

BE (i'm) PERFECT

GOING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE FEBRUARY 24, 2018

Discussion Guide

BEHOLDING VERSUS BEHAVING

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

- HOW WERE YOU TAUGHT TO BECOME LIKE JESUS? WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT THIS EXPERIENCE WAS LIKE AND HOW IT HAS SHAPED YOUR LIFE?

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 PRACTICE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE ANCIENT JEWISH WORLD.
- AS A GROUP, READ MATTHEW 4.19, 19.21; MARK 8.39; LUKE 5.10-11, 14.27; JOHN 8.12, 21.19-21. YOU MIGHT DO THIS ONE AT A TIME, OR ALL TOGETHER AS A GROUP AS A MEANS OF REHEARSING GOD'S STORY TOGETHER.
- WHAT COMMON THEMES, IF ANY, FROM THE MINISTRY OF JESUS DO YOU HEAR ACROSS THESE PASSAGES?
- HOW MIGHT YOU DESCRIBE JESUS' UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANT TO BE HIS DISCIPLE? WHAT MIGHT

THIS EXPERIENCE HAVE LOOKED LIKE FOR THOSE WHO RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY TO JESUS?

- READ ACTS 4.13.
- WHAT EFFECT, IF ANY, DID THE EXPERIENCE OF FOLLOWING JESUS HAVE UPON HIS DISCIPLES?
- JESUS INVITES PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM, TO BE WITH HIM, BEHOLDING HIM AS HE MOVES ABOUT IN THEIR LIVES AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS. SOMEHOW, BEING WITH AND SEEING JESUS BRINGS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF CHANGE, A CHANGE WHICH MAKES THE ONE WHO FOLLOWS MORE LIKE JESUS. DO YOU THINK IT IS POSSIBLE TO EXPERIENCE THIS KIND OF CHANGE-BRINGING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS TODAY? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- READ 2 CORINTHIANS 3.17-18.
- WHAT DOES PAUL SAY ABOUT HOW WE MIGHT EXPERIENCE AND BEHOLD JESUS TODAY?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO BEHOLD JESUS BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY? WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR GROUP?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY PAUSING, AND IN STILLNESS, SIT WITH JESUS, SIMPLY BEHOLDING HIS PRESENCE AMONG YOU.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE JEWISH WORLD

DISCIPLESHIP IS CENTRAL TO THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, APPEARING OVER 200 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. HOWEVER, THE PRACTICE OF DISCIPLING OTHERS WAS NOT SOMETHING JESUS INVENTED. JESUS CALLED AND TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES WITHIN HIS JEWISH CONTEXT WHICH EMPHASIZED DISCIPLESHIP.

TO UNDERSTAND THE PRACTICE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN JESUS' DAY, WE MUST START WITH THE RABBI. RABBIS WERE THOSE WHO WELCOMED PEOPLE INTO DISCIPLESHIP. IN THE FIRST-CENTURY, THERE WERE TWO KINDS OF RABBIS: TORAH TEACHERS AND

RABBIS WITH AUTHORITY, THE LATTER BEING FEWER IN NUMBER. THE TORAH TEACHERS WERE CALLED MASTERS OF TANACH (THE OLD TESTAMENT). THESE MEN KNEW THE OLD TESTAMENT BY MEMORY, ALL OF IT. WHILE THESE MEN KNEW AND COULD TEACH THE TORAH, THEY COULD NOT HAVE DISCIPLES. ONLY RABBIS WITH AUTHORITY COULD HAVE DISCIPLES.

A RABBI WITH AUTHORITY WAS ONE WHO HAD RECEIVED AUTHORITY FROM ANOTHER RABBI WHO HAD AUTHORITY OR SHEMHA, THE DIRECT AUTHORITY FROM GOD TO TEACH THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD. THIS AUTHORITY WAS RECEIVED AND THEN HANDED DOWN FROM A RABBI'S TEACHER IN A CEREMONY CALLED SAMAKH OR LEANING. IN THIS CEREMONY, A RABBI WOULD PLACE BOTH HANDS ON HIS DISCIPLE'S HEAD AND IMPART HIS AUTHORITY TO HIM. THIS AUTHORITY, HAVING BEEN CONFERRED, WAS THEN TO BE AFFIRMED BY AT LEAST TWO OTHERS WHO WOULD PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUTHORITY OF THIS NEW RABBI. AFTER THESE EVENTS HAD OCCURRED, THIS NEW RABBI COULD HAVE DISCIPLES. SOME OF JESUS' CONTROVERSIES WITH THE RABBIS OF HIS DAY INVOLVED THIS PROCESS OF SAMAKH, OR THE ABSENCE THEREOF. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF JESUS EVER BEING AUTHORIZED TO TEACH BY A RABBI WITH AUTHORITY (MARK 11.28). JESUS WOULD HAVE LEARNED SCRIPTURE AS A YOUNG MAN, LIKELY ENGAGING IN THE COMMON PRACTICE OF GATHERING WITH OTHER YOUNG MEN (HABERIM OR FRIENDS) TO DEBATE AND LEARN THE LAW OVER LATE-NIGHT COMMUNAL MEALS, A PRACTICE BASED ON A PHRASE FROM PSALM 119 (PSALM 119.63). HOWEVER, JESUS FELT HIS AUTHORITY HAD BEEN CONFERRED BY HIS HEAVENLY FATHER AND NOT ANOTHER HUMAN BEING (MARK 1.9-12; JOHN 8.12-20, 48-59). FURTHER, HE LIKELY VIEWED THE PROCLAMATIONS OF JOHN AND HIS HEAVENLY FATHER CONCERNING HIS IDENTITY AS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO AFFIRM HIS RIGHT TO PRACTICE OF THE GATHERING OF DISCIPLES (JOHN 1.29-34).

IN ORDER TO BECOME A DISCIPLE OF A RABBI WITH AUTHORITY, A MAN (ONLY MEN COULD BECOME DISCIPLES IN THE FIRST-CENTURY) FIRST HAD TO BECOME HIGHLY TRAINED IN SCRIPTURE. THIS COULD BE THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF GATHERING WITH HABERIM OR BY LEARNING FROM A TORAH TEACHER. SERIOUS STUDENTS LIKELY ENGAGED IN BOTH PRACTICES. THE POTENTIAL DISCIPLE THEN HAD TO CHOOSE THE RABBI WHOM HE DESIRED TO FOLLOW. HE DID THIS BY SITTING WITH THE CROWDS WHO GATHERED TO HEAR RABBIS TEACH THEIR DISCIPLES. IN THIS SETTING, THE MAN COULD BECOME KNOWN TO THE RABBI, BOTH THROUGH HIS PRESENCE AND THROUGH HIS INTERACTIONS WITH THE DISCIPLES AND THE RABBI. HE WAS THEN REQUIRED TO ASK THE RABBI IF HE, TOO, MIGHT BECOME A DISCIPLE. THE RABBI WOULD ACCEPT THE PERSON IF HE FELT THE POTENTIAL DISCIPLE COULD BECOME LIKE HIM. UPON ACCEPTANCE, THE NEW DISCIPLE WOULD BEGIN TO FOLLOW HIS

TEACHER EVERYWHERE, OBSERVING EVERYTHING HE DID AND SAID. THIS COULD INCLUDE EVEN INTIMATE MATTERS. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, THE DISCIPLE OFTEN LIVED WITH THE RABBI AND HIS FAMILY FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME. IN DUE COURSE, WHEN THE DISCIPLE WAS IN ALL RESPECTS LIKE HIS TEACHER, HIS TEACHER WOULD IMPART AUTHORITY UPON HIM (SAMAKH) TO GO AND HAND OFF WHAT HE HAD RECEIVED.

IN MANY RESPECTS, JESUS SIMPLY CONTINUED THE PRACTICE OF DISCIPLESHIP WHICH HAD BEEN PRACTICED FOR MANY YEARS. JESUS HAD MEN FOLLOW HIM, EVEN LIVING WITH HIM FOR AN EXTENDED TIME, SO THEY MIGHT BECOME LIKE JESUS IN ALL RESPECTS. HOWEVER, JESUS DEPARTED FROM THE DISCIPLING CUSTOMS OF HIS DAY BY SEEKING OUT HIS DISCIPLES, AND THESE HE DREW FROM OTHER PROFESSIONS RATHER THAN FROM THE PUPILS OF THE SCRIBES (MARK 1.16-20; ACTS 4.13). IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS SOUGHT OUT DISCIPLES WHICH WERE UNEXCEPTIONAL, MEN WHO NO OTHER RABBI WOULD EXPECT OR ACCEPT TO FOLLOW HIM. THIS PRACTICE OF KEEPING MANY ELEMENTS OF JEWISH CUSTOM WHILE BREAKING WITH OTHERS FITS THE CHARACTER OF JESUS' MINISTRY (MATTHEW 5.17-48).

THE TEXT

DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES CHANGE

IN KEEPING WITH THE COMMON PRACTICE OF HIS DAY, JESUS GATHERED DISCIPLES AROUND HIM IN ORDER TO HAND OFF HIS TEACHING AND WAY OF LIFE (MARK 1.16-20; LUKE 6.46-49; MATTHEW 28.19-20). THOSE MEN WHOM JESUS CHOSE AS HIS DISCIPLES, LIVED WITH JESUS, OBSERVING, LISTENING, AND PRACTICING THE LIFE OF JESUS (LUKE 9.1-6). THIS EXPERIENCE CHANGED THESE MEN, MARKING THEM WITH THE LIFE OF JESUS (ACTS 4.13).

WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE THE BENEFIT THESE MEN HAD OF PHYSICALLY LIVING WITH JESUS, EXPERIENCING HIS PRESENCE ON THEIR DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY AS HIS DISCIPLES, THE PURPOSE OF OUR FOLLOWING JESUS IS TO CHANGE US, MARKING US WITH THE LIFE OF JESUS. THIS IDEA OF CHANGE OR THE TRANSFORMATION OF DISCIPLES INTO THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST IS A REGULAR DRUMBEAT IN THE EPISTLES OF PAUL (COLOSSIANS 3; EPHESIANS 4-6; ROMANS 12). OLD WAYS OF BEING WERE TO BE PUT OFF AND NEW WAYS OF BEING (CHRIST-CENTERED) WERE TO BE PUT ON (EPHESIANS 4.17-24; COLOSSIANS 3.5-14; ROMANS 12.1-2). CLEARLY, THE POINT OF DISCIPLESHIP REMAINS BECOMING LIKE JESUS. BUT HOW MIGHT A PRESENT-DAY DISCIPLE BECOME LIKE JESUS APART FROM THE CENTRAL EXPERIENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP, FOLLOWING AND EXPERIENCING THE ONGOING PRESENCE OF A TEACHER?

PAUL ADDRESSES THIS ISSUE IN 2 CORINTHIANS 3. PUT ON THE

DEFENSE BY TEACHERS WHO CHALLENGED THE VALIDITY OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP, PAUL RESPONDED THAT IT WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HAD MADE HIM A COMPETENT MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL (2 CORINTHIANS 3.1-6). FURTHER, IT WAS THROUGH THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT THE PRESENCE OF JESUS COULD BE EXPERIENCED (2 CORINTHIANS 3.17). THEREFORE, A PERSON LIKE PAUL WHO DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF JESUS STILL HAD ACCESS TO JESUS IN AN ONGOING MANNER THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. IN THIS MANNER, PAUL AND OTHERS COULD WATCH AND BE WITH JESUS IN A WAY THAT TRANSFORMED THEM INTO HIS IMAGE AND WAY OF LIFE (2 CORINTHIANS 3.17).

ISAIAH 6.1-8 AND LUKE 5.1-10: EXPERIENCING GOD'S PRESENCE

DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES A PROCESS OF CHANGE BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH THE EXTENDED EXPOSURE TO THE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF A MASTER. THEREFORE, CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES A PROCESS OF CHANGE BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH EXTENDED EXPOSURE TO THE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF JESUS. IN ONE'S EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE, THIS CHANGE FOLLOWS A PROCESS OF AWARENESS OF GOD'S CHARACTER, AN AWARENESS OF ONE'S OWN CHARACTER, AND A CHANGE TO ONE'S CHARACTER BROUGHT ABOUT BY GOD.

THIS THREE-FOLD PATTERN OCCURS IN BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT. IN ISAIAH, WE FIND A RECORD OF ISAIAH'S EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. ISAIAH MARKS THE TIME AS THE YEAR OF KING UZZIAH'S DEATH. WHILE THIS NOTE HELPS THE READER DATE THE VISION, IT ALSO SERVES AS AN INTERPRETIVE AID. UZZIAH WAS THE GREATEST KING OF JUDAH SINCE SOLOMON, EXPANDING JUDAH IN EVERY POSSIBLE MANNER (2 CHRONICLES 26.1-5). THROUGHOUT THE REIGN OF UZZIAH, ISAIAH HAD BEEN EXPOSED TO GREATNESS. WITH UZZIAH'S DEATH AND THE ENCROACHMENT OF THE ASSYRIANS, ISAIAH MIGHT HAVE WONDERED IF HE WOULD EVER AGAIN EXPERIENCE ANYONE AS GREAT AS UZZIAH. THEN, HE SEES GOD.

WHEN ISAIAH SEES GOD, HE SEES HIM AS A KING, HIGH AND EXALTED ON A THRONE, SO GREAT THAT THE BOTTOM OF GOD'S ROBE FILLS THE TEMPLE TO CAPACITY. IT IS CLEAR THE GREATNESS OF GOD FAR EXCEEDS THAT OF UZZIAH. ADDITIONALLY, THE GREATNESS OF GOD EXCEEDS ISAIAH'S WORDS. ISAIAH IS ONLY ABLE TO DESCRIBE THE LOWER PART OF GOD BEFORE WORDS FAIL HIM AND HE IS FORCED TO DESCRIBE WHAT IS AROUND GOD. ISAIAH SEES ANGELIC BEINGS (SERAPHIM) WHO COVER THEMSELVES AS THEY FLY IN GOD'S PRESENCE. IT IS THESE ANGELIC BEINGS WHO GIVE WORDS TO WHAT ISAIAH SEES. GOD IS THRICE HOLY, SO GREAT THAT HIS GLORY FILLS THE EARTH. TO BE THRICE HOLY IS TO

BE COMPLETELY PURE AND SEPARATE, TO POSSESS TRANSCENDENCE WHICH MAKES GOD UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE IN CREATION.

WHILE THE SONG OF THE SERAPHIM FILL AND SHAKE THE TEMPLE, ISAIAH IS FILLED WITH FEAR AND HIMSELF BEGINS TO SHAKE. HAVING SEEN GOD FOR WHO HE IS (AWARENESS), ISAIAH SEES HIMSELF FOR WHO HE IS (SELF-AWARENESS). SEEING GOD'S GREAT HOLINESS, ISAIAH RECOGNIZES THAT HE IS NOT HOLY. HE IS A MAN WHO HAS UNCLEAN LIPS. THIS IS A METAPHOR WHICH SPEAKS TO THE INNER QUALITY OF ISAIAH AS THE LIPS ARE PART OF THE MOUTHPIECE FOR THE INNER PERSON. IN OTHER WORDS, ISAIAH RECOGNIZES HE IS CORRUPT AS A PERSON AND HE LIVES AMONG CORRUPT PEOPLE. HAVING ACKNOWLEDGED HIS CORRUPTNESS, A SERAPHIM FLIES TO HIM WITH A COAL FROM THE ALTAR UPON WHICH THE SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT IS MADE. AS A SERVANT OF GOD, THIS ANGELIC BEING WOULD ONLY HAVE COME TO ISAIAH AT GOD'S BEHEST. HE TOUCHES ISAIAH'S LIPS AND NOTES THAT ISAIAH IS CHANGED, PURIFIED, MADE HOLY LIKE GOD (CHANGE).

WE SEE A SIMILAR EPISODE IN LUKE'S GOSPEL. LUKE RECORDS AN EVENT WHERE JESUS WAS TEACHING BY THE SEA OF GALILEE AND FOUND THAT HE NEEDED A BETTER TEACHING PLATFORM. THEREFORE, HE ASKS A LOCAL FISHERMAN TO ALLOW HIM TO SIT IN HIS BOAT A FEW FEET OFF THE SHORE SO THAT HE MIGHT TEACH THE CROWD AND NOT FIND HIMSELF PUSHED INTO THE WATER! AFTER JESUS FINISHED TEACHING, HE ENCOURAGED THIS LOCAL FISHERMAN, SIMON PETER, TO PUSH OUT TO THE DEEP WATER AND PUT DOWN THE NETS. SIMON SCOFFS AT THIS SUGGESTION. IT IS DAY, THE TIME FOR FISHING IN SHALLOW WATER, AND THE FISH WERE NOT BITING THAT DAY. HOWEVER, AGAINST HIS BETTER JUDGMENT, SIMON AGREES TO FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTION OF JESUS. THE RESULT IS SIMON AND HIS COMPANIONS CATCH A GREAT HAUL OF FISH THAT THREATENS TO SINK TWO BOATS. SEEING ALL OF THIS, SIMON RECOGNIZES HE IS IN THE PRESENCE OF SOMEONE GREATER THAN A TEACHER. NO TEACHER SHOULD KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT FISHING, AND NO ONE COULD EVER DREAM OF CATCHING SO MANY FISH. THE ONLY EXPLANATION WHICH MADE SENSE OF THE MOMENT WAS SOMEHOW JESUS HAD MADE THE CATCH POSSIBLE BY HIS OWN POWER. AT THE VERY LEAST, SIMON RECOGNIZES HE IS IN THE PRESENCE OF MORE THAN A MERE MORTAL. HE SENSES POWER AND KNOWLEDGE BEYOND HIS OWN (AWARENESS). IN RESPONSE, SIMON RECOGNIZES HIS OWN SINFULNESS, IN THE CONTEXT, HIS OWN SMALLNESS AND INSIGNIFICANCE COMPARED TO JESUS (SELF-AWARENESS). JESUS' REPLY OFFERS COMFORT AND HOPE. SIMON DOES NOT NEED TO BE AFRAID. RATHER, HE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO BEING CHANGED TO BECOME A PERSON OF GREATNESS (FISHER OF PEOPLE) AS HE FOLLOWS JESUS (CHANGE).

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

HOW DOES ONE BECOME LIKE JESUS? THIS IS THE CENTRAL QUESTION EVERY FOLLOWER OF JESUS MUST ANSWER, FOR THE PURPOSE OF FOLLOWING IS TO BECOME LIKE HIM. I GREW UP IN A RELIGIOUS CONTEXT IN WHICH PEOPLE WERE TAUGHT JUST TO DO WHAT JESUS DID. . . ON THEIR OWN. I DON'T KNOW IF THAT LAST PART WAS EVER OPENLY STATED, BUT IT WAS HARD TO MISS THE MESSAGE. WE WERE SAVED BY GRACE. . . NOW, WE NEEDED TO STOP WHAT WE WERE DOING AND START BEHAVING. DALLAS WILLARD CALLED THIS KIND OF GOSPEL MESSAGE THE "GOSPEL OF SIN-MANAGEMENT." IN OTHER WORDS, THIS GOSPEL WASN'T REALLY ABOUT CHANGE. IT COULDN'T BRING ABOUT CHANGE. ALL IT COULD DO WAS LEAD PEOPLE INTO VARIOUS WAYS OF COPING WITH THEIR SIN. HOWEVER, I DIDN'T KNOW ANOTHER WAY. TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, IT SEEMED THAT SCRIPTURE SUPPORTED THIS KIND OF APPROACH TO CHANGE. AFTER ALL, DIDN'T PAUL REPEATEDLY SAY WE ARE TO PUT OFF OUR OLD WAYS (STOP IT) AND PUT ON OUR NEW LIFE (BEHAVE!)? (SEE EPHESIANS 4.17-24 AND COLOSSIANS 3.5-14.)

FOR MANY YEARS, I HAVE WRESTLED WITH THIS GOSPEL OF SIN-MANAGEMENT, ITS SEEMINGLY STRONG GROUNDING IN SCRIPTURE, AND ITS INABILITY TO BRING ABOUT ANY REAL, LASTING CHANGE IN MY LIFE. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, SOMEONE NUDGED ME TO READ WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT CHANGE ON THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY RATHER THAN JUST READING PAUL. SO, I TURNED TO JESUS IN THE GOSPELS, AND WHAT I FOUND SURPRISED ME. WHEN IT CAME TO JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP (THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING LIKE JESUS), HE HAD ONE SIMPLE RULE. FOLLOW HIM. JESUS WANTED HIS DISCIPLES TO BE WITH HIM, ALWAYS, TO WATCH HIM, LISTEN TO HIM, BE WITH HIM. SOMEHOW, THIS LIFE OF FOLLOWING WAS ENOUGH, ENOUGH TO TRANSFORM EVEN ROUGH AND TUMBLE FISHERMEN INTO MEN WHO LOOKED LIKE JESUS (LUKE 5.1-11; ACTS 4.13). WITH JESUS' TEACHING IN HAND, I TURNED BACK TO PAUL AND FOUND HE SAID THE SAME THING. DISCIPLESHIP (THE CHANGE JOURNEY) BEGINS WITH FOLLOWING, BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS, WATCHING HIM (2 CORINTHIANS 3.18). SOMEHOW, BEING WITH JESUS, BEHOLDING HIM AS HE MOVES ABOUT IS A NECESSARY COMPONENT OF THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY. SOMEHOW IT OPENS MY LIFE TO GOD IN A WAY THAT LEADS TO HIM CHANGING ME. HOW DOES THIS WORK? I AM NOT REALLY SURE. MAYBE, MY FOLLOWING DISPLAYS MY DESIRE TO BECOME LIKE JESUS, A DESIRE WHICH GOD SATISFIES. MAYBE, MY FOLLOWING MAKES ME AWARE OF JESUS' LIFE, AND GOD GIVES ME THE STRENGTH TO DO THE SAME. MAYBE, MY FOLLOWING EXPOSES ME TO THE GLORIOUS POWER OF GOD, AND THIS CHANGES ME. MAYBE, IT IS ALL OF THE ABOVE AND MORE. WHAT I KNOW IS THAT I CANNOT CHANGE MYSELF, BUT WHEN I FOLLOW JESUS, SEEKING TO BE IN HIS PRESENCE, GOD CHANGES ME.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

HOW DO WE BECOME LIKE JESUS? THE TYPICAL ANSWER INVOLVES SOME FORM OF SIN MANAGEMENT, A GOSPEL MESSAGE WHICH DECLARES WE MUST BEHAVE LIKE JESUS. THE PROBLEM WITH THIS APPROACH TO CHANGE IS WE CANNOT BEHAVE LIKE JESUS. WE ONLY SEEM ABLE TO MISBEHAVE. WE NEED A BETTER WAY. THIS BETTER WAY IS FOUND WHEN WE STOP SEEKING TO BEHAVE LIKE JESUS AND START SEEKING TO BEHOLD JESUS.

THE ANCIENT DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY WAS NEVER BASED ON THE IDEA OF BEHAVING. IT BEGAN WITH BEHOLDING. A DISCIPLE WAS ONE WHO FOLLOWED, WHO LIVED WITH HIS MASTER FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBSERVING HOW HE LIVED. IT WAS IN THIS PROCESS OF BEHOLDING THAT THE DISCIPLE SLOWLY BECAME LIKE HIS MASTER. IN OTHER WORDS, BEHOLDING LED TO BEHAVING!

ON THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY, OUR BEHOLDING IS MADE UP OF OUR PURSUIT OF LIVING WITH GOD, SEEKING TO OBSERVE HIM DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY IN OUR LIVES. WE CAN DO THIS THROUGH OUR READING OF THE GOSPELS, SOLITUDE AND SILENCE, OR EVEN THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF DAILY REFLECTION AND EXAMINE. IN THESE WAYS, AND OTHERS, WE PAY ATTENTION TO JESUS IN OUR LIVES. WE BEHOLD HIM. THE MORE WE BEHOLD HIM, THE MORE WE BECOME LIKE HIM FOR IN OUR BEHOLDING WE ARE EXPOSING OURSELVES TO THE ONE WHO CAN CHANGE US. WE ARE OPENING OUR LIVES WILLINGLY SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME LIKE THE ONE WE OBSERVE.

BEHOLDING RATHER THAN BEHAVING CAN FEEL SOMEWHAT AWKWARD. IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE ENOUGH, EVEN THOUGH PAUL SEEMED TO THINK IT WAS (2 CORINTHIANS 3.18). ONE EASY WAY TO START IS WITH A DAILY READING OF THE GOSPELS. EACH DAY, SET ASIDE 10 MINUTES TO READ A PORTION OF ONE OF THE GOSPELS. READ THE TEXT ALOUD AND THEN PAUSE, SEEKING TO IMAGINE YOURSELF PRESENT, EXPERIENCING THE TEXT. PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO JESUS. WATCH HIM. LISTEN TO HIM. BEHOLD HIM MOVING ABOUT. WHAT DO YOU SEE? WHAT FEELINGS ARE EVOKED IN YOU? JUST WATCH AND PONDER, THEN RESPOND AS YOU FEEL FITS WHERE YOU ARE AND WHO YOU ARE IN THE MOMENT.



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