



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 9, 2018

Discussion Guide

FAITH WITH FEELING

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

- WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE AN EMOTIONAL PERSON? 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 OF ETERNAL LIFE.
- READ MARK 10.17-27 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE.
- WHAT EMOTIONS DO YOU ENCOUNTER IN THIS EPISODE FROM JESUS' LIFE? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.
- READ MATTHEW 6.19-24. IN THIS PASSAGE JESUS NOTES THAT THE EXPRESSION OF DEVOTION INVOLVES

EMOTION, A REALITY SEEN IN THE EMOTIONAL CONFLICT WHICH ARISES WHEN ONE SEEKS TO SPLIT HIS DEVOTION.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES JESUS BRING THIS TEACHING TO BEAR IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE RICH MAN?

- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, MIGHT JESUS BE INVITING THE MAN TO MAKE A RESPONSE TO GOD WHICH INVOLVED EMOTION?
- DO YOU FIND THAT PEOPLE TODAY ARE INVITED TO MAKE EMOTION PART OF THEIR FAITH JOURNEY? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT BENEFITS MIGHT EMOTION BRING TO THE FAITH JOURNEY?
- DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE EASY OR DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO INTEGRATE EMOTION INTO YOUR FAITH JOURNEY? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY TAKING SOME TIME TO PRAY THAT GOD WOULD GRANT A SENSE OF PERMISSION TO EACH MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO PURSUE FAITH WITH FEELING.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

ETERNAL LIFE

THE CONCEPT OF ETERNAL LIFE GRADUALLY AROSE IN SCRIPTURE, BUT IT TAKES A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. NO FORMAL DEFINITION OF ETERNAL LIFE IS FOUND IN SCRIPTURE. THE CLOSEST TO A DEFINITION IN SCRIPTURE IS JESUS' STATEMENT IN JOHN 17.3 WHERE HE NOTES THAT ETERNAL LIFE CONSISTS OF KNOWING GOD THROUGH THE SON. THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES OFFER LITTLE HELP IN FORMALLY DEFINING ETERNAL LIFE BECAUSE MOST OF THE TEACHING THEY CONTAIN ABOUT THIS SUBJECT

IS DIRECTED TOWARD ADDRESSING FALSE TEACHINGS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE. FOR INSTANCE, IN 1 THESSALONIANS, PAUL SEEKS TO CORRECT A FALSE TEACHING ABOUT DEATH SEPARATING LIVING AND DECEASED BELIEVERS AT THE COMING OF THE LORD (1 THESSALONIANS 4.13-18), AND IN 1 CORINTHIANS, HE SEEKS TO CORRECT A TEACHING THAT ETERNAL LIFE COULD BE OBTAINED WITHOUT A PHYSICAL RESURRECTION OF THE BODY (1 CORINTHIANS 4.8; 15.12-19). IT SEEMS THAT THE EARLY CHURCH BELIEVED IN ETERNAL LIFE, A REALITY MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS, BUT THE EARLIEST DAYS OF THE CHURCH WERE SPENT WORKING OUT A FORMAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT.

THE EARLIEST MENTION OF ETERNAL LIFE IN SCRIPTURE APPEARS IN DANIEL 12 WHERE IT STATES THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE RAISED TO ETERNAL LIFE (DANIEL 12.1-2). THIS SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT THE JEWS FIRST BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE DURING THE EXILIC AND POST-EXILIC PERIOD. BEFORE THIS, LITTLE THOUGHT WAS GIVEN TO LIFE BEYOND PHYSICAL LIFE BY THE JEWS. AT MOST, THE JEWS TAUGHT THE DEAD MOVED TO A SHADY EXISTENCE IN A PLACE CALLED SHEOL (DEUTERONOMY 32.22; AMOS 9.2; PROVERBS 9.18). SOMETIME DURING THE EXILE AND FOLLOWING, SOME JEWS, AS THEY REFLECTED ON THE PROPHETS, BEGAN TO PONDER THE POSSIBILITY OF A LIFE BEYOND THE PRESENT, PHYSICAL LIFE. NOT ALL JEWS WERE CONVINCED THAT SUCH A LIFE EXISTED (JOSEPHUS ANTIQUITIES 18.11-22; MARK 12.18-27). HOWEVER, THOSE JEWS WHO BELIEVED IN A LIFE BEYOND THE PRESENT, PHYSICAL LIFE UNDERSTOOD SUCH A LIFE TO EXIST NOT IN "HEAVEN" BUT IN A RENEWED EARTH, A CONCEPT BASED ON THE TEACHING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD IN THE PROPHETS.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE CONCEPT OF ETERNAL LIFE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PART OF JESUS' TEACHING AS EVIDENCED THROUGHOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. JESUS TAUGHT THAT ETERNAL LIFE BEGAN WHEN ONE WAS BORN AGAIN AND THAT IT CONSISTED IN KNOWING GOD THROUGH THE SON (JOHN 3.3, 15-16, 18, 36; 17.3). AS IMPORTANT AS JESUS' TEACHING WAS TO MAKING ETERNAL LIFE A CENTRAL CONCEPT FOR THE EARLY BELIEVERS, IT WAS JESUS' RESURRECTION WHICH CEMENTED THE CONCEPT AND FORCED THE CHURCH TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT. JESUS' BODILY RESURRECTION MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE THAT SOME FORM OF LIFE EXISTED BEYOND THIS PHYSICAL LIFE, AND THAT IT INVOLVED BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL REALITIES.

IT SEEMS THE EARLY CHURCH TOOK CARE TO EMPHASIZE BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE ASPECTS OF ETERNAL LIFE. PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT PRESENT ASPECTS OF ETERNAL LIFE SUCH AS PEOPLE POSSESSING NEW LIFE IN CHRIST (COLOSSIANS 3.1; ROMANS 6.13) AND EXISTING AS NEW CREATIONS OF GOD (2 CORINTHIANS 5.17). THE CONTRAST PAUL SEEMS TO MAKE IS THAT PRIOR TO FAITH, PEOPLE ARE DEAD IN SIN BUT UPON FOLLOWING CHRIST THEY BECOME ALIVE. THIS NEW LIFE IS MEANT TO GUIDE AND GROW WITHIN THE NEW BELIEVER, BUT THE FULLNESS OF THIS LIFE WILL NOT BE EXPERIENCED UNTIL JESUS'

RETURN WHICH BRINGS ABOUT A RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. AT THIS POINT, ALL THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE TRANSFORMED TO EXPERIENCE THE FULLNESS OF WHAT THEY ALREADY POSSESS, ETERNAL LIFE (1 JOHN 2.17, 25, 28; 3.2-3, 24; 4.13).

- ONE MIGHT SUMMARIZE THE NEW TESTAMENT'S TEACHING CONCERNING ETERNAL LIFE AS FOLLOWS:
- ETERNAL LIFE CONSISTS OF KNOWING GOD WHICH LEADS ONE TO THE EXPERIENCE OF REAL LIFE.
- THE EXPERIENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE BEGINS WITH THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST AND INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- ETERNAL LIFE NOW FILLS AND ENLIVENS THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST, BUT THE FULLNESS OF THIS LIFE WILL ONLY BE EXPERIENCED WITH THE RETURN OF CHRIST AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

THE TEXT

MARK 10.17-27

JESUS' ENCOUNTER WITH A MAN IN THE REGION OF JUDEA (MARK 10.1) PROVIDES A CONVERSATION WHICH CHALLENGES PREVALENT EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT IT TOOK TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD. SIMPLY PUT, THE RICH WERE NOT ESPECIALLY FAVORED OR BLESSED BY GOD (A COMMON ANCIENT AND MODERN THOUGHT), BUT OFTEN STRUGGLED MORE THAN MOST TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THEIR WEALTH A HINDRANCE TO SUCH ENTRANCE (MARK 10.23). THE CHALLENGING OF KINGDOM EXPECTATIONS SEEMS TO BE CENTRAL TO THIS PERIOD OF JESUS' MINISTRY IN THIS REGION. IN THE PREVIOUS SCENE, MARK RECORDS A CONTROVERSY OVER WHETHER CHILDREN WERE WELCOME IN THE KINGDOM (MARK 10.13-16), AND IN THE FOLLOWING SCENE, MARK RECORDS A CHALLENGING OF EXPECTATIONS OF WHO WAS GREAT WITHIN THE KINGDOM (MARK 10.35-45). THIS SECTION OF MARK'S GOSPEL CONCERNING THE CHALLENGING OF KINGDOM EXPECTATIONS CONSISTS OF SERIES OF PASSAGES SURROUNDING THE THIRD PREDICTION OF JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS AND SUBSEQUENT RESURRECTION, AN IDEA FOREIGN TO PREVALENT THINKING ABOUT THE ROLE AND NATURE OF THE JEWISH MESSIAH (MARK 10.32-34).

MARK, AND THE OTHER GOSPEL WRITERS, HAD MANY STORIES ABOUT JESUS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE WHEN THEY WROTE THEIR GOSPELS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THEY PURPOSEFULLY CHOSE TO WRITE THE STORIES THEY DID, NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE THESE WERE THE ONLY ONES THEY REMEMBERED. THEY WROTE THESE SPECIFIC STORIES IN THE ORDER THEY DID TO MAKE LARGER POINTS ACROSS THE NARRATIVES. SIMPLY PUT, THE GOSPEL WRITERS MEANT FOR READERS TO LEARN KINGDOM TRUTHS FROM INDIVIDUAL EPISODES AND FROM THE WAY THEY ORDERED THESE EPISODES. WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH MINING THE TEXT FOR KINGDOM TRUTHS WITHIN THESE INDIVIDUAL EPISODES. HEARING THE TRUTHS THE GOSPEL AUTHORS SOUGHT TO COMMUNICATE ACROSS EPISODES IS DONE BY STEPPING BACK AND CONNECTING THE

DOTS ACROSS A SERIES OF EPISODES. IF ONE STEPS BACK AND THINKS ABOUT THE LARGER POINT MARK IS TRYING TO COMMUNICATE IN THIS SECTION OF HIS GOSPEL, IT IS OBVIOUS FROM THIS SERIES OF CHALLENGE STORIES THAT MARK SEEMS TO EXPRESS THE KINGDOM OF GOD DOES NOT WORK ACCORDING TO HUMAN EXPECTATIONS OR RULES, A GOOD POINT TO REMEMBER AS WE THINK ABOUT LIVING AS KINGDOM PEOPLE!

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE RICH MAN OCCURS IN AN UNSPECIFIED PLACE, NOT FAR FROM WHERE HE BLESSED THE CHILDREN (MARK 10.16-17). THE MAN APPROACHES JESUS BY FALLING ON HIS KNEES AND ADDRESSING JESUS AS A GOOD TEACHER. THIS FORM OF VERBAL ADDRESS FOR A RABBI IS UNHEARD OF OUTSIDE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, SOMETHING JESUS POINTS OUT TO THE MAN. WHILE SOME ARGUE THAT JESUS' CORRECTION OF THE MAN IS AN ATTEMPT TO INVITE HIM TO RECOGNIZE THE DIVINITY OF JESUS, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE JESUS WAS SIMPLY CORRECTING THE MAN, ENCOURAGING HIM TO USE THE APPROPRIATE ADDRESS FOR A RABBI IN THIS PERIOD. REGARDLESS OF THE INTENT, THE MAN DOES NOT CALL JESUS GOOD AGAIN.

THE MAN'S POSTURE INDICATES MORE THAN DEFERENCE. IT SEEMS TO POINT TO A LEVEL OF DESPERATION NOT UNLIKE THAT OF THE LEPER WHO APPROACHED JESUS IN A SIMILAR MANNER (MARK 1.40). THE MAN WANTS JESUS TO ANSWER A QUESTION ABOUT WHAT CAN BE DONE TO OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE. THE CONCEPT OF ETERNAL LIFE WAS A MATTER OF DEBATE IN JEWISH THEOLOGICAL CIRCLES DURING THE TIME OF JESUS. THIS MAN SEEMS TO SIDE WITH THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES IN BELIEVING IN THE EXISTENCE OF A LIFE BEYOND THE PRESENT, PHYSICAL LIFE. HE MAY BE APPROACHING JESUS BECAUSE PART OF JESUS' TEACHING INVOLVED TEACHING ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE (JOHN 3). PERHAPS, HE BELIEVED JESUS HAD AN ANSWER WHICH HAD ELUDED OTHER RABBIS. IN THIS PERIOD, TYPICAL ANSWERS REGARDING ETERNAL LIFE INVOLVED TWO PARTS. FIRST, THE RABBI WOULD BEGIN WITH THE LAW AND THEN HE WOULD MOVE TO INVITE THE QUESTIONER TO BECOME PART OF THE RABBI'S GROUP. JESUS IS NO EXCEPTION IN HIS APPROACH.

JESUS BEGINS BY POINTING THE MAN TO THE COMMANDMENTS FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THE DECALOGUE (EXODUS 20). HE MENTIONS COMMANDMENTS 5-9, LEAVING OUT 10 (COVETOUSNESS), 1-4 ABOUT HONORING GOD, AND ADDS ONE ABOUT NOT DEFRAUDING (MARK 10.19). SINCE COVETOUSNESS CAN BE ASSOCIATED WITH IDOLATRY, IT SEEMS THAT JESUS WANTS TO FOCUS ON THE COMMANDMENTS WHICH INVOLVE ONE'S HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS WHILE LEAVING OUT ONE'S VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. HIS REASON WILL BECOME APPARENT IN THE SUBSEQUENT VERSES.

HEARING JESUS' ANSWER, THE MAN NOTES HE HAS KEPT THESE COMMANDMENTS SINCE HIS YOUTH, A REFERENCE TO A PERIOD BEGINNING WITH HIS 12TH BIRTHDAY WHEN THE WEIGHT OF KEEPING THE LAW WAS PLACED UPON JEWISH BOYS. JESUS LOOKS HARD AT THE MAN AND BELIEVES HIS REPORT. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THIS

MAN WAS SINLESS BUT THAT HE HAD A TRUE INTENT TO HONOR THE LAW. PAUL MAKES A SIMILAR STATEMENT REGARDING THE LAW IN PHILIPPIANS 3.6. HOWEVER, THE MAN SEEMS TO RECOGNIZE THAT HIS OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW WITH RESPECT TO HIS HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS WAS NOT ENOUGH. HE STILL DID NOT POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE. JESUS SENSES THIS MAN IS TRULY SEEKING AFTER LIFE AND HIS AFFECTIONS FOR THE MAN ARE KINDLED. IT IS OUT OF HIS LOVE FOR THIS MAN THAT HE PROVIDES AN HONEST AND DIRECT ANSWER.

THE MAN IS LACKING ETERNAL LIFE NOT BECAUSE HE HAS MISSED THE INTENT OF THE LAW WITH RESPECT TO PEOPLE BUT HE HAS MISSED THE INTENT OF THE LAW WITH RESPECT TO GOD. THE MAN SHOULD SELL HIS POSSESSIONS AND FOLLOW JESUS. IT MIGHT BE TEMPTING TO THINK JESUS IS JUST ADDING ANOTHER RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS UPON THE MAN, BUT THIS IS NOT THE CASE. THE LANGUAGE JESUS USES AT THIS POINT IS REMINISCENT OF HIS TEACHING ABOUT THE PROPER ROLE OF WEALTH IN THE LIFE OF HIS FOLLOWERS (MATTHEW 6.19-24).

JESUS TAUGHT THAT THOSE WHO WERE PART OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD DID NOT DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO THE PURSUIT OF MONEY BUT RATHER THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE PURSUIT OF GOD. THIS PURSUIT LED TO THE SHAPING OF WHAT GUIDED AND ENLIVENED A PERSON (MATTHEW 6.19-23). HOWEVER, IN THIS TEACHING, JESUS WENT FURTHER. HE NOTED THAT THE PURSUIT OF MONEY OR GOD INVOLVED THE CHOICE OF WHAT ONE SERVED. HE NOTED THAT DEVOTION TO MORE THAN ONE THING WAS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE IT LED TO A CONFLICT OF EMOTIONS; THAT IS, EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT WAS CENTRAL TO THE EXPRESSION OF DEVOTION. TO PURSUE DEVOTION TO MORE THAN ONE THING CREATED AN EMOTIONAL CONFLICT WITHIN A PERSON. SIMPLY PUT, ACCORDING TO JESUS, THE PURSUIT OF GOD INVOLVED MORE THAN BLIND OBEDIENCE. THE DEVOTED PURSUIT OF GOD (OR MONEY!) INVOLVED THE KINDLING OF AFFECTIONS (MATTHEW 6.24).

ONE MUST HEAR THIS TEACHING OF JESUS, FOR IT FORMS THE BASIS OF HIS INVITATION TO THE RICH MAN. WHEN JESUS INVITES THE MAN TO PURGE HIMSELF OF WEALTH, HE IS INVITING HIM TO DEVOTE HIMSELF FULLY TO GOD, TO CHOSE WHOM HE WOULD SERVE. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO JESUS, THIS CHOOSING WOULD INVOLVE THE KINDLING AND DIRECTING OF EMOTION TOWARD GOD. IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS IS ASKING FOR FAITH WITH EMOTION FORMING AN IMPORTANT BUILDING BLOCK FOR FAITH. ONE MIGHT SAY, JESUS IS ASKING THE MAN TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL HE IS (MATTHEW 22.34-40). IN EVERY CASE, AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT TO LOVE INVOLVES AFFECTION. THE MAN RESPONDS WITH OBVIOUS SADNESS PHYSICALLY; THAT IS, HE HAS AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO JESUS' EMOTIONAL INVITATION! HE GOES AWAY REJECTING THE INVITATION BECAUSE HE COULD NOT BRING HIMSELF TO ALIGN HIS AFFECTIONS WITH GOD RATHER THAN HIS MONEY. IT IS THIS REFUSAL TO LOVE GOD RATHER THAN MONEY WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE RICH TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD WHICH MAY GIVE ONE INSIGHT INTO PAUL'S STATEMENT URGING THE AVOIDANCE OF THE LOVE OF MONEY (1 TIMOTHY 6.10).

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

WHEN I BEGAN MY JOURNEY OF FAITH, IT INVOLVED TEARS. I AM NOT SURE WHY I CRIED, BUT I WEPT UNCONTROLLABLY FOR WELL OVER AN HOUR, A MESSY PUDDLE OF EMOTION. WHILE I DO NOT SIDE WITH THOSE WHO SAY SUCH AN EMOTIONAL DISPLAY IS NECESSARY, IT WAS PART OF MY FIRST STEPS AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST. HOWEVER, I WAS QUICKLY ASSURED THAT SUCH DISPLAYS WERE TO BE THE EXCEPTION RATHER THAN THE RULE. EMOTIONS HAD NO PART, AT LEAST NO SIGNIFICANT ROLE TO PLAY, ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH. FAITH WAS ALL ABOUT REASON, LOGIC, AND DOCTRINE. EMOTIONS WERE FINE AS LONG AS THE OTHERS WERE IN PLACE, BUT IT WAS PRETTY CLEAR THAT IT WAS JUST BETTER TO AVOID EMOTION ALTOGETHER. SO, I JETTISONED EMOTION AND MY FAITH BECAME A SERIES OF DO'S, DON'TS, SHOULD AND SHOULD NOTS. GOD WAS THERE, IN MY MIND, BUT NOT IN MY LIFE. IT FELT WRONG, BUT NOTHING PEOPLE SAID TO DO TO BRING GOD FROM MY HEAD TO MY HEART WORKED. THIS IS PROBABLY BECAUSE EVERYTHING I WAS TOLD TO DO INVOLVED MY HEAD, THE RATIONAL PART OF ME. FOR YEARS I LEFT THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF ME UNDEVELOPED, A FORGOTTEN AND NEGLECTED ASPECT OF THE JOURNEY OF FAITH.

THIS NEVER REALLY MADE SENSE TO ME. AFTER ALL, DIDN'T JESUS SAY WE WERE TO LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER (MATTHEW 22.34-40)? HOWEVER, I WAS QUICKLY ASSURED THAT REAL LOVE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH FEELINGS. IT WAS ALL DEVOTION. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TEMPTED TO TRY THAT ONE OUT ON RACHEL, BUT I AM TOO AFRAID OF WHAT SHE MIGHT DO TO ME. AS I HAVE MOVED THROUGH THE YEARS, I HAVE BECOME MORE AND MORE CONVINCED THAT FEELING REALLY IS SUPPOSED TO BE PART OF THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, AN IMPORTANT PART, BUT I NEEDED A BIBLICAL ARGUMENT TO BACK UP MY HUNCH. THAT WAS WHEN I READ THE STORY OF JESUS' ENCOUNTER WITH THE RICH MAN FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE THE FIRST TIME EVEN THOUGH IT WAS PROBABLY THE HUNDRETH TIME.

WHEN I READ THIS STORY, IT HIT ME THAT JESUS WASN'T ASKING THIS MAN TO BECOME POOR. HE WASN'T INVITING HIM TO BLIND OBEDIENCE. HE WAS INVITING HIM TO LOVE, TO PASSIONATELY LOVE GOD MORE THAN HIS MONEY. WHAT WAS MISSING FROM THIS MAN'S LIFE WAS PASSION, DEEP, BOILING-OVER PASSION FOR GOD. UNLESS THIS MAN HAD THIS KIND OF PASSION (A PASSION-DRIVEN FAITH?) HE WOULD NEVER FIND THE ETERNAL LIFE HE LONGED TO POSSESS. WITH THIS IN MIND, I REALIZED LOVE OF GOD IS ABOUT MORE THAN OBEDIENCE, IT IS OBEDIENCE DRIVEN BY EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO GOD. AS ELATED AS I SHOULD BE, I FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO REJOICE OVER MY DISCOVERY. I REALIZED THAT THE REASON WAS I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS TO REJOICE. I HAD NEVER BEEN ALLOWED TO DO SO. SIMPLY PUT, I COULDN'T

MAKE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE BECAUSE EMOTIONS HAD NEVER BEEN A PART OF MY FAITH JOURNEY. I WAS STUNTED. I BELIEVE THIS IS THE CASE FOR MANY PEOPLE OF GOD, BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY. I BELIEVE THAT WITH PERMISSION, WE CAN LEARN TO FEEL ONCE MORE AND CAN DISCOVER THE ROLE OF THE DEEP-BOILING OVER EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE WE ARE MEANT TO HAVE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WHEN MANY OF US CAME TO FAITH, WE WERE TAUGHT EMOTIONS WERE NOT TO BE TRUSTED. EMOTIONS, IF THEY WERE ALLOWED AT ALL, WERE TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO REASON, LOGIC, AND DOCTRINE. WHILE THIS REJECTION OF EMOTION DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE OF OUR CALLS TO LOVE GOD AND HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM—EVERY RELATIONSHIP INVOLVES EMOTION—WE DUTIFULLY JETTISONED EMOTION FROM OUR FAITH JOURNEY. IN SO DOING, FAITH BECAME WHAT IT CAN ONLY BE WITHOUT EMOTION, LEGALISM. GOD BECAME A FIGMENT OF OUR IMAGINATION, AN IMAGE BASED ON DOCTRINAL PROPOSITIONS, DISTANT, AND DETACHED FROM OUR OWN VERY REAL, EARTHY EXISTENCE. HOWEVER, IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE THIS WAY. GOD CREATED US TO FEEL. WE ARE EMOTIONAL BEINGS AND OUR EMOTIONS ARE MEANT TO BE A VERY REAL PART OF THE FAITH JOURNEY, NOT SOME SECONDARY EXPERIENCE WE ARE BETTER WITHOUT. SCRIPTURE PLAINLY TEACHES US EMOTION IS A PART OF OUR FAITH JOURNEY. WE JUST HAVE TO HAVE EYES TO SEE IT. JESUS CLEARLY CALLS US TO LOVE (MATTHEW 22.34-40), AND LOVE CERTAINLY INVOLVES EMOTION. HE INVITES PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM, AND THIS FOLLOWING BEGINS WITH THE KINDLING OF AFFECTIONS (MARK 10.17-25). WE COULD GO ON, BUT THE EXAMPLES ARE RICH AND DEEP. WE REALLY DO HAVE PERMISSION TO FEEL. HOWEVER, WE ARE LEFT AT SOMETHING OF A DISADVANTAGE WHEN WE SEEK TO ACT ON THIS PERMISSION. SO MANY OF US HAVE NEGLECTED THIS PART OF OUR LIVES FOR SO LONG WE NO LONGER KNOW HOW TO FEEL, NOR ARE WE ABLE TO NAME AND RECOGNIZE OUR EMOTIONS. THIS WEEK, WE RECOMMEND TAKING TIME EACH EVENING TO REVIEW THE DAY SO YOU MIGHT RECOGNIZE AND NAME THE EMOTIONS YOU EXPERIENCED. USE THE "FEELINGS" CHART TO HELP YOU IDENTIFY JUST HOW OFTEN AND FREQUENTLY YOU EXPERIENCE EMOTIONS. THIS RECOGNIZING OF EMOTIONS IS THE FIRST STEP TO INTEGRATING EMOTION INTO THE JOURNEY OF FAITH.



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