

FOUNDATIONS

Hill Country Bible Church UT
Spring 2008

"Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Luke 6:46-49

Introduction

We thirst and are not satisfied. We try and fail to fill the aching void within us with experiences, accomplishments, things and people. Somewhere in the stillness of our soul we cannot escape the fact that there has to be more. Do you long for more? Do you want to pursue God with a relentless passion? Then this study is for you.

This semester's study is about the foundations of our faith. Without firm foundations buildings eventually crumble. Life is like that. Foundational truths of the faith are meant to be an anchor in the storm helping you to understand who you are in Christ and why that is significant.

Each week of this study is broken up into five daily devotional readings. The readings are intentionally short each taking between ten and twenty minutes. You will find that daily time with God works best if you establish a specific time and place. If you are a morning person have your devotional time in the morning. If you are an evening person have it before you go to bed. Ten to fifteen minutes a day every day is better than thirty minutes once a week.

As you begin each reading take a few minutes to pray. Ask God to help you understand what you are reading. If the passage is familiar to you, pray that God will give you fresh eyes to see the text in a new light.

After you have prayed slowly read the passage. Some people find it helpful to read a passage aloud or to read a passage multiple times. Several good modern translations are out there which make reading the bible easier (New American Standard, New International Version and English Standard Version). If you don't have a bible we have free ones available at church. Crosswalk.com is a great place to read the bible online.

At the end of your reading spend some time answering the questions listed in the devotional guide. You may want to briefly journal about the passage asking questions like- what is this passage saying? Why is that significant? How can I apply that to my life?

As you finish each day, think specifically about how you can apply what you have read. Each week your small group will spend time discussing the material. You will find that if you consistently spend daily time with God this semester your life will change. Welcome to foundations. Have a great semester.

405 Schedule- Spring 2008

January 16th - Welcome Back

January 23rd - First Session-God and Man

January 30th - Second Session-Emanuel: God With us

February 6th - Third Session-Who is Jesus?

February 13th - Valentines Party

February 20th - Fourth Session-The Holy Spirit

February 27th - Fifth Session-Our identity in Christ

March 5th - Sixth Session-Sin

March 12th - Spring Break (No 405)

March 19th - Seventh Session-Abiding in Christ

March 26th - Rez Week (No 405)

April 2nd - Eighth Session-The Bible

April 9th - Ninth Session-Prayer

April 16th - Tenth Session-The Call of Christ

April 23rd - Eleventh Session-The Church

April 30th - Twelfth Session-Missional Life

Lesson One: God and Man

In His Book *The Silver Chair*, C.S. Lewis writes

“Are you thirsty?” said the Lion.

“I’m dying of thirst,” said Jill.

“Then drink,” said the Lion.

“May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?,” said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

“Will you promise not to do anything to me, if I do come?,” said Jill.

“I make no promise,” said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

“Do you eat girls?,” she said.

“I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,” said the Lion. It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

“I daren’t come and drink,” said Jill.

“Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“Oh dear!” said Jill, coming another step nearer. “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.¹

We all have a lion problem. He stands at the edge of the stream majestic, lordly, powerful beckoning us to come and drink. To embrace the lion involves risk. Who is he? Can he be trusted? In order to really understand Christianity we have to understand who God is and who we are.

The call to follow him involves giving up everything. As you stand at the edge of the stream you have a choice. Will you be what you have been designed to be since the beginning of time or will you be satisfied with the counterfeit?

¹ Lewis, C.S., *Readings for Meditation and Reflection*, New York: Harper Collins, 1992, 1.

Day 1-Who am I?

Our world struggles immensely with identity- figuring out who they are and why they exist. All around us people cry out for purpose and meaning desperately trying to fill a gaping void inside their life with things that don't ultimately satisfy. Scripture says that from the beginning of time we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and that we were made for the display of His splendor (Isaiah 60:21). Today as you read, reflect on the truth that you were created by design to glorify God and worship him.

Read : Genesis 1:26, Ephesians 2:10, Isaiah 43:1-7

Respond:

1. What does it mean to be made in the image of something?
2. According to these verses what is the purpose for which you were created?
3. How do these verses change your view of God?

Day 2- God is Holy

We can't understand Christianity without understanding the holiness of God. Scriptures says that God is perfect. He is completely without sin. In fact he so perfect that sin can't even enter his presence. In this passage Isaiah writes about a vision he has of the holiness of God. As you read today's text consider how Isaiah responds.

Read: Isaiah 6:1-8

Respond:

1. How did Isaiah respond when he was faced with the holiness of God?
2. How did God respond to Isaiah?
3. How do you need to respond to what you have read today?

Day 3- God is Just

Growing up you probably heard the expression "Nobody's perfect." While that's true of people, its not true of God. The Bible tells us that God is 100% Holy and Just- so Holy in fact that sin can't stand in front of him. It is critical that we understand the justness of God so that we can understand why Jesus had to die for sin.

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Respond:

1. What do these passages tell you about God?
2. Does this passage bother you? Why or why not?

Day 4- My sin separates me from God

According to the bible everyone has sinned or fallen short of God's perfect standard of holiness. Because God is just there has to be a penalty for sin. Today's passage tells us that God loved us so much he sent Christ to die for our sin so that we could have a relationship with God.

Read: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:6-8

Respond:

1. What do these passages say about sin?

2. What do these passages say about Christ?

Day 5- Mercy of God

Imagine how awful it would be if you had to work your way to favor with God. You would always be carrying around little checklists to see if you were good enough. The bible tells us that God knew we could never achieve righteousness on our own so he granted us mercy- unmerited favor that we did not deserve.

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

Respond:

1. Look at these verses and list all of the things God has done for us.

2. According to this passage what does "saved by grace" mean?

3. How does this shape your attitude toward God?

Lesson Two- Immanuel God With Us

Day 1- God With Us

It must have been shocking. How could Mary possible be pregnant? Imagine for just a second that you are Joseph. All is right with the world and you are preparing to be married. Than Mary tells you the unthinkable. Worse she doesn't own up to the fact that she had been with another man. Suddenly an angel appears and tells you that the child Mary is carrying will save his people from their sins. He would be the one foretold by the prophets. Immanuel God with us.

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

Respond:

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus entered into humanity and took on flesh?
3. Jesus is Immanuel "God with us". What difference does that make in your daily life?

Day 2- The Word

For the next two days we are going to be looking at a passage from the first chapter of John that explains who Jesus is and why he was sent. In today's passage the term "Word" means Jesus.

Read: John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-23

Respond:

1. What do these verse say about Jesus?
2. How can you apply them at a practical level?

Day 3-A Child of God

Jesus came so that you could have a personal relationship with him. His intention was that you would become his child.

Read: John 1:6-18

Respond:

1. What does John 1:10-11 mean?
2. According to this passage how do you become a child of God?
3. Why is being a child of God significant?

Day 4-The Word Became Flesh

Some times we can become so familiar with a story that we miss the profoundness of it. In this passage God steps into humanity as a baby so that he could save us from our sin. For just a moment marvel at a God who cares enough about us that he would take on the limitations of mankind and become one of us.

Read: John 1:14-18, 1 John 1:1-7

Respond:

1. Using today's verses describe John's experience with Jesus?
2. What did John believe about Jesus?
3. At this point in the study what do you think about Jesus?

Day 5- Christ was fully Man

Jesus Christ knows what it is like to be a man. When he walked on earth he experienced hunger, fatigue, emotion, betrayal, joy, sadness- everything that we experience as people. We serve a personal God- a God who knows us intimately.

Read: Hebrews 2:14-18, Hebrews 4:14-16

Respond:

1. What do these verses tell you about God?
2. Why is it significant that Christ became a man? What difference does it make?
3. How do these verses change the way you view Christ?

Lesson Three- Who is Jesus?

In his book The Jesus I Never Knew Philip Yancey writes, “It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the word Messiah among faithful Jews. They staked their future on a king who would lead their nation back to glory.”² The nation of Israel believed that God would come as a prophet, priest and king to deliver the people and establish a kingdom on earth. Over 456 passages in the Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah. To claim to be the Messiah was to claim to be God. This week several of the passages you read will be familiar to you. Pray for fresh eyes as you read about Jesus.

Day 1 - Who do you say I am?

Spend some time today considering the question Jesus asked Peter- Who you say I am? Ultimately Jesus stands at the doorway of our hearts and asks us this same question.

Read: Matthew 16:13-20

Respond:

1. Who did Jesus say he was in this passage?
2. What relevance does that have in your everyday life?

Day 2-You Must Be Born Again

Nicodemus must have been watching Jesus from a distance. Picture the scene for a moment- It's night and Nicodemus comes to Jesus to find out more about who he was and why he had come. How startled he must have been by Jesus' response “You must be born again.”

Read: John 3:1-21

Respond:

1. Why do you think Nicodemus came at night?
2. What does being born again mean?

² Ortberg, John, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002, 100.

Day 3-Living Water

In New Testament times women would come in the morning and evening to draw water from wells. In today's passage a woman with a shady past comes at noon to draw water. Why did she come in the middle of the day? Was it to avoid people who would shun her because of her past? Remarkably, Jesus comes to Samaria and changes this woman's life for forever. Jesus sees past the woman's stated need and speaks to her real need.

Read: John 4:1-26

Respond:

1. In Jesus' times it was unthinkable for a respectable Jewish man to interact with a Samaritan woman- especially one with a bad reputation. Why is it significant that Jesus spoke to this woman?
2. What is this "living water" that Jesus talks about?
3. How can you apply this story to your life?

Day 4- My Lord and My God

Belief. We struggle with it. It is difficult to follow someone we can't see. In today's passage Thomas is struggling with his faith. As you read notice how patient Jesus is with him. What was he trying to teach him? What relevance does that have for you today?

Read: John 20: 24-30

Respond:

1. What was Thomas's struggle in this passage?
2. How did Jesus respond to Thomas?
3. What are areas of belief that you struggle with?

Day Five- Made Alive

In today's passages Paul makes a strong argument concerning the resurrection of Christ. As you read, consider what your faith is based on and why that matters.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:14-22, Romans 8:9-11

Respond:

1. List three reasons why the resurrection of Christ is important?

2. How does the resurrection of Christ make a difference in your daily walk with Him?

*In his famous book Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis makes this statement, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."*³

1. Why does C.S. Lewis write that you can't say Jesus was a great moral teacher but not God?

³ Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity*, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1960,55.

Lesson Four: Holy Spirit

One of the very last things Jesus said to his disciples in Acts 1:8 was “ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The book of Acts records the very first time the Holy Sprit came to the believers. This week we are going to look at the questions: Who is this Holy Spirit? Why is he important? What difference does he make the daily life of a believer?

Day One-Guide You In Truth

Jesus is about to die. At the very end of his life he tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit is coming. The Holy Spirit was designed by God to have a very significant role in the life of the believer. As you read this text consider what that role is and why it is important.

Read: John 16:5-15

Respond:

1. What do you think the role of the Holy Spirit is?
2. In this passage what did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do?
3. Have you experienced this in your life or in the lives of others?

Day 2-Marked With A Seal

For many of us the word “Holy Spirit” seems kind of strange. What is it? How do you get it? The whole concept feels mystical like something you might find in far eastern religion. Today’s passage is very specific about the Holy Spirit.

Read: Ephesians 1:11-14

Respond:

1. What does this passage say about the Holy Spirit?
2. Why is that significant?
3. What relevance does the Holy Spirit have in your everyday life?

Lesson Five- Identity in Christ

This week we are going to wrestle with who God says we are. So often we believe the lie that our identity is based on how we feel, what people think about us or how we perform. Jesus told his disciples I have come to set you free - no more performance, no more having to please people, no more seeking achievement in the eyes of the world. When God looks at you he sees you as completely holy, righteous, and pleasing to God. Not because of anything you have done but because of the blood of Jesus Christ shed for you.

Day 1- A Long Way Off

Performance. For many of us that is what we base our self-worth on. Our whole life we have watched people reward those who do well and condemn those who do wrong. We tend to think that God is like that- sitting in heaven with a little black book evaluating our behavior. Unconditional love is not something we can even remotely fathom. Today as you read this passage pay attention to the love of the father- a love that accepts you as you are.

Read: Luke 15:11-32

Respond:

1. What does this passage say about how God loves us?

2. If you believed God loved you unconditionally how would that change your relationship with Him?

Day 2-Made Us Alive

Look carefully at the wording of today's passage. The text says you were dead but now you have been made alive. Our identity was purchased for us at the cross. It is already accomplished. The question for us today is "Will I live out who I really am?"

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

Respond:

1. What does this passage say about our identity?
2. How does our identity influence our spiritual walk?
3. How can you apply today's passage?

Day 3-Holy and Dearly Loved

Most of us remember that horrible feeling in grade school when you weren't chosen for something. Deep within us we have a desire to be special, to be one of the "in crowd", to be accepted. God's word tells us that we are chosen and dearly loved. As a result of that acceptance, our lives are to be profoundly different. We are to reflect our identity and to change the world around us.

Read: Colossians 3:12-17

Respond:

1. According to this passage how should we respond to the love of God?
2. If you really believed you were holy and dearly loved by God how would that change your life?

Day 4- His Divine Power

How would your life change if you knew you had everything you need? Would you step out in faith and live differently? Would your response to trials and difficulties change? Today's passage challenges us to live lives that reflect the power of God.

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-9

Respond:

1. What does this passage say Christ has given you?
2. How do you need to respond?

Day 5-New Creation

Most people spend their lives living for themselves. They completely miss the fact that God has made us new creations. The old identity has been replaced. This passage challenges us to live out our calling.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Respond:

1. What does being a new creation look like?
2. What does it mean to be the righteousness of God?

Lesson Six- Sin

Sin. We all struggle with it. In fact, for many of us, it causes us to hide our faces from God and others because deep down we are afraid of what they might think if they really knew us. When God looks at you he doesn't see your sin, he sees the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross for you. In fact, scripture says that God has cast your sin as far as the east is from the west. The problem with our sin is that our sin separates us from fellowship with God. That's where forgiveness comes in. The bible tells us that we can restore fellowship with God through confession and repentance

Day 1- A Chosen People

Many people spend their whole lives trying to prove something to the world around them. Their struggle is one of identity. Who am I? Why am I significant?

Read: 1 Peter 2:9-12

Respond:

1. What do these verses say about your identity as a believer?
2. How does the term "war against your soul" change how you view sin?
3. What are you commanded to do in this passage?

Day 2-Stands in our Defense

Jesus came to set us free from the captivity of sin. He came so that we could experience abundant life. We no longer have to defend ourselves because he stands in our defense.

Read: 1 John 2:1-2, Psalms 103:10-12

Respond:

1. According to these passages what does God do with our sin?
2. How do these verses change the way you view sin?

Day 3-If We Confess

To confess means to agree with God that what we are doing is wrong. Confession changes our inner hearts and our attitudes. It renews our desire to walk in a right relationship with God.

Read: 1 John 1:5-9

Respond:

1. According to this passage what happens when we confess sin?
2. What specific things hold you back from confessing sin to God?
3. Today take some time and pray 1 John 1:9 back to God. As you pray confess your sin and embrace the promise that he is faithful and just to forgive you.

Day 4-If My People

Confession is the process of agreeing with God that what you are doing is wrong. Repentance is changing your behavior, thoughts, and attitudes.

Read: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Respond:

1. What actions does this passage ask you to do?
2. What does it mean to turn from something?
3. Why is turning an important step in dealing with sin in our lives?

Day 5-Do Not Let Sin Reign

Who reigns in your heart? Today's passage challenges us to consider who our master is. As you read think carefully about the language in the passage. Spend some time prayerfully asking God to help you make the daily choice to place God on the throne of your heart.

Read: Romans 6:11-22

Respond:

1. At a practical level how do we not let sin reign in us?
2. What does it mean to be a "slave to righteousness"?
3. Who is it in your life that challenges you to a better understanding of righteousness?

Case Study:

You've know something was bothering your roommate for a long time, you could see it in her eyes, she usually comes to church with you but she has been "busy" for quite a while. Finally you ask her what's wrong and with tears in her eyes she begins to tell you that she is sexually active in her relationship with her boyfriend. She says, " I know sex outside of marriage is wrong. We are both believers. Now I'm afraid God can't forgive me. When I step into church I feel like a hypocrite."

1. *How do you explain God's forgiveness to your roommate?*
2. *What steps does she need to take?*

Lesson Seven- Abiding

Have you ever watched a caterpillar transform into a butterfly? At first there is not really much to see- they kind of look like worms. Than all of the sudden they begin to change into something beautiful. God desires to do the same thing with our lives. Transformation occurs as we immerse ourselves in a relationship with God and learn to live out our faith.

Day 1-Offer Your Bodies

Sacrifice. It doesn't conjure up warm fuzzy feelings. Most of us would rather have some other option- an option that allows us to maintain a life of comfort. Today's reading urges us to intentional choose not to conform to the pattern of the world. It challenges us that true worship means we offer up ourselves.

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Respond:

1. What does "living sacrifice," mean?
2. Describe the difference between conformed and transformed.
3. According to this passage what has to happen for transformation to occur?

Day 2-Why Do You Call Me Lord?

True Lordship in our lives means that we listen to God and do what he says. This process of listening and obeying build a foundation in our lives that allows us to withstand storms. Are you ready for a flood? Today prayerfully commit to listening and obeying.

Read: Luke 6:46-47

Respond:

1. In this passage Jesus says we are to come to him, hear his words, and put them into practice. What does that look like at a practical level?
2. Today how do you need to do respond to this passage?

Day 3-Remain In Me

Often when Jesus spoke he used word pictures to help people understand what he was saying. As you read today's passage, spend some time considering the picture of the vine and the branches. How does that picture challenge you?

Read: John 15:1-8

Respond:

1. What are the promises in this passage?
2. What does this passage say about fruit?
3. At a practical level what does it look like "to remain in the vine"? Are there any specific changes you need to make so you can abide with Christ?

Day 4-Martha Was Distracted

Martha was distracted. So often that characterizes our lives- we are so busy with our normal day-to-day affairs that we miss what is most important. Today as you reflect on this passage think about what has to change in your personal life for you to sit at the Lord's feet and listen to him.

Read: Luke 10:38-42

Respond:

1. In this passage where was Martha's focus?
2. What was it that Martha did not understand?
3. What types of things distract you from sitting at the Lord's feet?

Lesson Eight- The Bible

Romans 12:1-2 says, “ Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The way we renew our mind is through the word of God. Nothing changes our thoughts, attitudes, and motives more than scripture. It is through this process of renewing our minds that we are able to discern the will of God in our lives.

Day 1- Living and Active

What if I told you that investing in one thing consistently would radically alter the course of your life? God designed his word to change our lives. When we read it we aren't just reading words on a page. We are reading something that was created to shape and mold our thoughts, our attitudes and our actions conforming us to the image of Christ.

Read: Hebrews 4:12

Respond:

1. What does “living and active” mean?
2. How does this passage change your view of God’s word?

Day 2 – Inspired By God

A key doctrine of Christianity is the belief that the Bible is the word of God. Our faith doesn't rest on words made up by men but on words inspired by God.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21

Respond:

1. According to these passages what is the purpose of God’s word?
2. Do you believe God inspired the bible? Why or why not?

Day 3- Hidden Your Word

What is our relationship with the Word of God suppose to be? So often we read the bible but we don't let it penetrate our hearts. Today, ask yourself what needs to change in your relationship with the word.

Read: Psalms 119:9-16

Respond:

1. In this passage what are the benefits of the word?
2. In these verses specifically what does the psalmist do with the word?
3. How can you apply this passage at a practical level?

Day 4-Upon Your Hearts

Often people treat the word of God like they treat good china. It sits on the shelf and only gets taken out on special occasions. In the Old Testament Moses gathered together all of the Israelites and told them that the word of God was to be an integral part of their every day lives not something they just considered occasionally.

Read: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Respond:

1. According to this passage why is the law (word) important?
2. What were the people suppose to do with the law?
3. At a practical level how can you make the word of God something you experience throughout your day?

Day 5-Dwell in You

If we are going to pursue God with a relentless passion we have to know Him. In order to know him we have to invest time in his word. Today as you read, let the words of these passages challenge your hearts.

Read: Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15

Respond:

1. How is letting the word of Christ dwell in you different than just reading?
2. What does it mean to correctly handle the word of truth?
3. Specifically how would you like to change your relationship with the word?

Case Study:

While in a history class you overhear a fellow student say, "I believe in most of the bible but there are some things I don't agree with. When you come right down to it the Bible was written by men and men make mistakes."

1. *Do you believe this student is correct? Why or why not?*
2. *If a person believes the bible was written by men and not inspired by God what effect could that have on their lives?*

Lesson Nine- Prayer

In his book *The Life You've Always Wanted* John Ortberg writes about prayer saying, "The problem (with prayer) is that my mind has a steady stream of thoughts: will I get a year-end bonus, will the meeting I'm supposed to lead come off all right, what's for dinner-but none of these things seem spiritual. So I force myself to pray for things that seem nobler-missionaries and world peace. But there is a gap between what I am suppose to pray for and what I am really thinking about. Removing this gap is what simple prayer is about."

Day 1- Pray about everything

God wants us to talk to him about everything that is going on in our lives. Nothing is too small or unimportant for him to hear.

Read: Philippians 4:6-7

Respond:

1. What is challenging about these verses?
2. What is promised?
3. How can you apply this passage?

Day 2- When You Pray

Often we feel awkward about praying, because we aren't quite sure we are doing it "right". This is especially true when we start praying with other believers for the first time. In this passage Jesus teaches us how to pray.

Read: Matthew 6:5-7

Respond:

1. What does this passage tell you about prayer?
2. Today take about five minutes and write out a simple prayer to God- don't worry about how it sounds just lay before God the things that are in your heart.

Day 3- Daily Bread

So often we pray about immediate needs – a test, big decisions, a job. In this passage Jesus teaches his disciples a model for prayer.

Read: Matthew 6:9-13

Respond:

1. Look at each verse and list the types of thing that are prayed for (worship, forgiveness)

2. Looking at the list you made above, what types of prayer are missing from your prayer life?

Day 4- Ask

In today's passage Jesus challenges his disciples to persist in prayer. As you read consider what this would look like lived out in your personal prayer life.

Read: Luke 11:5-11

Respond:

1. What is the promise that is listed in this passage

2. What is the point of verses seven and eight?

3. Why is being persistent in prayer difficult?

Day 5- He Hear Us

Do you believe God hears your prayers? Today's passage challenges us to pray according to God's will and to act in confident that He hears us.

Read: 1 John 5:14-15

Respond:

1. Do you pray to God with confidence? Why or why not?
2. How do you know if what you are praying is God's will?
3. How do you want your prayer life to change this semester?

Lesson Ten- Call of Christ

So often we proclaim that we want Christ to be the center of our lives. It is so easy to say, yet so hard to live. This week we are going to be looking at the hard sayings of Jesus. Continually Jesus said to people, "If you want to follow me I have to be first in your life". As you read the passages this week ask yourself "Am I really committed to living biblically?"

Day 1- Deny Yourself

If we are honest with ourselves most of us want our Christianity to be comfortable. We love God but we want it to fit nicely in with the rest of our life. In today's passage Jesus is speaking to his disciples and makes a startling claim about what it cost to follow him.

Read: Luke 9:23-24

Respond:

1. What things in this passage surprise you?
2. What are the promises in this passage?
3. At a practical level what does it look like to deny yourself?

Day 2- Follow Me

Priorities. They reflect what is most important in our life. In this passage several people come to Jesus and say they want to follow him after they have done something else. As you read, look carefully at how Jesus responds to these people.

Read: Luke 9:57-62

Respond:

1. In this passage three men tell Jesus they will follow him. Look at how Jesus responds to them. What was he trying to get them to see?
2. What things are you tempted to put in front of following Christ?

Day 3- Whoever Serves Me

Today if you stand on a national stage you carefully script your words to appeal to people. Listening to Jesus must have been a shocking experience. The words Jesus spoke didn't leave people with warm, fuzzy feelings. Jesus words were intended and still are intended to challenge us at the very core of who we are.

Read: John 12:23-26

Respond:

1. If you are going to serve Christ why is dying to yourself such an important thing?
2. At a practical level how can you apply this passage?

Day 4- As One Who Serves

Being first. It's the American way. Our culture tells us that the greater you are the more you deserve to be served. Today look at what Jesus has to say about being great.

Read: Luke 22:25-27

Respond:

1. How does Jesus define greatness in this passage?
2. Why is serving so difficult?
3. What are some specific ways you can begin to serve others?

Day 5- Nature of a Servant

How is servanthood lived out in a practical way? Today's passage is where the rubber meets the road. As you read consider the things in your life that God wants to re-shape into his image.

Read: Philippians 2:1-8

Respond:

1. Based on this passage what specific attitudes and actions should be present in our lives?
2. What areas of your attitude or actions do you need to change in response to this passage?

Case Study

Ann is one of the girls in your bible study. Last week she shared, "This semester I am carrying a really heavy load and working part time. I am just so busy I don't have a lot of time for getting involved in things at church and making my relationship with God a priority. I think God understands that this season in my life is pretty crazy now. I know that once I get out of school it will be a lot easier to be committed to following Christ."

1. *Is Ann correct in assuming that we have seasons of life where our commitment level to Christ changes? Why or Why not?*
2. *Where is Ann's focus?*
3. *Over the course of the semester how can you help Ann to understand what it means to follow Christ?*

Lesson 11- The Church

This week I want to challenge the way you view church. Some people view church like a country club full of people who need to fit a certain mold in order to be accepted. For them church is about legalism- following a carefully designed set of rules to be accepted and loved. Some people view church as something they do on Sundays. These people carve out a little slice of their life for God and then go on to live the rest of their week without him. God has designed the church to be a place where people live out the process of sanctification side by side- loving, serving and challenging each other to become more like Christ in every aspect of their life. Church was never meant to be a “Sunday thing” but a “Life thing.”

Day 1- The Church is His Body

Normally when we think of the church we think of a building filled with people. This passage literally says that the church is the body of Christ and that Christ is the head of the church. In this passage Paul is praying for the church of Ephesus that they would know his great power. Today think about the power of Christ that rests in every believer and how much God wants that power displayed in the local church.

Read: Ephesians 1:18-23

Respond:

1. What does Paul pray in this passage?

2. How does the word picture of the body change your view of the church?

Day 2- One Body

One of the first phrases little kids typically learn is, "I can do it myself." We value independence. In fact we value independence so much we design and order our whole lives around it. People who don't value independence just seem weird. In this passage Paul writes about a lifestyle of dependence on Jesus and inter-dependence with one another. The church is designed by God to be a place where people serve one another.

Read: Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Respond:

1. According to these passages why is using your gifts in the church important?

2. If you really believe that all the members of the church were one body belonging to each other, how would that change your attitudes and actions?

Day 3- As One Who Serves

The world instills in us from an early age that the great are first. What a stark contrast is presented in Christianity. Today's verses challenge our thinking.

Read: Luke 22:25-27, Matthew 20:25-28

Respond:

1. How would the church be different if all the members were there to serve one another?

2. How can you live out servanthood practically?

Day 4- Don't Give Up Meeting Together

The book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish believers who were struggling with their newfound faith in Jesus Christ. The words "let us" appear five times in the passage. As you read prayerfully consider how you need to respond.

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25

Respond:

1. List the five "let us" phrases in this passage.
2. Why do you think it is important to meet together?
3. What difference does it make in your spiritual life when you are or are not connected to other believers?

Day 5- All Things To All Men

How committed are you to the gospel? Are you willingly to step out of your comfort zone to engage people with the message of Jesus Christ? In this passage Paul challenges us to treasure the gospel to the extent that we are willingly to lay down our lives for other people.

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Respond:

1. In what ways is your life like Paul's?
2. In what ways is it different?
3. What would you like to see change in the way you share the gospel?

Case Study

Last week during a study group you invited your friend Nick to come to church with you. “I’m not really into church,” said Nick. “Growing up I felt like most of the people there were pretty hypocritically-living one way on Sunday and a different way the rest of the week. Don’t get me wrong I believe in God and I go to bible study once a week on campus. It’s just that I don’t think going to church is that important.”

- 1. How would you explain what the purpose of the church is?*
- 2. Is going to bible study once a week on campus different than church? Why or Why not?*
- 3. How would you respond to Nick’s claim that people in church are hypocritical?*

Lesson 12- Missional Life

At the core of who we are as a church is our desire to reach people with the life changing reality of Jesus Christ. This is our mission. We want to live vibrant lives that reflect Jesus Christ among people who don't know him. We want to love people so much that we are willingly to sacrifice our time, talent, and treasure so that they have an opportunity to hear the gospel. A missional lifestyle is one of pursuing God and pursuing people with reckless abandonment. For us it is the thing that matters most.

Day 1- Go and Make Disciples

Jesus has been crucified and now appears to his disciples to give them the great commission. The words he speaks will dramatically alter the direction of their lives and will literally change the world. These words still challenge us today and are at the heart of what it means to live a missional lifestyle.

Read: Matthew 28:16-30

Respond:

1. What does “go and make disciples” mean?
2. What promises are in this passage?
3. How does this passage apply to you?

Day 2- Seek First

God has called us to be people on a mission for him. People whose priorities, desires, and passions are for Christ's glory and renown. In today's passage Jesus is speaking to his disciples about what it means to follow him. As you read think about what a life surrendered to Christ looks like.

Read: Matthew 6:25-33

Respond:

1. What are the commands in this passage?
2. What are the promises?
3. At a practical level how do you seek first his kingdom and his righteousness?

Day 3- The Ministry of Reconciliation

Every day we are bombarded by messages that tell us to put ourselves first. "Look out for number one," "If you don't take care of yourself no one will." This message has become so much a part of our culture that it seeps into our Christianity and we leave it unchallenged. In today's passage Paul writes to the church at Corinth and implores them to live for a greater calling. He challenges them to take part of the ministry of reconciliation- taking broken people and restoring their relationship to God.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Respond:

1. What does this verse challenge us to do?
2. What things help us to live a life that puts other people first?
3. What does being an ambassador for Christ look like at a practical level?

Day 4- Be Wise

What does it look like on a practical level to be on mission for God? In this passage Paul gives specific instructions about how we are to interact with the world around us. As you read think about the specific things he says to do.

Read: Colossians 4:2-6

Respond:

1. What are you instructed to do in this passage?
2. What do conversations “full of grace” and “seasoned with salt” look like?
3. When you analyze how you act toward non-believers what needs to change?

Day 5 – Finishing the Race

Researchers tell us that when people look back at their lives the things they regret most are typically not what they did but what they didn't do. Opportunities missed, relationships not restored, passions not lived out. When you have reached the end of your life what do you want to be able to say? In this passage Paul writes these powerful words, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” May the same be said of us.

Read: 2 Timothy 4: 1-8

Respond:

1. If you were going to run a difficult race how would you prepare?
2. What steps do you need to take today to run the race that God has designed for you?

Case Study

Amy is a close friend of yours and has been a believer for a few years. At lunch she tells you, “Evangelism just isn’t my gift. Sharing my faith really scares me. I am afraid what my friends will think. I guess I am just not comfortable. Whenever I think about sharing with other people I get nervous. What if they ask me things I don’t know how to answer? What if they feel like I am judging them?”

- 1. How do you respond to Amy?*
- 2. What helps people to get over their fear in sharing the gospel?*
- 3. Is “evangelism” a gift?*

Notes

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For More Information on Foundations Please Contact Us At:

Hill Country Bible Church UT
405 W. 22nd
Austin, TX 78705
www.hbcut.com

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