

**March 8, 2010**

John 4:5-42

Sharing our faith is an integral part of Christian discipleship for it is a command of Christ equal to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Not only did Jesus tell us to "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), but He also commanded "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). Perhaps we are uncertain of how to do this. Perhaps we want to be taught a technique or given special training, but Jesus said nothing about "Go and get trained", simply "Go...make disciples..."

Sharing our faith can be as simple as telling our story. How we came to believe in God, how we came to be a Christian, and what Christ means for our life are all places we can start. Perhaps we need to review these areas of our life to be more comfortable sharing them. We could talk about them with a friend or a Sunday School class, but talking about them is vital. Sharing our faith is the way we pass along the good news. That is every Christian's responsibility.

**How can I simply share my faith and invite someone into a relationship with God? With whom might God be leading me to share my faith journey?**

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**March 9, 2010**

1 Samuel 16:1-13

God's vision sees the world very differently than does human eyesight. Samuel grieved God's rejection of Saul as king, but God had a new leader in mind. People don't look for boy-kings, no do they expect God to provide one. God knew David's heart and abilities and was not swayed by political or social sensibilities.

God sees differently and offers us a different perspective on our world. We see havoc and God sees hope. We quake in fear while God calls us to faith. We see the world in hopeless confusion while God offers the promise of eternal salvation. God is about the task of redemption and is an expert at transforming the world's rejects into subjects of divine purpose. We are fortunate that God sees the world differently. God looks at our lives and sees possibility when we have yet to see potential. That is what a redeemer does—offer hope to the last and the lost.

**How is God calling you to look at others in your life with a different perspective?**

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**March 10, 2010**

Psalm 23

Leadership brings direction and vision to life, just as a shepherd guides and provides for their sheep. Images of a shepherding Lord are found in the Hebrew Bible as well as the

New Testament. Psalm 23 is perhaps the most famous and beloved of these passages.

The shepherd of this psalm is described by an individual with the theme of abiding presence: "...for God is with me (v. 4b). It would be a mistake to merely associate this psalm with death, though its comforting theme makes it an often-used text at death's bedside or graveside.

God is a shepherding Lord of intimate care (consider the first-person voice of the writer versus the perspective of the entire flock), who provides for our needs ("I shall not want" v. 1), compels us when necessary ("makes me to lay down in green pastures" v. 2), and whose greatest attribute in times of need is to be with us (v. 4). Great leaders are personally committed and involved in the lives of those whom they lead.

**In what ways are you a leader and how are you a follower?  
How do you seek vision and direction for living?**

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**March 11, 2010**

Ephesians 5:8-14

Teaching moral living is something Paul did for his newly established churches. Some converts to Christianity came from pagan religious backgrounds or had no religious or moral foundation at all. Light and dark are metaphors Jesus used and Paul followed Christ's example. Paul's use of the metaphor is sometimes confusing or comical ("the fruit of the light" v. 9), but his meaning is clear: Christians are called to a different standard of living.

At issue is discerning evil from good, not as simple a task as it may sound when culture and Christianity have different standards of what is acceptable. To keep Christian practice from being a lengthy list of legal admonitions (which contributed to Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees who treated faithfulness to God in similar legalistic fashion), the standard of practice was to love God and each other and to keep the teachings and commands of Christ.

If more Christians today followed that practice there would be less petty bickering over differences in doctrine and scriptural interpretation. As John Wesley taught, "in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."

**Is your discipleship rooted in legalism or love?**

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**March 12, 2010**

Philippians 4:13

Strength is a quality that most people want. Boys aspire to be men of physical stature. Parents strive such that their children will develop moral strength. People of all faiths want to be spiritually strong, to "keep the faith" in all circumstances of life.

Christians have a strength anchored in the One who is Truth, Life, and Love. Such strength does not flail in the wind of life's storms. Neither does it succumb to the brute force of the Caesars, Herods, or other despots of the world. Christian martyrs found hope in this

strength, even in the face of unrelenting persecution.

The weak and the aged, the lonely and the lost, have found Paul's words to ring true despite life's folly: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

**From where do you get your source of strength and how do you sustain it?**

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**March 13, 2010**

John 9:1-41

Blindness is not just a physical malady, it is also a spiritual and moral one. This wonderful prose from John's gospel is worthy of an entire chapter. It is a story of physical blindness that is healed by the One who is Light, and spiritual blindness that refuses to step into the Light. Perhaps it may be better stated that the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees remained because they loved the deceptive comfort of their darkness greater than the dramatic revelation of God's Light—Jesus Christ.

The ancient Hebrew idea of illness and physical defects being caused by sin is still a belief, though an irrational one, held by some religious people today. When the question is put to Jesus, it is both an opportunity to teach and to demonstrate God's grace and human folly. Jesus heals the blind man, people question the healing, the Pharisees squabble over Jesus' violation of Sabbath law, and the man who is healed give thanks and praises Jesus.

My father was blind for 44 years following an industrial accident. His sight was surgically restored for ten years before finally fading. This text and my father's experience reminds me of two important truths: God's grace brings hope when our hope fades, and physical sight does not guarantee spiritual vision any more than physical blindness supposes spiritual darkness. God's grace is available to those who claim it, and God gives us the freedom to reject it as well.

**Are there areas of your life or faith to which you may be blind?  
Who may help you recognize your blind spots?**

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**March 14, 2010**

Revelation 21:1-4, 9-10

Hidden meaning and confusing symbols or metaphors can cloud or mislead our understanding of biblical texts. If God wants to be found, why are some parts of the Bible so hard to interpret?

The Bible is neither exclusively an instruction manual nor a history book, although it contains elements of both. The Bible contains inspired and inspiring stories, experiences, proverbs, allegories, and prophetic insight of humankind's encounter with God through the centuries. It offers truth, wisdom, and explanation. It also presents cultural interpretation that we need to put into historical perspective rather than swallow as absolute. God's redeeming action is eternally relevant, ancient cultural prejudice is not.

We know that the ancient Hebrew belief that sin caused all natural disaster need not be embraced today anymore than women need be subordinated to men because the Genesis story places Eve's arrival after Adam's. The truth of God's salvation story is not harmed by modern insight or common sense, as faith in Christ does not require that we leave our God-given intelligence out of the process. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit as well as modern understanding accumulated through centuries of study, archeology, and translation are also God's gift.

The subtleties of biblical texts offer us a life-long opportunity for study and discernment. The "big picture" of the biblical message is clear. The Bible tells us whose we are and where we're from ( a people of God's loving creation), and what we need do to be saved from our brokenness (accept God's love offered through Jesus Christ). The salvation message of faith, hope, and love is a clear and wondrous truth that is inescapable to those who choose to see.

**What does the bible mean to you and what will you do to grow  
in your knowledge and understanding of scripture?**