

Being Faithful

The Waiting Room Parables Series

Week Two

Did You Know?

Parables are short stories with a moral at the end of the story or a saying that expresses a truth. Parables are a great vehicle for teaching spiritual truths in a concrete manner. The images and characters used in these parables can express spiritual ideas about faithfulness, love, grace, and so many other important concepts. Parables are the storyteller's poetry. In all of the mechanics of the story God's truth can be mined and understood. Jesus spoke in parables because they are such a great way to show who God is. But most of the people around him, usually the religious leaders, did not understand these parables. As we look at parables, we are looking to see the spiritual truth found in each one, and then seeing the details of setting, characters, plot and reactions to gain more facets and insights to that truth.

Monday, January 14, 2013

Read: Matthew 20:16, 19:30; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30

Discuss: This phrase is a saying of Jesus that three of the four Gospels record. It is an interesting statement about the reversal of roles when it comes to God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom functions entirely differently than the world with different principles and rewards. What are some of the differences between the way God's economy and kingdom work and the ways the world teaches things work? You will also notice that different Gospel writers will use some of the same sayings or material in a different context in their own books. As you look at the surrounding verses, how do Matthew, Mark and Luke differ in the way they apply Jesus' truth about the first being last and the last being first?

Act: One of the foundational teachings of the Kingdom that is different from the world is that of serving others and serving God. We are aiming in our work to be the best, not for our own reputation, but for God to be glorified when people observe our work ethic. We want to be our best so that we can please Jesus. What is a practical thing that you can do today to get practice as "one of the least of these," a servant?

Tuesday, January 15, 2013

Read: Matthew 25:14-30

Discuss: Here is another parable about how God rewards his servants. What are the different amounts of money? What is the ratio of earnings by the first, second and third servant (the first received 5 and doubled, etc)? What does the master's reaction to the third servant tell us about God's expectations of us today?

Act: What are you doing for God today that will last for eternity? How we steward our finances, time and relationships either gives God glory or takes care of ourselves. Take a look at the way you manage your life and its different areas. Is there any area that you are not doing what the Bible says? How will you address this area? What action steps can you commit to do and start doing this week?

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Read: John 21:15-19

Discuss: There are two main theories about why Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him in John. The first deals with the original languages and explains that there are several words for love in Greek, and Jesus and Peter were using different words. The third time, Jesus matched Peter's word for love, which was not an unconditional love, but a friendship love. The idea of this option is that Jesus comes down to our level of understanding and starts there with us. The second explanation of the passage is that Peter denied Jesus three times, and so Jesus reaffirms his love for Him three times, restoring his place as a leader and apostle. But the key for our concept of faithfulness is found in the discussion about John. Peter focuses on John, but Jesus tells him, "You, follow Me!" Sometimes we get focused on other people's walk with God and neglect our own.

Act: What are the dangers of comparing ourselves to other people? What if the other person is a great saint? How does that make you feel? Or maybe we compare ourselves to other Christians who do not have our higher standards and look down on them. What is a way you can serve someone who is in your eyes a better believer than you and a way you can serve someone who is in your eyes a worse believer than you?

Thursday, January 17, 2013

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Discuss: Paul encourages Christians to focus on their own race, or their own walk with God. Sometimes we get sidetracked and we begin to think of others instead of ourselves. The Devil would like nothing more than for us to get distracted by others so that we become ineffective for

God. While we can admire others stronger than us and serve others weaker than us, we must not neglect ourselves. If a runner helps out all the other runners, that runner will not be able to focus on their own race. Distraction is one of the biggest potholes in the road in our marathon!

Act: What things do you allow to distract you from reading your Bible or praying or going to church or seeking God? Are there policies at work or school that hinder you from being a strong Christian? What are ways that you can deal with these matters? List three things in your life right now that are distracting you from growing deeper in your relationship with Jesus. Now pray and think on how to eliminate such distractions.

Friday, January 18, 2013

Read: Galatians 5:7-10

Discuss: Paul once again discusses the ways in which distractions get into our lives and hinder our walk with God. What is the distraction in Paul's day in the context before and after these verses? How does Paul deal with that distraction? Sometimes we need to be encouraged and reminded about the mission God has for us to do.

Act: What are some ways you can use to keep you focused on God? Maybe it's writing Scriptures about God's mission and posting them around the house or your room. Maybe it's signing up for a daily or weekly encouraging email about serving God. Maybe it's a different devotion than you're used to doing. If you need other family members to encourage you, ask someone each week to drop a note of encouragement or tell you how God's using them.

Saturday, January 19, 2013

Read: Hebrews 1:1-6

Discuss: This whole chapter of Hebrews is called the Hall of Faith. Throughout the chapter, the writer of Hebrews shows us people who have trusted in God for larger-than-life promises. Some have seen them come to pass, and others died before they saw God do what He promised. But even then, they saw the signs of what He would do. How would you define faith in your own words based on this passage?

Act: We cannot be faithful to God if we don't know what faith is or how to exercise it. What is one way you can trust in God a little bit more this week? Find an area of your life in which you are afraid to surrender all of it to God. Why do you hold back? Perhaps you can discuss this hang-up in that area with a family member who loves Jesus and you and you can trust. One of the best ways to overcome something in our lives is to put it in the open so it can be looked at in different perspectives. How will you change this area of your life to lean more on Jesus for support rather than yourself?

Sunday, January 20, 2013

Read: Matthew 25:1-13

Discuss: This is our text for Pastor's message this morning about "Being Faithful." As you read through the text, think of two questions that puzzle you concerning this parable of Jesus.

Act: If Pastor does not answer these questions, ask him after service to help you understand better this parable.