



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

June 4, 2017

Discussion Guide

FAITHFUL TRANSFORMATION

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 THINK IT IS POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO CHANGE? 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 CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.
- READ COLOSSIANS 3.1-17 OUT LOUD. SEEK TO HEAR THE TEXT AS A MEMBER OF A CONGREGATION GRAPPLING WITH

THE IDEA THAT FOLLOWING CHRIST HAS BOTH SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE.

- ACCORDING TO PAUL, WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST'S ATONING WORK HAVE FOR THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF CHRIST-FOLLOWERS? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.
- IF YOU COULD SUM UP WHAT PAUL SAYS IN A SINGLE PHRASE OR STATEMENT, WHAT WOULD IT BE? CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY YOU WOULD SUM PAUL'S EXHORTATIONS UP IN THIS MANNER?
- PAUL ARGUES THAT THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST ALSO EXPERIENCE LIFE CHANGE, A TRANSFORMATION OF THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES SO THEY LOOK MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS. WOULD YOU SAY THAT THIS IS THE TYPICAL EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE WHO FOLLOW JESUS IN FAITH? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- IN VERSES 15-17, PAUL OUTLINES THE ROLE COMMUNITY PLAYS IN THE PROCESS OF THIS LIFE CHANGE. WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE ROLE COMMUNITY PLAYS IN PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS IS THE SAME OR DIFFERENT FROM THE ROLE COMMUNITY PLAYS IN THE TYPICAL COMMUNITY OF FAITH? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- WOULD YOU SAY THAT INVOLVING COMMUNITY IN THE PROCESS OF LIFE CHANGE MAKES THIS PROCESS EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO INVOLVE A FAITH COMMUNITY IN THE PROCESS OF LIFE CHANGE IN THE MODERN CHURCH?
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, KEEPS US FROM INVOLVING COMMUNITY IN THIS MANNER?

- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE FOR THIS GROUP TO FUNCTION IN THE WAYS PAUL OUTLINES? WOULD THIS GROUP BE OPEN TO MOVING TOWARD THIS WAY OF BEING WITH ONE ANOTHER? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- CONSIDER CLOSING WITH PRAYER, ASKING GOD FOR EYES TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF LIFE-CHANGING COMMUNITY AND THE GRACE TO MOVE TOWARD THAT WAY OF BEING IN KEEPING WITH WHO YOU ARE AS A GROUP.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION IS A PROCESS OF RENEWAL, A PROCESS IN WHICH A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST MOVES FROM ONE WAY OF LIVING BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF THE WORLD TO A LIFE WHICH RESEMBLES THE LIFE OF CHRIST. IN REALITY, SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION IS THE PHYSICAL AND PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF THE GOSPEL IN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST, A RESULT OF A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND PEOPLE (PHILIPPIANS 2.12-13). THIS PARTNERSHIP BEGINS WITH THE AWARENESS THAT TRANSFORMATION IS NOT OPTIONAL FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS (ROMANS 12.1-2). RATHER, THOSE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST ARE CALLED TO LIVE AS JESUS LIVED (1 JOHN 2.6; MATTHEW 28.19-20) AND THIS CALLING REQUIRES THE PUTTING OFF OF OLD WAYS OF BEING AND THE PUTTING ON OF NEW WAYS OF BEING FASHIONED ON JESUS' LIFE (EPHESIANS 4.17-24; COLOSSIANS 3.1-17). THIS PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION IS TRULY A PROCESS, SOMETHING BEGUN, CARRIED OUT, AND COMPLETED BY GOD HIMSELF (PHILIPPIANS 1.6; 2.13) OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, BUT REQUIRING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION ON THE PART OF THE BELIEVER, A PARTICIPATION WHICH INVOLVES THE PURSUIT OF CHRIST-CENTERED VIRTUE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY (COLOSSIANS 3.12-17; ROMANS 12.3-8). AS THE BELIEVER OPENS HIMSELF WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY TO THIS TRANSFORMING WORK OF GOD, THEY BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE THE VERY REAL OUTWORKINGS OF ATONEMENT AS THEY LOOK MORE AND MORE LIKE CHRIST (ROMANS 6.1-14), A PROCESS WHICH IS FINISHED WHEN EACH BELIEVER STANDS IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AND BECOMES FULLY LIKE HIM (1 JOHN 3.2; COLOSSIANS 3.4).

THE TEXT

COLOSSIANS 3.1-17: A TRANSFORMED LIFE

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE IS A LETTER IN WHICH PAUL IS BATTLING THE FIRST STRAINS OF WHAT

WOULD BECOME THE HERESY CALLED GNOSTICISM IN THE SECOND CENTURY. GNOSTICISM IS A SYNCHRONISTIC BELIEF SYSTEM HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY PLATONIC DUALISM AND IDEAS FROM ANCIENT MYSTERY RELIGIONS WHICH WERE COMBINED WITH CHRISTIAN TRUTHS. ONE OF THE MAIN TENETS OF THIS LOOSELY ORGANIZED WAY OF THINKING WAS THE DENIAL OF THE HUMANITY OR DIVINITY OF CHRIST. IN THE CASE OF THE COLOSSIANS, THE VERSION OF THINKING WHICH PAUL WAS CHALLENGING INVOLVED A DENIAL OF THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST (COLOSSIANS 1.15-20; 2.6-8). THEREFORE, IN HIS LETTER TO THIS CHURCH, PAUL TAKES GREAT PAINS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IN JESUS, ONE FINDS BOTH THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURE, AND, THEREFORE, THE WORK OF JESUS ON THE CROSS HAS BOTH COSMIC AND EARTHLY IMPLICATIONS.

PAUL BEGINS TO TURN TO THE EARTHLY IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORK OF CHRIST BY DISCUSSING HOW THE ATONING WORK OF JESUS FREES PEOPLE FROM RELIGIOUS LEGALISM WHICH MAY, IN THE CASE OF THE COLOSSIANS, INCLUDE RULES INFLUENCED BY THE ANCIENT MYSTERY RELIGIONS (COLOSSIANS 2.16-23). HOWEVER, THE WORK OF JESUS ON THE CROSS DOES BIND BELIEVERS TO THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION, A PROCESS IN WHICH THE CHRIST-FOLLOWER PUTS OFF OLD WAYS OF BEING AND PUTS ON WAYS OF BEING WHICH LOOK LIKE CHRIST (COLOSSIANS 3.1-17).

PAUL BASES HIS STATEMENTS ABOUT TRANSFORMATION FIRMLY IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ATONEMENT. BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN UNITED WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH AND IN HIS RESURRECTION (COLOSSIANS 2.20; 3.1, 3). BECAUSE OF THEIR UNITY WITH CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION, THOSE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST ARE TO LIVE A NEW LIFE. THIS NEW LIFE IS A LIFE IN WHICH THE HEART/MIND (THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM OF THE HUMAN PERSON) IS ORIENTED AROUND GOD; THAT IS, THAT WHICH GUIDES A PERSON WHO HAS BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST PURSUES THINGS OF GOD. THIS IS A REALITY BECAUSE THE OLD WAY OF BEING DIED WITH CHRIST ON THE CROSS AND A NEW LIFE HAS TAKEN ITS PLACE. HOWEVER, THIS NEW LIFE IS NOT FULLY SEEN BECAUSE IT IS HIDDEN WITH CHRIST. WHAT PAUL MEANS IS EXPLAINED IN THE NEXT VERSE AS HE INDICATES THAT THIS LIFE WHICH IS HIDDEN IS A LIFE WHICH LOOKS LIKE CHRIST. THIS LIFE IS NOT FULLY SEEN IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER, BUT IT ONE DAY WILL BE WHEN CHRIST RETURNS. ON THAT DAY, FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WILL BECOME FULLY LIKE JESUS DISPLAYING GOD'S GLORY IN THEIR LIVES.

WHILE THOSE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST ARE NOT YET FULLY WHAT THEY WILL BE, THAT THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED UNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS ATONING WORK MEANS THEY MUST BE MOVING TOWARD THE LIFE THEY WILL ONE DAY EXPERIENCE IN FULLNESS. THIS INVOLVES PUTTING OFF OLD WAYS OF BEING AND PUTTING

ON NEW WAYS OF BEING. THE PUTTING OFF OF OLD WAYS INVOLVES A CONSCIOUS CHOICE TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC WAYS OF BEING WHICH NEED TO BE REMOVED AND THEN TAKING THE NECESSARY STEPS TO RID ONESELF OF THESE BEHAVIORS, WAYS WHICH INVOLVE THE USE OF ONE'S BODY, TONGUE, AND MIND. THESE WAYS OF BEING BRING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S WRATH BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT IN KEEPING WITH THE LIFE GOD INTENDS FOR PEOPLE, AND IN MANY WAYS, ARE ABOUT THE SATISFACTION, SERVICE, AND GLORIFICATION OF SELF RATHER THAN GOD. THESE WAYS OF BEING WERE ONCE A PART OF THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO FOLLOWED CHRIST, BUT THESE CAN NO LONGER BE PART OF THEIR LIFE AS THIS LIFE, BECAUSE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ATONEMENT, IS GONE. A NEW LIFE HAS TAKEN THE PLACE OF THE OLD, ONE WHICH IS GROWING, A GRADUAL RENEWING OF THE PERSON AS THEY COME TO KNOW GOD IN AN EVER-INCREASING WAY AND THEREFORE COME TO BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE ONE WHO MADE THEM. THIS NEW WAY HAS CHRIST AS ITS STANDARD AND NOT MARKERS SUCH AS ETHNICITY, NATIONALITY, OR RELIGION WHICH WERE FORMER STANDARDS FOR WAYS OF BEING.

IN THE VERSES WHICH FOLLOW, PAUL TURNS TO DESCRIBE THIS NEW WAY OF BEING WHICH IS MODELED ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST. THIS WAY OF BEING INCLUDES VIRTUES SUCH AS COMPASSION, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, GENTLENESS, AND PATIENCE AND THE PRACTICE OF FORGIVENESS. HOWEVER, PAUL IS QUICK TO REMIND THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS THAT ALL OF THESE VIRTUES AND PRACTICES ARE ENCAPSULATED WITHIN THE VIRTUE/PRACTICE OF LOVE. HERE PAUL ECHOES JESUS' STATEMENT CONCERNING LOVING ONE'S FELLOW PERSON AS A WAY OF LIVING A LIFE IN KEEPING WITH THE STANDARDS GOD DESIRES (MATTHEW 22.37-40).

WHILE PAUL HAS OUTLINED THE NEW LIFE BELIEVERS HAVE AS A RESULT OF THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST AND THAT THIS LIFE IS TAKEN UP IN A PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION, HE HAS NOT DESCRIBED THE NATURE OF THIS PROCESS; THAT IS, PAUL HAS NOT DESCRIBED HOW ONE GOES ABOUT PUTTING OFF THE OLD WAY OF BEING AND TAKING UP A NEW WAY OF BEING. BEGINNING IN VERSE 15, HE TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO THIS PROCESS WHICH LEANS HEAVILY ON THE PRACTICE OF THIS LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH. PAUL OUTLINES THREE PRACTICES IN THIS PROCESS. FIRST, THE BELIEVERS ARE TO ALLOW THE PEACE OF CHRIST TO RULE IN THEIR HEARTS. EVERY BELIEVER IS TO ALLOW WHOLENESS WHICH CHRIST DESIRES AND MADE POSSIBLE TO BE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THEIR LIVES. IN OTHER WORDS, IN EVERY ACTION, RELATIONSHIP, AND THOUGHT THE DESIRE FOR WHOLENESS IS TO BE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE. IF THIS IS THE GUIDING

PRINCIPLE, THEN OLD WAYS OF BEING WILL BE ENCOUNTERED AND DEALT WITH AND NEW WAYS WILL BE TAKEN UP OUT OF NECESSITY BECAUSE THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAINTAIN WHOLENESS. AS BELIEVERS SEEK WHOLENESS AND THE RADICAL RETHINKING AND REWORKING OF THEIR LIVES WHICH THIS BRINGS ABOUT, THEY ARE TO MAINTAIN A SPIRIT OF THANKS, MOST LIKELY FOR THE LIFE WHICH THEY ARE TAKING UP. SECOND, PAUL INSTRUCTS BELIEVERS TO ENSURE THAT THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST (THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD) IS CONSTANTLY PRESENT IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY. THEY ENSURE THIS BY SPEAKING AND ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER WITH THE GOSPEL AND ENSURING THAT THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL ARE PRESENT IN THEIR WORSHIP. HERE PAUL PORTRAYS A COMMUNITY WHICH IS CONSTANTLY SPEAKING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE LIFE WHICH GOD HAS MADE POSSIBLE AND THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS IS POSSIBLE AS A WAY OF SUPPORTING THE PURSUIT OF PEACE. IN THE PURSUIT OF PEACE ONE WOULD BUMP INTO WAYS OF BEING WHICH WERE FAMILIAR, BUT NOT HELPFUL AND BE FACED WITH TAKING UP NEW WAYS WHICH WERE UNFAMILIAR AND UNCOMFORTABLE. THE CONSTANT SPEAKING OF THE GOSPEL CREATES A CONTEXT IN WHICH THESE NEW WAYS ARE HELD FORTH AND ENCOURAGED EVEN AS THE TRUTHS ABOUT GRACE AND GOD'S FAITHFULNESS ARE PRESENTED AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT IN TAKING UP THESE NEW WAYS. AGAIN, GRATITUDE IS TO BE PRESENT, MOST LIKELY IN RESPONSE TO THE WORK GOD IS DOING AS PROCLAIMED BY THE GOSPEL. FINALLY, THE COMMUNITY IS TO SEEK TO DO ALL THINGS IN THE NAME OF JESUS; THAT IS, IN ALL THINGS THE BELIEVERS WERE TO SEEK TO ACT LIKE JESUS. THIS IS REALLY WHAT THE END GOAL OF TRANSFORMATION IS, BUT HERE PAUL REMINDS THE COLOSSIANS THAT THEY NEED TO HAVE THIS GOAL IN MIND IF THEY ARE TO REACH IT. ONCE AGAIN, THANKS IS TO BE PRESENT, MOST LIKELY IN RESPONSE TO THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS LIFE TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

IF WE ARE TO REPRESENT GOD IN THE WORLD, THEN WE MUST LOOK AND ACT LIKE GOD. MAKES SENSE, BUT IT IS A PROBLEM. MOST OF THE TIME I DON'T. THAT MEANS THAT IF I AM TO BE GOD'S FAITHFUL PRESENCE, I MUST CHANGE, AND WE ARE TALKING SERIOUS CHANGE HERE. BUT, HOW EXACTLY DOES THAT HAPPEN? HOW DO I CHANGE? IS CHANGE EVEN POSSIBLE? IT SEEMS LIKE MOST OF THE TIME WHEN I REALIZE I NEED TO CHANGE AND TRY, THE RESULT IS LESS THAN DAZZLING. MOST OF THE TIME I LOOK PRETTY MUCH AS I DID BEFORE I STARTED. SO, IT IS WITH AN HONEST HEART THAT I WONDER IF CHANGE IS POSSIBLE.

IT REASONS THAT IF WE MUST CHANGE THEN CHANGE MUST BE POSSIBLE, BUT IT PROBABLY TAKES SOMETHING I AM NOT BRINGING TO

THE PROCESS. SO, WHAT IS IT THAT I AM MISSING? I AM COMING TO REALIZE THAT MUCH OF WHAT I AM MISSING IN MY DESIRE TO CHANGE IS THE PRESENCE AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY. CHANGE TAKES COMMUNITY, A COMMUNITY WITH WHOM I CAN PRACTICE TAKING UP THE LIFE OF CHRIST, A COMMUNITY WHICH ENCOURAGES ME IN THIS PROCESS, A COMMUNITY WHICH REMINDS ME THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE AND THAT THIS CHANGE IS ROOTED IN THE WORK GOD HAS AND IS DOING AND NOT JUST IN THE EFFORT AND WORK I PUT FORTH. CHANGE TAKES COMMUNITY, BUT OFTEN I AM TOO BUSY FOR COMMUNITY, AT LEAST FOR THIS KIND OF COMMUNITY. I HAVE TIME FOR A COMMUNITY MADE UP OF QUICK "HELLOES" AND "HOW ARE YOU DOING?" GREETINGS. I HAVE TIME FOR COMMUNITY THAT DOESN'T TAKE MORE THAN BRIEF ENCOUNTERS AND SHALLOW RELATIONSHIPS. I CAN FIT THAT IN, BUT THIS IS NOT THE COMMUNITY I NEED TO CHANGE. CHANGE REQUIRES COMMUNITY WHICH IS PRESENT FOR ME AND I FOR IT IN REAL, LIFE-REVEALING WAYS. CHANGE REQUIRES A COMMUNITY THAT IS PRESENT LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE ME OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE THE LIFE OF CHRIST, AND PRESENT LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO FAIL WHILE I DO IT. CHANGE REQUIRES A COMMUNITY WHICH IS PRESENT ENOUGH TO REMIND ME OVER AND OVER AGAIN, IN A WAY THAT WORKS ITSELF DEEP INTO MY SOUL, THAT THE LIFE I AM PURSUING IS GOOD AND IT IS THE LIFE OF CHRIST HIMSELF. CHANGE REQUIRES A COMMUNITY WHICH IS MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE COMMUNITY WHICH I EXPERIENCE. SO, WILL I OPEN MYSELF TO THIS COMMUNITY? I WANT TO SAY "YES," BUT TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM SAYING "YES" TO WHEN I SAY IT. IF YOU HAD ASKED ME A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO WHAT THIS COMMUNITY LOOKED LIKE I WOULD HAVE SPOUTED OFF AN ANSWER THAT HAD TO DO WITH SMALL GROUPS, BUT THE SMALL GROUP MOVEMENT HAS COME AND GONE. IT WAS A TANTALIZING IDEA, BUT IT WASN'T THIS KIND OF COMMUNITY. IT COULDN'T BE BECAUSE IT WAS FORCED INTO AN ALREADY BUSY SCHEDULE.

SO, WHAT DOES THIS COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE? TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW, BUT I THINK I CAN SEE A WAY FORWARD. THE WAY FORWARD IS NOT TO A PROGRAM OR PREDEFINED SYSTEM. THE WAY FORWARD IS MUCH SIMPLER THAN THIS. IT INVOLVES TAKING A STEP, A STEP TOWARD PEOPLE WHEN I AM AROUND THEM. IT IS CHOOSING TO LINGER ON A SUNDAY MORNING OVER A CUP OF COFFEE. IT IS CHOOSING TO TALK ABOUT LIFE AT A LITTLE BIT DEEPER LEVEL. IT IS TAKING A SMALL STEP, SEEING WHAT HAPPENS AND THEN TAKING THE NEXT STEP. THIS IS THE PATH TO THE COMMUNITY I NEED, AND IN TAKING THESE STEPS I AM SAYING I NEED IT AND AM MOVING TOWARD IT.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

IF WE ARE GOING TO REPRESENT GOD IN THE WORLD, TO BE HIS FAITHFUL PRESENCE, THEN WE MUST LOOK LIKE GOD, ACT LIKE GOD, THINK LIKE GOD. FOR MANY OF US, THIS IS WHERE SERVING AS GOD'S FAITHFUL PRESENCE BREAKS DOWN. WE SIMPLY DO NOT LOOK LIKE GOD. FOR THIS TO BE TRUE, WE WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE, BUT MANY OF US HAVE TRIED TO CHANGE AND FOUND OUR EFFORTS LACKING.

THE GOSPEL LEADS TO A CHANGED LIFE. THE GOSPEL REQUIRES THE CHANGING OF OUR LIVES. HOW CAN WE SAY WE HAVE REPENTED AND CHOSEN TO TAKE UP THE LIFE OF CHRIST IF WE CONTINUE LIVING THE WAY WE DID BEFORE? WHAT MANY OF US DO NOT REALIZE IS THAT CHANGE IS NOT A SOLO ENDEAVOR. IN REALITY, NO PART OF THE FAITH JOURNEY IS A SOLO ENDEAVOR. THE JOURNEY OF FAITH IS A JOURNEY WE TAKE WITH OTHERS. THIS INCLUDES THE PART OF THE JOURNEY WHICH INVOLVES CHANGE. CHANGE TAKES COMMUNITY, A COMMUNITY WHICH IS FOCUSED ON WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORTS AND ENCOURAGES GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE CHANGE. THE PROBLEM IS THAT MOST OF US DON'T FEEL WE HAVE TIME FOR THIS KIND OF COMMUNITY NOR DO WE HAVE ANY IDEA OF WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE.

I AM NOT SURE WE NEED TO HAVE AN IDEA OF WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE OR THE CONVICTION THAT WE HAVE TIME. PERHAPS WHAT WE NEED IS A WILLINGNESS TO MOVE TOWARD THIS SORT OF COMMUNITY. MOVING TOWARD THIS KIND OF COMMUNITY INVOLVES TAKING STEPS, ONE AT A TIME. THIS WEEK, CONSIDER TAKING A STEP TOWARD COMMUNITY. THIS STEP NEED NOT BE INTENSE, BUT IT DOES NEED TO STRETCH YOU. SO, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER HANGING AROUND AFTER WORSHIP ON A SUNDAY TO CHAT WITH PEOPLE OVER A CUP OF COFFEE FOR 20-30 MINUTES. NOT A HUGE ASK. A LITTLE BIT OF A STRETCH, BUT A DOABLE ONE. YOU MIGHT INVITE SOMEONE INTO SOMETHING YOU ARE ALREADY DOING. FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU ARE HAVING A BONFIRE THIS WEEKEND OR IF YOU PLAN ON EATING—MOST OF US PLAN ON EATING—SIMPLY INVITE SOMEONE TO JOIN YOU. WHATEVER IT IS, TAKE A SMALL STEP AND KEEP ON TAKING THAT STEP. AS THIS BECOMES COMFORTABLE, A WAY OF BEING, ASK GOD TO SHOW YOU WHAT THE NEXT STEP IS. IN SO DOING, WE CAN JOURNEY TOGETHER TO COMMUNITY, THE COMMUNITY WE NEED FOR CHANGE.



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