS THAT OF THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE GUIDANCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEREFORE, LUKE SEEMS TO INDICATE KOINONIA IS A WORK OF THE SPIRIT AND NOT PEOPLE. IT IS AFTER THIS USE BY LUKE IN ACTS THAT THE WORD BEGINS TO APPEAR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS, PRIMARILY IN PAUL WHO USED THE WORD 13 TIMES. PAUL PRIMARILY USED THE WORD TO REFER TO THE PRACTICE OF GIVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO STRUGGLING CONGREGATIONS AS A SIGN OF DEVOTED FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN CONGREGATIONS (ROMANS 12.13; 15.26; 2 CORINTHIANS 9.13; GALATIANS 6.6). WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE IS THAT IN PAUL’S LETTERS, KOINONIA IS ASSUMED TO BE PRESENT, AN INTEGRAL PART OF A HEALTHY, FUNCTIONING LOCAL CONGREGATION OF FAITH. THEREFORE KOINONIA CAN BE EXPRESSED IN THE GIVING OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WHEN THIS IS NECESSARY (ACTS 2.44-45), BUT THIS EXPRESSION RESTS UPON A DEEPER CONNECTION AND DEVOTION WHICH THE SPIRIT WORKS IN THE HEARTS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

THE TEXT

ACTS 2.42-47: SAVED TO CONNECT

ACTS 2 DETAILS THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH AS WE KNOW IT. ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, THE CHURCH IS THE TANGIBLE EXPRESSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE TOGETHER WITH GOD UNDER HIS REIGN. IN JESUS’ MINISTRY, THE KINGDOM EXISTED WHEREVER JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE. THUS, JESUS’ ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE KINGDOM WAS AT HAND (ARRIVING) WAS LITERALLY UNFOLDING IN REAL TIME AS JESUS ENTERED A VILLAGE AND MADE THIS PROCLAMATION. HOWEVER, THE KINGDOM OF GOD DURING HIS MINISTRY WAS LIMITED GEOGRAPHICALLY TO WHEREVER JESUS WAS. WHEN JESUS ASCENDED (ACTS 1.9), THERE WAS AN INTERMEDIATE TIME DURING WHICH THE DISCIPLES WAITED AND PRAYED FOR THE KINGDOM TO COME IN A GREATER FULLNESS. ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST, WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME UPON THOSE FIRST BELIEVERS (ACTS 2.4), AND THE PROMISE WAS MADE THAT ALL FUTURE BELIEVERS WOULD RECEIVE THE SPIRIT (ACTS 2.38-39), THE GEOGRAPHIC LIMITATIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD WERE REMOVED AND THE CHURCH AS WE NOW KNOW IT WAS BORN, THE CHURCH AS A COLLECTION OF GATHERINGS OF BELIEVERS SCATTERED AROUND THE WORLD WHO LIVE TOGETHER WITH GOD UNDER HIS REIGN.

HAVING DETAILED THE ORIGINS OF THE CHURCH, LUKE TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CHURCH WITH A SUMMARY STATEMENT (ACTS 2.42-47). SUMMARY STATEMENTS LIKE THIS ONE OCCUR THROUGHOUT ACTS, LUKE’S LITERARY ATTEMPT TO HELP STITCH TOGETHER THE SERIES OF STORIES AND EXPERIENCES HE HAS GATHERED INTO A COHESIVE NARRATIVE. IN THESE NARRATIVES, LUKE OFTEN REVEALS HE IS ABOUT TO SHIFT IN HIS WRITING AND SUMMARIZES FOR THE READER THE GENERAL (TYPICAL) AND CONTINUED EXPERIENCE OF THE WIDER CHURCH OR BODY OF BELIEVERS DURING THE TIME THE PREVIOUS STORIES COVER; THAT IS, LUKE DRAWS UPON THE THEMES OF THE STORIES HE HAS COLLECTED IN A PARTICULAR SECTION AND DRAWS OUT PARALLELS TO THE LIFE OF THE LARGER CHURCH. SOME OF THESE ARE POSITIVE AND SOME ARE NEGATIVE AS LUKE MAKES NO ATTEMPT TO GLOSS OVER THE STRUGGLES AND PITFALLS ENCOUNTERED BY THE EARLY CHURCH.

THE SUMMARY IN ACTS 2.42-47 IS THE FIRST OF THESE SUMMARIES AND IT HELPS THE READER UNDERSTAND WHAT THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CHURCH WERE LIKE. WE CAN SAFELY ASSUME THAT LUKE IS DISCUSSING AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME (MORE THAN A FEW DAYS) BUT MOST LIKELY HAS THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN MIND RATHER THAN THE LARGER CHURCH WHICH WAS EXPANDING BEYOND JERUSALEM.

ACCORDING TO LUKE, THE EARLY JERUSALEM CHURCH DEVELOPED

A WAY OF BEING WHICH DEVOTED ITSELF TO FOUR MAIN PRACTICES: TEACHING, FELLOWSHIP (KOINONIA), THE LORD'S TABLE, AND PRAYER. THREE OF THESE ARE A CONTINUATION OF PRACTICES DRAWN FROM THE MINISTRY OF JESUS. JESUS HAD TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES. THEREFORE, HIS DISCIPLES IN TURN TAUGHT THE NEW FOLLOWERS OF JESUS, MOST CERTAINLY HANDING OFF NOT ONLY THE TEACHING OF JESUS, BUT ALSO RELATING THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES WITH JESUS AND OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES WHICH POINTED TO JESUS AS THE MESSIAH. (SEE ACTS 2.14-36 FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUCH OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING.) JESUS' MINISTRY WAS MARKED WITH MUCH PRAYER (LUKE 6.12). THEREFORE, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THE EARLY CHURCH WAS MARKED WITH MUCH PRAYER (ACTS 1.14; 2.42). FURTHER, JESUS HAD INSTRUCTED HIS DISCIPLES TO REMEMBER HIM THROUGH A REINTERPRETATION OF THE PASSOVER MEAL (LUKE 22.7-23). THEREFORE, ONE WOULD EXPECT THE DEVOTION TO SUCH A PRACTICE. HOWEVER, ONE OF THE PRACTICES OF THE EARLY CHURCH WAS NEW: FELLOWSHIP.

THE WORD "FELLOWSHIP" IS A LOOSE TRANSLATION OF THE GREEK WORD KOINONIA WHICH REFERS TO THE DEEP UNION AND COMMUNION BETWEEN THE EARLY BELIEVERS. IT ENCOMPASSES IDEAS SUCH AS FRIENDSHIP, CONNECTION, DEVOTION, CARE, CONCERN, AND MORE. WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE IS THIS PRACTICE IS NOT MENTIONED ANYWHERE IN THE GOSPELS; THAT IS, THIS PRACTICE IS NOT PRESENT IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, APPEARING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE EARLY CHURCH. WITH NO PRECEDENT OR COMMANDMENT FROM THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT THIS PRACTICE AROSE AS A WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HAD RECENTLY COME UPON THESE BELIEVERS. THAT THE SPIRIT MOVED THESE EARLY BELIEVERS TO THE PRACTICE OF KOINONIA IS NOT SURPRISING BECAUSE THE MINISTRY OF JESUS WAS INTENDED TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO ONCE MORE CONNECT DEEPLY WITH ONE ANOTHER, TWO BECOMING ONE AS GOD ORIGINALLY INTENDED (GENESIS 2.23-24; EPHESIANS 2.14-18). HERE WE SIMPLY SEE THE SPIRIT LEADING PEOPLE TO THE LIFE WHICH JESUS HAD MADE POSSIBLE. ONE MIGHT SAY THAT THE PRACTICE OF KOINONIA IS THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT TO THE CHURCH, A HANDING OFF OF THE LIFE HE EXPERIENCES IN HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER AND THE SON.

THIS PRACTICE OF KOINONIA IS SO NEW AND FOREIGN THAT LUKE TAKES TIME TO UNPACK ITS PRACTICAL OUTWORKING IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. THE DEEP UNION AND COMMUNION BETWEEN THESE BELIEVERS LED THEM TO HOLD THEIR POSSESSIONS IN COMMON, TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER DEEPLY ENOUGH TO KNOW OF PHYSICAL NEEDS, TO GIVE SACRIFICIALLY TO MEET THESE

NEEDS, AND TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER EACH DAY. IT IS LIKELY THIS PRACTICE OF KOINONIA WHICH CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF OTHER JEWS IN JERUSALEM LEADING TO THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN THESE EARLY DAYS.

THE MODERN CHURCH HAS CARRIED FORWARD THE PRACTICES OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KOINONIA. THE MODERN CHURCH VALUES TEACHING, PRAYER, AND REGULARLY CELEBRATES THE LORD'S TABLE IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIS SACRIFICE. HOWEVER, THE MODERN CHURCH STRUGGLES TO PRACTICE THE DEEP COMMUNION AND UNION KNOWN AS KOINONIA AS EVIDENCED IN THE ABSENCE OF WIDESPREAD OUTWORKING OF THIS PRACTICE LIKE DEVOTION, SACRIFICIAL GIVING, A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF OTHERS, ETC. SOME OF THIS IS BECAUSE KOINONIA IS A WORK OF THE SPIRIT NOT PEOPLE. PEOPLE CAN TEACH, REMEMBER, AND PRAY BUT THEY CANNOT ENGAGE IN KOINONIA APART FROM THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR MIDST. THE ABSENCE OF KOINONIA DOES NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT AN ABSENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN A CONGREGATION OR HIS REFUSAL TO GIVE THIS ASPECT OF HIS LIFE TO A BODY OF BELIEVERS. MOST LIKELY, THE ABSENCE OF KOINONIA IN A CONGREGATION REFLECTS THE UNWILLINGNESS OF A CONGREGATION TO GIVE THE SPIRIT THE FERTILE GROUND IN WHICH KOINONIA MIGHT BE SOWN: TOGETHERNESS. IN THE TEXT, LUKE GOES TO GREAT PAINS TO NOTE HOW THE CHURCH INTENTIONALLY SPENT TIME TOGETHER IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL WAYS, IN WORSHIP AND IN THE SHARING OF EVERYDAY LIFE (ACTS 1.14; 2.1, 44, 46). IT SEEMS THAT THE REGULAR GATHERING OF THESE EARLY BELIEVERS PROVIDED THE SPIRIT THE CONTEXT IN WHICH HE COULD LEAD BELIEVERS INTO WHAT JESUS HAD MADE POSSIBLE ON THE CROSS, KOINONIA.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

WE ARE HARDWIRED TO CONNECT. I AM HARDWIRED TO CONNECT. I/WE ARE MEANT TO LIVE IN INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH ONE ANOTHER, BUT I/WE RARELY EXPERIENCE THIS INTENDED CONNECTION BECAUSE OF MY/OUR FAILURE TO KNOW HOW TO CONNECT. MY BEST ATTEMPTS TO CONNECT GO HAYWIRE BECAUSE I CAN'T SEEM TO SHAKE INGRAINED WAYS OF BEING, WAYS OF BEING WHICH HAVE RESULTED FROM MY ATTEMPTS TO LIVE AS GOD AND NOT AS ONE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. HOWEVER, THE HOPE WHICH I FIND IN THE GOSPEL IS CHRIST HAS DONE WHAT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO CONNECT ONCE MORE. CHRIST HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE (EPHESIANS 2.14-18). ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE CONNECTING. SO, HOW EXACTLY DO I GO ABOUT CONNECTING, EXPERIENCING WHAT JESUS HAS MADE POSSIBLE?

WHEN I STRIKE OUT WITH THE TRUTH OF WHAT JESUS HAS DONE

IN ONE HAND AND MY DESIRE TO CONNECT IN THE OTHER, YOU WOULD THINK ALL WOULD BE WELL. IT IS NOT. TRUTH IN ONE HAND AND DESIRE IN THE OTHER IS NOT ENOUGH. I FIND I STILL STRUGGLE TO CONNECT. IT IS HARD. I DO IT POORLY AND IN WAYS WHICH UNDERMINE WHAT I WANT MOST. SIMPLY PUT, I AM STILL LONELY. I NEED SOMETHING MORE, BUT WHAT IS THE MORE?

I AM COMING TO DISCOVER THAT THE MORE I NEED IS NOT FOUND IN BETTER CONNECTING SKILLS OR FINDING PEOPLE WHO THINK AND ACT LIKE ME. WHAT I NEED IS THE HOLY SPIRIT BECAUSE CONNECTING IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE MEMBER OF THE GODHEAD WHO MAKES REALITY OUT OF WHAT JESUS HAS MADE A POSSIBILITY. THIS WAS WHAT THE FIRST BELIEVERS DISCOVERED. WITHOUT THE SPIRIT THEY COULD PRAY, AND THEY DID. WITHOUT THE SPIRIT THEY COULD TEACH, AND THEY DID. WITHOUT THE SPIRIT, THEY COULD CELEBRATE THE LORD'S TABLE, AND THEY DID. BUT, WITH THE SPIRIT THEY DID SOMETHING THEY HAD NEVER DONE BEFORE. THEY CONNECTED. THEY CONNECTED IN A WAY THEY HAD NEVER BEFORE CONNECTED. THEY CONNECTED IN A WAY THAT EACH PERSON WAS SEEN, HEARD, AND CARED FOR IN REAL WAYS. THEY CONNECTED IN A WAY THAT EACH PERSON WAS VALUED REGARDLESS OF THEIR BACKGROUND, EDUCATION, WAY OF THINKING, OR BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE. THEY CONNECTED IN A WAY THAT THEY WERE LONELY NO MORE.

IF THIS IS WHAT THE SPIRIT CAN DO, THEN I WANT IN, BUT, FIRST, I HAVE A QUESTION. IF THIS IS WHAT THE SPIRIT CAN DO, THEN WHY DOES HE NOT DO IT IN ME? I HAVE THE SPIRIT. I HAVE EXPERIENCED HIS WORK IN ME, WHY NOT THIS WORK? WHAT DID THESE FIRST BELIEVERS HAVE THAT I DO NOT? AS I PONDER THEIR WAY OF BEING AS FOUND IN SCRIPTURE ALL I CAN FIND IS ONE THING. THEY SPENT TIME TOGETHER, REAL TIME TOGETHER. THESE FIRST BELIEVERS DIDN'T JUST WORSHIP TOGETHER. THEY ATE TOGETHER. THEY SPENT TIME TOGETHER. THEY SHARED LIFE TOGETHER. . . EVERY DAY. SOMEHOW, IN THIS FERTILE GROUND OF BEING TOGETHER THE SPIRIT WORKED AND BROUGHT ABOUT THE CONNECTION JESUS HAD MADE POSSIBLE.

WHAT I GLEAN FROM WHAT I SEE IN THEIR LIVES IS THAT WHEN WE ARE WILLING TO GIVE THE SPIRIT THE FERTILE GROUND OF TOGETHERNESS, HE WILL GIVE US THE GIFT OF CONNECTING. HERE IS WHERE THE RUB COMES. I DON'T KNOW IF I WANT TO GIVE HIM THE FERTILE GROUND OF TOGETHERNESS. I HAVE THINGS TO DO. I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES. I HAVE "ME-TIME" AND SO MUCH MORE. HOW COULD I EVER DREAM OF GIVING THESE UP? BUT, THEN AGAIN, I LONG TO CONNECT. I WAS MADE TO CONNECT. SO, MAYBE THE BETTER QUESTION IS HOW COULD I NOT GIVE THEM UP?

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WE WERE MADE TO CONNECT, TO EXPERIENCE DEEP AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS, BUT WE FAIL TO CONNECT BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW HOW. WE ARE NOT ABLE TO CONNECT, OUR ATTEMPT TO PLAY GOD FOREVER MARRING OUR CONNECTING KNOW-HOW. BUT, THERE IS HOPE. JESUS HAS MADE CONNECTING POSSIBLE ONCE MORE. WE REALLY CAN LIVE THE LIFE WE WERE MEANT TO LIVE, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN LEAD US TO THIS LIFE. WE SIMPLY MUST GIVE THE SPIRIT ROOM TO WORK. SO, WHAT IS THE ROOM HE NEEDS? THE FERTILE GROUND THE HOLY SPIRIT NEEDS TO LEAD US TO THE CONNECTING JESUS HAS MADE POSSIBLE IS THAT OF TOGETHERNESS WITH OTHERS, REAL, REGULAR, INTENTIONAL BEING WITH OTHERS. THIS IS WHERE THINGS GET DIFFICULT. WE BRISTLE AT THE THOUGHT OF GIVING UP AN HOUR OF OUR TIME BECAUSE IT IS SO PRECIOUS. THEREFORE, WE MISS THE LIFE TO WHICH THE SPIRIT CAN LEAD US. IT IS HERE THAT WE MUST DO SOME SERIOUS HEARTWORK. WE MUST ASK WHAT WE WANT THE MOST. THIS IS NO SIMPLE QUESTION. WHAT DO WE WANT, REALLY? DO WE WANT THE LIFE WE WERE MEANT TO LIVE, OR DO WE WANT OUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOW? DO WE WANT TO CONNECT, OR DO WE WANT OUR FAVORITE SPORTING EVENT? DO WE WANT TO BE LONELY NO MORE, OR DO WE WANT THE MANY AND ASSORTED THINGS WHICH NOW MAKE UP OUR LIVES? IF WE SAY WE WANT THE LIFE WE WERE MEANT TO LIVE, IT IS POSSIBLE, BUT IT COMES AT A COST, A COST OF OUR PRESENT LIVES. THIS SHOULD NOT SURPRISE US. JESUS TOLD US THIS WAS THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP, BUT IN HIS PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (MATTHEW 13.45-46), HE REMINDS US THAT IT IS MORE THAN WORTH THE COST. THIS WEEK, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SPEND SOME TIME ASKING WHAT YOU REALLY WANT. COUNT THE COST. EVALUATE THE BENEFITS. TALK WITH GOD ABOUT IT. DON'T BE AFRAID TO STRUGGLE, TO BE BRUTALLY HONEST, TO BE WHO YOU ARE WITH HIM. YOU MIGHT TALK TO A FRIEND ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH ABOUT HOW THIS CONVERSATION IS GOING SO THEY MIGHT ENCOURAGE AND CHEER YOU ON AS YOU SEEK TO FOLLOW AFTER CHRIST.



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