



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MARCH 31, 2019

Discussion Guide

DEALING WITH THE LOG

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

- DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "YOU CAN'T HAND OFF WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE."? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?

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.)

- DISCUSS THE USE OF JUDGEMENT AND ITS COGNATES IN SCRIPTURE.
- READ MATTHEW 7.1-6 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, ALOUD.
- WHAT REASONS DOES JESUS PROVIDE FOR NOT JUDGING OTHERS? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.

- JESUS DOES NOT INSTRUCT HIS FOLLOWERS TO IGNORE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. WHAT GUIDANCE DOES HE PROVIDE CONCERNING THE PRESENCE OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS?
- IN YOUR MIND, DO FOLLOWERS OF JESUS APPLY THESE INSTRUCTIONS WELL? WOULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DO YOU FIND DIFFICULT IN THESE EXHORTATIONS? WHAT PITFALLS, IF ANY, EXIST IN SEEKING TO OBEY THEM?
- WITH OUR PRESENT DISCUSSION OF PEACEMAKING IN VIEW, HOW MIGHT WE APPLY THESE WORDS TO OUR CALLING TO MAKE PEACE?
- WHY MIGHT THIS APPROACH TO PEACEMAKING BE NECESSARY? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO APPROACH PEACEMAKING IN THIS MANNER AS A CONGREGATION? AS AN INDIVIDUAL? AS A GROUP?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY DISCUSSING VARIOUS PERSONAL AREAS IN NEED OF PEACEMAKING. HOLD THESE BEFORE GOD, ASKING FOR HIS PEACE TO MEND THE DIVIDES PRESENT.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

JUDGEMENT

IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD, THE TERM “JUDGMENT” AND ITS COGNATES WERE USED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY WITHIN LEGAL SETTINGS. THE CENTRAL CONCEPT OF THIS WORD-GROUP INVOLVED THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING AND THEN PASSING JUDGEMENT UPON A PERSON OR ISSUE. AS TIME PASSED, OTHER COGNATES OF THIS WORD-GROUP WERE FORMED WITH ASSOCIATED MEANINGS: INTERROGATE, DISPUTE, AND INVESTIGATE.

THE SEPTUAGINT (LXX) OR GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT USED THE JUDGEMENT WORD-GROUP IN KEEPING WITH THE CLASSICAL GREEK USAGE. HOWEVER, SEVERAL MODIFYING ELEMENTS WERE ADDED TO THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF THESE TERMS. FIRST, THE HEBREW PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD JUDGMENT TO BE PART OF THE PROCESS OF SEEKING JUSTICE. IN THEIR MIND, JUSTICE INVOLVED ACTIONS WHICH RESTORED PEACE WITHIN A COMMUNITY. THIS PROCESS DID INVOLVE INDIVIDUAL LEADERS, AS WELL AS COMMUNITY HEADS, AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY (JUDGES; RUTH 4.1-2). HOWEVER, JUSTICE WAS ROOTED IN THE PERSON AND CHARACTER OF GOD WHO WAS LORD AND JUDGE (DEUTERONOMY 1.17). AS LORD AND JUDGE, GOD NEVER DEVIATES FROM JUSTICE (PSALM 7.11). HE CALLS HEAVEN AND EARTH AS HIS TRIBUNAL (ISAIAH 1.2; JEREMIAH 2.12; MICAH 6.1). HE IS THE JUDGE OF THE NATIONS, NOT JUST THE ISRAELITES (GENESIS 11.1-9; PSALM 67.4; JOEL 3.2), AND HE WILL PASS FINAL JUDGEMENT OF ALL PEOPLE AND NATIONS AT A TIME THE PROPHETS REFERRED TO AS THE DAY OF THE LORD (ISAIAH 2.12-18; JEREMIAH 46.10; EZEKIEL 30.3).

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, ONE FINDS THE AUTHORS USES THE TERM JUDGEMENT AND ITS COGNATES IN KEEPING WITH ITS USAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, INCLUDING THE ADDITIONAL IDEAS OF GOD AS THE ULTIMATE LORD AND JUDGE. THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PRESS FURTHER INTO THE DAY OF THE LORD OR FINAL JUDGEMENT OF GOD, NOTING THIS JUDGEMENT BEGINS WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND THEN EXTENDS TO THE NATIONS (1 PETER 4.17; ACTS 2.25;

HEBREWS 6.2), AND THAT THIS JUDGEMENT WOULD INVOLVE THE ISSUING OF PUNISHMENT (JOHN 3.17-18; ROMANS 2.12; 2 THESSALONIANS 2.12; JAMES 5.9). IN LIGHT OF GOD BEING BOTH LORD AND JUDGE, HIS PEOPLE WERE THEREFORE LIMITED IN THEIR SCOPE AND ABILITY TO JUDGE (MATTHEW 7.1). WHILE GOD’S PEOPLE COULD DISTINGUISH, AND WERE TO EVALUATE BEHAVIORS WITHIN THE CHURCH, GOD ALONE HELD THE RIGHT TO CONDEMN (1 CORINTHIANS 5.12, 6.2). THE REALITY THAT ALL PEOPLE ARE FALLEN AND CORRUPT IN THEIR WAYS BELIES THEIR ABILITY TO PASS PROPER AND FITTING JUDGEMENTS (ROMANS 1-3).

THE TEXT MATTHEW 7.1-7:

IN MATTHEW 7, JESUS TURNS TO ISSUES OF JUDGEMENT, THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING AND PASSING JUDGEMENT UPON PEOPLE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE LARGER CONTEXT IN WHICH THIS DISCUSSION IS FOUND, SANDWICHED IN-BETWEEN EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING WORRY AND INSTRUCTIONS INVOLVING PRAYING FOR ONE’S NEEDS. BOTH THE DISCUSSION CONCERNING WORRY AND THE INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING PRAYER INVOLVE A MINDSET IN WHICH THE BELIEVER RELEASES RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL TO GOD. IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE BELIEVER CAN TRUST GOD WITH ISSUES BEYOND HIS POWER AND CONTROL. COMING IN-BETWEEN THESE DISCUSSIONS WHICH FOCUS ON TRUSTING GOD WITH ISSUES BEYOND ONE’S POWER AND CONTROL, THIS SAME THEME INFUSES JESUS’ DISCUSSION CONCERNING JUDGEMENT. THE PROCESS OF JUDGING IS ONE WHICH THE BELIEVER CAN RELEASE TO GOD AS IT CONCERNS ISSUES BEYOND HIS POWER AND CONTROL.

JESUS IS CLEAR IN HIS CALL TO RELEASE THE PROCESS OF JUDGING TO GOD WITH HIS COMMAND NOT TO JUDGE. HOWEVER, THE HUMAN NATURE FORMED IN THE IMAGE OF THE DIVINE LONGS TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY IN PASSING JUDGEMENT AS A MEANS OF REFLECTING THE DIVINE IMAGE. HOWEVER, THE MARRIED STATE OF THE HUMAN IMAGE MAKES ANY SUCH JUDGEMENT FAULTY, A POOR EXPRESSION OF GOD’S CHARACTER (ROMANS 1-3). THEREFORE, THE PROCESS OF HUMANITY PASSING JUDGEMENT IN THE PRESENT IS DENIED BY JESUS. JESUS NOTES THAT SHOULD THE CITIZENS OF

GOD'S KINGDOM PASS JUDGEMENT, IT WOULD CREATE A CYCLE OF JUDGEMENT IN WHICH THE STANDARD THEY HAD APPLIED TO OTHERS WOULD BE APPLIED TO THEM. THE THOUGHT OF FALLEN PEOPLE USING FAULTY STANDARDS TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON FALLEN BEHAVIORS IS DARK AT BEST.

IN DENYING HUMANITY THE PROCESS OF PASSING JUDGEMENT, JESUS IS NOT SAYING NO BEHAVIORS EXIST WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED AND CORRECTED. HUMANITY IS FALLEN. JESUS PROPOSES ANOTHER WAY. HE SUGGESTS THAT CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM SHOULD BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING AND ADDRESSING THEIR OWN AREAS OF UNRIGHTOUSNESS. ONLY WHEN ONE HAD FULLY ADDRESSED HIS OWN UNRIGHTOUSNESS WOULD HE BE ABLE TO ADDRESS WITH INTEGRITY THE UNRIGHTOUSNESS OF ANOTHER. TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE TO PRETEND TO BE RIGHTEOUS; THAT IS, TO PRETEND TO BE LIKE GOD (HYPOCRISY).

JESUS CONCLUDES HIS DISCUSSION CONCERNING JUDGEMENT WITH TWO PROVERBS CONCERNING PEARLS, PIGS, AND DOGS. AT FIRST THESE PROVERBS SEEM TO BE OUT OF PLACE, BUT UPON CLOSER INSPECTION THEY FIT THE DISCUSSION WELL. IF JUDGEMENT IS DENIED, THE TEMPTATION MIGHT BE TO EXPRESS THE DESIRE TO JUDGE IN LESS OBVIOUS WAYS. WITH THESE PROVERBS, JESUS SPEAKS TO THIS TEMPTATION EXPRESSED THROUGH ADVICE GIVING. AT ITS WORST, ADVICE GIVING IS A TWISTED WAY OF USING TRUTH WRAPPED IN A PACKAGE OF FALSE CONCERN FOR THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE OF CONDEMNING A PERSON AND THEIR BEHAVIOR. JESUS WARNS THAT YIELDING TO THIS TEMPTATION WOULD YIELD POOR RESULTS, THE ADVICE GIVER BEING TORN TO BITS AND THEIR BEAUTIFUL ADVICE BEING TRAMPLED INTO THE MUD. IN OTHER WORDS, AVOID JUDGEMENT, EVEN IN ITS DISGUISED FORMS.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

OUR WORLD IS BROKEN, BUT GOD HAS FILLED IT WITH PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP, HIS PEACEMAKERS. HOWEVER, WHEN I LOOK OUT AT THE WORLD, I QUICKLY AM OVERWHELMED. THERE EXISTS SO MUCH BROKENNESS, I DO NOT KNOW WHERE TO START AND TO START IN TOO MANY PLACES QUICKLY DILUTES MY ABILITY TO MAKE PEACE. SO, DO I JUST PICK SOMETHING ABOUT WHICH I AM PASSIONATE? WHAT ABOUT FINDING AND ADDRESSING THE BIGGEST NEED AT THE MOMENT? MAYBE I SHOULD JUST DRAW STRAWS OR CAST LOTS. AT THE END OF THE DAY, I FIND THAT THE HARDEST PART OF PEACEMAKING IS GETTING STARTED. SO, WHERE DO WE START?

I HAVE FOUND JESUS TO BE EXTREMELY CLEAR WHEN IT COMES TO THE STARTING POINT FOR PEACEMAKING. WE START WITH OURSELVES. WE CANNOT GO AND MAKE PEACE IN A WORLD IF WE HAVE NOT FIRST SOUGHT TO MAKE PEACE IN OUR OWN LIVES. TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE THE HEIGHT OF HYPOCRISY, AND A TWISTED FORM OF JUDGING OUR WORLD AND THOSE IN IT. WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE THEIR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER, MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT VERY RECEPTIVE TO THOSE PEOPLE PUTTING OTHER'S HOUSES IN ORDER.

SO, IS THE HOUSE OF GOD'S PEOPLE REALLY THAT OUT OF ORDER? WELL, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE IN ORDER? IT LOOKS LIKE A PEOPLE AMONG WHOM THERE ARE NO DIVISIONS. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED IN THE WORLD CHRISTIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA THAT SOME 33,000 CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS EXIST. WHILE THE METHODOLOGY USED IN ARRIVING AT THIS NUMBER IS FLAWED, INCLUDING MANY NON-CHRIST CENTERED FAITHS LIKE MORMONISM AND BREAKING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INTO ALMOST 1,000 DENOMINATIONS, IT WOULD LIKELY BE SAFE TO SAY THERE ARE OVER 10,000 CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS. AT FACE VALUE, THIS IS NOT A PROBLEM. UNDER THE SURFACE, WE HAVE A HUGE PROBLEM. MANY OF THESE DENOMINATIONS HAVE COME INTO BEING AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF ARGUMENTS AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE, ARGUMENTS WHICH DID NOT END WITH RECONCILIATION BUT DIVISION. EVEN THOSE DENOMINATIONS WHICH AGREE TO ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER AS FELLOW BELIEVERS, EYE EACH OTHER WARILY AND THE CLAIMS OF FELLOWSHIP TYPICALLY GO NO FURTHER THAN THE CLAIMS THEMSELVES. SADLY, DR.

MARTIN LUTHER KING'S ASSESSMENT THAT SUNDAY IS THE MOST SEGREGATED DAY IN AMERICA REMAINS LARGELY TRUE. WE HAVE NOT YET EVEN TOUCHED ON THE COUNTLESS GRIEVANCES, GRUDGES, AND BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS WHICH EXIST IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. DO WE NEED TO GO DEEPER TO SEE WE DO NOT HAVE OUR HOUSE IN ORDER?

SO, WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO PUT OUR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER, TO DEAL WITH OUR LOG? I THINK IT BEGINS BY ACKNOWLEDGING WE HAVE A LOG; THAT IS, UNION CENTER AND BLAKE SHIPP AS A MEMBER DO NOT HAVE THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER. I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN WITH SOMEONE ELSE AND THEIR CONGREGATION, BUT I MUST BEGIN WITH ME. SECOND, I MUST ACKNOWLEDGE WHERE MY HOUSE IS NOT IN ORDER. IN THIS CASE, I CARRY A NUMBER OF WOUNDS AND GRIEVANCES ACCUMULATED ACROSS THE YEARS OF MINISTRY. FINALLY, I MOVE TO MEND THE DIVIDE. IN THIS CASE, FORGIVENESS IS THE NECESSARY BALM. I AM BEGINNING THIS PROCESS, STEPPING INTO IT BY LEARNING HOW TO GRIEVE, A LARGE PART OF THE FOCUS OF MY SABBATICAL. AS I STEP INTO GRIEVING, THERE WILL COME OTHER STAGES, ANGER, RAGE, MORE GRIEF, SADNESS AND THEN THE BEAUTIFUL RELEASE WHICH MAKES ROOM FOR THE FREEDOM TO EMBRACE.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

PEACEMAKERS BRING THE POWER OF GOD'S KINGDOM TO BEAR ON THE BROKENNESS BEFORE THEM SO THEY MIGHT LEAVE A WAKE OF WHOLENESS BEHIND THEM, BUT WITH SO MUCH BROKENNESS BEFORE US, WHERE DO WE START? JESUS IS CLEAR THAT PEACEMAKING MUST BEGIN WITH THE PEACEMAKER. TO DO OTHERWISE IS NOT ONLY A FORM OF HYPOCRISY BUT IS TANTAMOUNT TO ISSUING A TWISTED FORM OF CONDEMNATION WRAPPED IN A BOW OF FALSE CONCERN FOR OUR BROKEN WORLD. BUT HOW DO WE BEGIN OURSELVES?

BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF PEACEMAKING IN ONE'S OWN LIFE BEGINS WITH THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THERE ARE DIVIDES WHICH EXIST AND THESE DIVIDES NEED TO BE MENDED. THIS CAN TAKE MANY FORMS. ONE MIGHT MAKE A LIST OF HER RELATIONSHIPS ALONG WITH AN HONEST EVALUATION OF THEIR PRESENT STATUS. ONE MIGHT DO THE SAME FOR THEIR CHURCH, HONESTLY EVALUATING WHAT IS AND IS NOT WORKING RELATIONALLY. ONCE THESE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED, WE OWN OUR PART AND APPLY THE NECESSARY BALM. SOMETIMES THIS BALM IS THE ADMISSION OF WRONGDOING. OTHER TIMES IT INVOLVES BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS. SOMETIMES WE NEED TO REENGAGE AND FINISH WELL. AS WE EXPERIENCE THE GRACE OF GOD MENDING THESE DIVIDES, WE EXPERIENCE AND POSSESS PEACE IN A WAY THAT IS AUTHENTIC RATHER THAN THEORETICAL, AND WE ARE ABLE TO HAND OFF WHAT WE HAVE EXPERIENCED.

THIS WEEK, MAKE SPACE TO DO AN HONEST EVALUATION OF YOUR OWN PERSONAL COMINGS AND GOINGS. WHERE, IF AT ALL, ARE THERE DIVIDES NEEDING TO BE MENDED? THIS EXERCISE IS NOT MEANT TO BRING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF CONDEMNATION. IT IS SIMPLY MEANT TO EXPOSE. YOU ARE ASKING DIVINE SIGHT. WHILE WHAT WE SEE MAY NOT BE PRETTY, DIVINE SIGHT IS GROUNDED IN THE BOTTOMLESS LOVE OF GOD. ONCE WE NOTICE OUR DIVIDES, WE CAN APPLY THE APPROPRIATE BALM: FORGIVENESS, CONFESSION, ACCEPTANCE, RECONCILIATION, AND MORE.



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