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ANANIAS: THE DECEITFUL HEART

Tonight we are going to talk about a famous man of the New Testament. Unfortunately, he was famous for his sins. His name was Ananias.

Acts 5:1-11 C. Imagine their lives. They were disciples, married, probably with children, committed, giving. Etc. The apostles started talking about special contribution, just like we do now.

Q: What do you think *Ananias and Sapphira* thought about when the Apostles started talking about the special contribution? (Let them give responses.) Perhaps they thought, “Its hard” or they wondered what will others do?

Or they thought “Here is my chance to impress the Apostles.” They would have thought, ‘We have this land, but it will be hard to sell’ Maybe Ananias thought “I want to give, but.....”

? Perhaps they looked at others in Acts 4:36-37, and thought, “others are being sacrificial”

? May be they started thinking, “But we need to buy this. Or we need to save money for that. We can’t give too much!”

C: Many of us have thought these things. Q: So why did God kill them? Let’s see 4 reasons...

1. He Did Not Take Advice

C: Ananias and Sapphira obviously wanted to give, but they faced a dilemma: “when we sell the land, should we give it all?” It would have been easy to go to the leaders and ask them what was best. The apostles probably would have told them “give what you can cheerfully give, and keep the rest”.

C: But Ananias and Sapphira were independent. They made a plan without getting any advice.

Q: Think about it. Have you asked advice about the special contribution? Or are you struggling inside, secretly sinning and being selfish? Or are you pretending it will go away if you don’t think about it?

C: God will not bless us if we are like them, acting without taking advice

Ex.: I appreciatewho talked to her leaders (or me) about the contribution, and decided to do for it.

2. He Misled His Wife

C: Ananias had plotted with her to lie. Instead of leading her into righteousness through sacrificial giving and honesty, he led her into sin. When Peter asked him whether this was all the money for the land, he lied to protect their reputation. He lied to protect his wife. He did not even come in to see Peter with her—he was busy doing his own things. Sometimes we are this way. We charge ahead, ignoring our

wives, or the other people we live with. They could have told Peter the truth, “no, we’ve kept some money for ourselves.” It would not have been wrong for them to keep some of the money. But lying was wrong!

Q Think about t are you leading the people in your household and family to righteousness, or are you leading them into sin by your selfish example and your cover-ups?

C: Sometimes we are very close to someone, and instead of exposing their sins, we cover up for them. Most often it is husbands and wives who do this for each other. Sometimes two brothers who are close friends do this for each other. But the consequence of cover-up are disastrous. (SHARE YOURSELF about a time you-joined in with someone else in sin, and you did not confess it to the leaders, but covered up for each other. It could be gossip, or lust or greed, or stealing, or violence, or laziness...)

Q: What kind of relationships do we have in the church? Think about it: are they “iron sharpens iron” relationships, where there is challenge, purity, and accountability? Or are they compromising cover-up relationships? What kind of marriage do we have? Are there any sins or secrets no one else knows about (like impurity, now or before marriage, financial matters, beatings, bad attitudes.

C: Confess today—just confess and avoid the sin of Ananias & Sapphira “Protecting” others by lying for them is the worst thing that we can do for those we love. Let’s be open. and make sure that others around us are open. too.

3. He Was Not Truthful:

Prov 12:22. C: God is our heavenly father. And like father on earth, he is delighted when his children are truthful. The Bible says that “He detests lying lips.” C As disciples we must be committed to telling the truth, always. Aananias lied to Peter when he asked a very direct question. Sometimes lying means just hiding the truth, telling half the truth, or not confessing. We will get in bigger trouble with God for lying than with the **leaders for** confessing our sins! (SHARE YOURSELF: about a time you did not want to confess something, but then you did, and tell what happened.)

4. He Did Not Understand

C: God is very forgiving if we are open and repent; but very **hard-line** if we are deceitful. **We** think we can escape God, but that is very stupid. Hebrews 4:12-13. God can see everything. He knows our every thought and deed, even if no one else does. Nothing would have happened to Ananias & Sapphira if they had said it was half the money for the land and that was what they wanted to give. They might even have been commended. But they were people pleasers and cared more about their reputation in the church than about what God thought of them. And they died for it

Conclusion:

Let us all learn from Ananias & Sapphira’s bad example.
Let’s be open and righteous. Let’s overcome sin.

PHILIP : THE POWERFUL PREACHER

1. Serve when You Are Asked

Acts 6:5-7 C: The Greek widows were being overlooked in the distribution of food for the poor. Philip had nothing to do with this problem, but they asked him to help. He didn't complain. He didn't say, 'Oh, I am too busy.'" He decided to serve just as he had been asked. Some times we are asked to serve. It might be childcare, or taking someone somewhere, *or* doing follow up, or cooking or helping with ushering or communion, or sitting in on a study, or doing the dishes or serving food or cleaning or getting water or bringing something to church whatever the job is, we should gladly do it just like Philip. Leadership is all about being a servant.

2. Evangelise Everywhere

Acts 8:4-8 C: *As* a result of Stephen's death, the church *in Jerusalem* got persecuted more and more. The regular Christians left town and settled all over the country to avoid being sent to prison by Saul (v.3).

Q What did the regular Christian do everywhere they went (v.4)? [Preached.] Where are some of the places we can share our faith? .When people come to our house. To neighbours. At work/school. At shops, on the roads. To old friends. To families & relatives, in restaurants. At Cinemas, On buses.

Q What did Philip do in Samaria? [He preached and did miracles (vs.5-6).] Why did the people listen to him? [Powerful messages, miracles.] Why did God give him special miraculous power, but not to us? [He did not have the written Bible to back up his message. We do. So the Apostles gave him power by laying their hands on him in Acts 6:6-8.

Q How did the people feel when they saw the miracles and believed in Jesus? There was great joy in that city (vs.8)

C: One thing is clear. Philip had learned the lesson in Jerusalem—disciples evangelize everywhere they go! Let's make sure the we also do that.

3. Really Bold with the Truth

Acts 8:9-13. Q What did Simon do before he became a Christian? (He we a sorcerer, making a living by doing magic! Q Why was he impressed with Philip? [The signs and miracles.] Was Philip afraid of him? [No, he was really bold with the gospel]

C: When the apostles came, they laid their hands and prayed for the new Christians so they could also have miracle power (v.15-17), so they could evangelize effectively even though they did not have Bibles. Q: When Simon saw the apostles passed on the gifts by the laying on of hands, what did he do? [Offered them money so he could do it too.] Did Simon ever really change? [No]

Q: What are some of the things people today love more than Jesus? Money, job,

girlfriend, boy friend, pleasure, family, etc

C: It takes real boldness to love Jesus more than the world. It takes boldness to stand up to our families and follow Jesus. Example I appreciate Yogaraj, who has decided to love Jesus more than his old life. He could be living in Madurai, making lots of money as a doctor, with a clinic **paid for** by his family. But he has rejected his family's religion. Sacrifice money and comfort and is serving Jesus with all his heart And God is blessing him in a great way, because he *is* bold with the truth.

4. Value Every Soul

Acts 8:26.40 Q What are some things about PHILIP that show every soul was important to him? [He was willing to evangelise alone, He ran after the eunuch when God called him. 'He had a conversation with the eunuch. He didn't just want any visitor to come, he wanted the Eunuch to come. After the eunuch was converted, again Philip was preaching to others (v.40)]

Q: Did the eunuch get a bad attitude that Philip, his discipler, had to leave? [vs. 39] What should our attitude be if God changes our discipler or family group? [Happy! We should be willing to go anywhere and do anything for God] C: I appreciate..... He is willing to go anywhere for Jesus.

5. Make Family A Priority

Acts 21:8-9 C: Many years later, Paul was traveling from Ephesus, and he landed at Caesarea, star Jerusalem. And he stayed with Philip. By this time Phillip was married, and had 4 daughters! He was hospitable. He must have saved them food, and cleaned their dirty clothes. He was hospitable. And he obviously had done a great job with his kids, because just like their father, they preached, too! He made time for them. Being a Christian does not mean that you have no time for your family. Be sure to set aside one evening a week for your family. Spend time with them, and make it special. Tuesday or Wednesday night could be a good night, if you don't have a meeting then. Philip spent time with his family. He had fun with them. He had devotionals with them. He listened to them. He challenged them. He told them about Jesus and the Bible. And they loved him, and followed his example. That is what all of us want.

C: This week, have someone over to your house. Entertain them or atleast give them tea. Show them photos. Love them the way Phillip loved people.

ANDREW

Today we will learn about a very special man Andrew, the brother of Peter and a disciple of Jesus.

I believe this lesson will change our lives.

1. Hang on to Jesus

John 1:35-40

C: This was the first time Andrew met Jesus. Jesus was so friendly to him. He asked Andrew, “what do you want?” He wanted to help Andrew. *Andrew asked* Jesus, “where are you staying?” (v.38) And Jesus took him home with him. and they spent the day together. When Jesus offered Andrew a chance to spend time with him, Andrew did not say, I’m busy, I have some urgent work, later I’ll come.” Andrew said, “OK, I will come right now.” Q: What about you? Are you ready to hang *out* to Jesus? Or are you not making time for the meeting and the disciples? Let’s *make* sure we all follow Andrew’s example.

C: The first time we meet the Christians is such a special moment (SHARE YOURSELF about when you first were invited and came to the church) Q: What about you? Would any of you like to share about when you first came to a meeting? (Let a couple of people share)

Mark 1:14-18

C: Here we see that Jesus was preaching and again he saw Peter and Andrew. He told them to follow him. And they left their nets and immediately followed him. Andrew was willing even to leave his job to follow Jesus! Q: Is Jesus more important to you than your job? Are you hanging on to him and trusting him? Or are you trusting in your boss, your education, your family, and your job?

2. Help Others With Jesus.

Mark 1:29-31. C: Peter’s mother-in-law was sick. Often husbands have a bad relationship with their wives, mothers and the brothers of the husband side with the husband. But here we see that Andrew went with Jesus to heal Peter’s mother-in-law. He was learning how to help others by spending time with Jesus. That is what we do in the church. We go together with other disciples to evangelize, follow-up, study with people, encourage the weak and help the poor. It is fun to serve others together. If you haven’t been doing that; get more involved in the group, and help others. You can even come with me.

C: Another way to help others is by caring for orphans like it says in **James 1:27**—”Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the

world” Q: If you are married, think about it. Are you considering adopting a child? Do you care for orphans? C: Millions of babies are aborted or killed every year *in* India Let’s care for them!

3. Get On Jesus’ Team

Luke 6:12-15. C: When Jesus chose the twelve disciples, Andrew was one of them. He must have felt so special to be chosen Q: Have you ever been chosen for something special? How did it feel? (SHARE YOURSELF and let a couple of others share, too.) C: Jesus had a team of disciples that he trained to do the work of God. In the same way, this family group is a team. God has chosen you. Each of us must play our part to make this team successful, so that we can have fruit in this month.

John 6:5-14. C: Here there were crowds of hungry people, all listening to Jesus. Jesus wanted to feed them (v.5). So Andrew looked *around and got an idea. He wanted to help Jesus, so he suggested that a little boy with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish* might be able to help them (v.9). He was on Jesus’ team. He was contributing ideas and energy to the group. And as a result of this little boy, Andrew, and Jesus, and the disciples were able to distribute food to feed 5000 people (v.10)! It was an awesome victory for Jesus’ team, because everyone participated. We need to be this way. When I ask questions in the group, we all need to participate. I appreciatewho always raises his hand to read, and to answer questions.

4. Bring others to Jesus-

John 1:40-42. Q: According to this, what was the first thing Andrew did after following Jesus? [He brought a visitor, his brother Simon Peter] C: If we are excited about following Jesus, the first thing we’ll do is to bring others to Jesus. We’ll be so fired up about our new relationship with him that we want to tell others about it. That’s what Andrew did.

John. 12:20-22 C: Here some Greeks wanted to see Jesus. As soon as Andrew found out about it he made sure that Jesus knew, so that these guys could be followed up with. He was always thinking of ways to spread the gospel. Q Think about it do you often bring visitors or is it an unusual thing for you? Andrew regularly brought others to Jesus, because he consistently invited others. We can’t just invite one or two people, or even ten, on one day, and do nothing after that Each day we must share our faith as we go.

5. Never Let Go of Jesus

Acts 1:13-14. C: after the crucifixion Andrew was still there. He had made a decision at the beginning, “I’m never letting go of Jesus” He was there praying with Peter and Mary, the mother of Jesus. And when the early church began, he was there preaching in Acts 2. At the end of Andrew’s life, he was arrested, and told that if he did not deny Jesus, they would crucify him. He said, “I would not preach the glory and honour of

the cross if I feared to die on it.” And so they fastened him to a cross with ropes. Andrew hung on the cross for 3 days, preaching to all those who came. He was a real disciple of Jesus. And 2000 years later, we still remember him.

Q: Think about it if you died tonight, who would cry for you? Who have you truly helped with your life? **C:** if you can't think of many people who'd be very sad about your death, it is time to change your behaviour.

Conclusion.

Andrew hung on to Jesus his whole life. And then he died as a martyr. He brought many people to Jesus. Our religion is not one of rituals, but one of caring for people. This week make an effort to be kind to everyone you meet Just like Andrew would do, invite them to our special program next Sunday.

MARTHA - THE SELF RELIANT HEART

C: Today, we're learning about Martha, a ~ woman who relied on herself; and yet changed to rely on Jesus. She was weak, just like us, but she became a great Christian.

C: Martha and her family were friends of Jesus. They were great disciples very committed, and we learn many things from Martha, both good and bad. You'll probably see a lot of yourself in her, so let's read in the Bible! (Let different disciples read the following sections of Scripture.)

Luke. 10:33-42; John 11:1-44; John. 12:1-2.

I. Martha Was Very Committed to the Church

C: She was definitely not lukewarm. She was very hardworking. We see her busy in the kitchen in Luke 10. She had opened her home to the disciples for a special meeting with Jesus. She was not selfish, in John 12:1-2, we see Martha serving another big dinner. She was a disciple, and yet she made the time to clean, cook, and have the Christians over to her house. Q: Think about yourself. Are you hard working or lazy? Do we get up early in the morning like her? Are our homes clean and tidy? Are we hospitable? Do we open up our homes to others, or do we grumble? Example: I appreciate..... who is great in serving others, and keeping her house clean and bright..

2. Martha Was a Great Friend to Jesus

C: In Luke 10:40, we see that Martha was close to Jesus, close enough to be open with him, to tell her what was in her heart. She talked to him as a brother. There was a real bond between them. She was real with him and he *was* real with her as well.

C: In John 11:3, Martha and her sister felt free to send for Jesus when their brother Lazarus was sick They knew he was not too busy for them. Martha had given a lot and served Jesus many times. She probably thought Jesus would not hesitate to help her, and she was right! In v.5, **it says that Jesus loved her family.** He went back to Galilee to help Martha at the risk of his own life (John 11:8). His disciples, like Thomas, thought that they would die there (v.16). In v.19, we see him confronting the sisters In v.20, Martha goes out to meet him, as if he were a relative or a dear friend.

Q: How did Martha achieve such closeness with Jesus? [She must have spent a lot time with him, talking to him, listening to him, and learning from him, so when she was in trouble and needed help, she did not hesitate to call on Jesus. Q Think about it. Is this the kind of relationship you have with Jesus? Do you know him? Does he know you? Do you spend a good quiet time with him every day? Has the Bible helped you to get closer to him? When you face problems, do you get overwhelmed and run away from God, or do you immediately open upto Jesus in prayer? (Take a few minutes to let a few of us share how they are doing in their relationship with God, and SHARE YOURSELF.) Example: I appreciate~ who is a real friend to Jesus. (Feel free to use examples

outside of your own group, otherwise you'll use the same people every week)

3. Sometimes Martha Did Not Have Faith

C: In Luke 10:40, we see her "worried and upset" about many things. She was more concerned about the cooking than learning from Jesus, and he challenged her hard. No matter how many distractions we face, our commitment to God, to our relationship with him (quiet times), must always be first priority. Q How are we doing on this? Do we get distracted from our quiet times? Do we always have an excuse why we can't spend time with Jesus? Do we get bad attitudes towards those who are closer to God than we are?

C: Martha also doubted. In John 11:38-39, we see her doubting Jesus' power. She was thinking in worldly terms. Her faith in God was not very strong. She was self-reliant and not totally surrendered to God's power. (SHARE YOURSELF about a time when you were self-reliant, doubted God's power, and then repented. Share the victories that followed, too)

4. Sometimes Martha Did Have Faith

C: Just like a lot of us, sometimes Martha wasn't fired up. But sometimes she was excited. She tried hard to please Jesus. In John 11, she was the one to call Jesus to run out and meet him. And she expressed her faith in him in vs.21-22. She confessed Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior in vs 27. Peter was the only other disciple in the New Testament to say that Jesus was a Messiah before he was crucified. Even though she occasionally doubted, she had a faith strong enough to keep on following Jesus, to persevere no matter what happened, even when her own brother died! And so her brother was raised from the dead.

C: This news should be encouraging to us. Martha was a friend to Jesus and he helped her even though she sometimes stumbled. We can learn from her, from *her* sins and her victories. We should try to be like her. We must imitate her hard work, her friendship with Jesus, and her efforts to have a strong faith.

Conclusion: Let us all learn from the Martha's example. Though she had weaknesses, God used her in a great way. Let's depend on God like never before! And let's persevere to bring many visitors to church. Many of the people we have met in the past will come, if we keep on calling *them*.

ESAU - THE MAN WHO LOST HIS INHERITANCE

We are going to learn about a person from the Bible, a man who made a bad bargain in life and as a result lost his inheritance and his father's blessings. This man is Esau, eldest son of Issac and Rebekah and twin brother of Jacob.

Let's see from his life and character and learn 2 things, which we need to reject and avoid.

1. Avoid Emotional Decisions- Genesis-25:27-34.

Among the Children Issac favored Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob.

The oldest son has the first rights to the inheritance and also in getting his father's blessings. Esau had the rights to the inheritance as an oldest son. One day Esau came back from hunting very hungry (Vs 29) what did he ask his brother for? (Stew).

Did Jacob give him? (Yes)

Esau gave his Birthright in exchange for some stew, just because he was hungry, he was impulsive and he was dominated by his appetite.

God thought Esau's decision was stupid (Heb-12:16-17) Should we make emotional decisions? (No).

Like Esau avoids emotional decisions when you get married, move away from the house, fall away from God, quit job or making friends.

Make decision only after prayer and taking advice from godly people. That saves a lot of pain later.

2. Avoid non-appreciation of higher things.

Esau despised his Birthright. **Gen-25:34**, by letting his hunger overwhelm his concern for things of lasting value.

How do you prioritize things of lasting value in your life?

Do you let concern for small things overtake for that things of lasting value?

God did not appreciate Esau. He was labeled as "Godless".

Do you make excuses for coming to meetings?

Remember your fellowship with Christians can help you rather than your job or sleep or distance from your house to meeting place.

You should prioritize godly things first and not worldly things which is not of lasting value.

BARNABAS

This week we'll be studying the life of Barnabas, one of the leaders in the early church. There are 8 things he did:

1. Build Others Up.

Acts 4:36-37. *Q:* What was Barnabas called here? (The "Son of Encouragement")

C: Wouldn't that be a great nickname to have? Do you think people would say that about you?

C: An encouragement person always thinks of positive things to say about others. Example: I appreciate Ian Correa. He works for HOPE, helping the poor over Delhi. Ian always has good things to say about others. He is a wonderful person to spend time with. He encourages everyone in the church He's a great example for us

2. Aggressively Gave Money.

C: In verse 37 we see that Barnabas had owned a field, but he sold it and gave all the money to the apostles. No one told him to do this. He was eager to give his contribution He aggressively made it happen- *Q:* What are some things that people are aggressive about today? (Chasing a girl they like. Finding a job. Visiting their native place. Going abroad *Q:* Think about it: have you been aggressive in giving your contribution? Have you been saving for special contribution?

3. Really Believed in Others.

Acts 9:26-30 *Q:* The brothers in Jerusalem were afraid of Paul, and weren't really sure he was a disciple. Why did they feel this way? (Before he used to persecute Christians- They were afraid he hadn't really changed] What did Barnabas do for Paul? [He convinced the apostles that Paul was genuine in his heart.] *C:* Barnabas really believed in others. He lifted Paul up by faith in him. When someone believes in us, it changes our life forever. (SHARE YOURSELF about someone who has believed in you.) *Q:* Have you ever had someone who really believed in you, and helped you to succeed? (Let a few people share.)

4. Never Stopped Evangelising

Acts 11:19-24 *C:* In v.21 it says that many people *in* Antioch become Christians, and so they needed a leader. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to them. just like the our church/family group has sentto *Q:* When he arrived, how did he feel? (Fired up to see the disciples (Vs23). *C-* The Bible says that he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and so many people became Christians (v.24) Barnabas was on fire for God. *Q:* What about you? Have you been evangelising on your own? Do you regularly bring visitors? Do you ever go out to evangelise? Do you follow up?

C: Make a decision to change, and to bring visitors for every weekly meeting.

5 Actively loved His Friends:

Acts 11:25-26 C: Even though Barnabas was cranking he was sad because he did not have a partner to help him. So he went to Tarsus and brought his friend Saul (also known as Paul) to preach with him. Many people became disciples as a result of their work (v.26). He was an active friend, not just saying “I love you,” but going out of his way to renew his relationship with Paul. Q: What are some ways that we can be active in our friendships in the church? (Initiate to spend time with people, or pray with them. Write people cards, or give them small gifts. Encourage them in the fellowship think of fun things to do together. Evangelize or follow-up or visit the sick together.)

6. Boldly Spoke for the Lord

Acts-14: 1-3. Q According to these verses, how did Paul and Barnabas? [Effectively (v.1) and boldly (Vs 3)] *C:* God wants us to be bold when we preach the word. He doesn't want us to be wimpy, but to tell people, “You need change your life forever. Example: I appreciatewho is very bold in sharing his faith. He is not afraid of what people think; and he always has many visitors.

7. Always Ready to Go Anywhere for God

Acts 13:14. C Just like the church, the Antioch church sent out mission teams. They chose Saul and Barnabas to lead the team. They did not argue. They were not afraid. After prayer and fasting, they were ready to go. We need to be like this. Q Think about it are you ready to go anywhere for God? How do you feel if you have to change cities, or move to a different group, or have a new discipler. Example: I appreciate They were willing to move from place to place.

8. Strengthen Many in the Church.

Acts 14:21-28 Once again, after Paul was stoned (Vs 19-20), they went and preached the word! Nothing could stop them. And in each city, they strengthened the disciples (V 22) and encouraged them. They also raised up elders in the churches (V 23), just like we are in Verse 27, they gathered the church together and reported all the great things that God had done! That is what we'll be doing .

Conclusion

It is exciting to study the life of Barnabas. He had so many qualities, we can all learn from him. let's decide that each of us will be known as a “Son of Encouragement”. Pick some week, and really encourage them.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. A voice in the Desert.

Luke 3:1-6. C: John was all alone. He had convictions about God's Word (v.2). And so he went into the desert and preached (v.3). He had no discipler to ask him if he evangelized. He had no church building, no cards. He met in a terrible location, the desert. And he preached a very hard-line message. **Q:** Think about it. If you were him, on your own, would you start preaching the message of repentance in our city? C: This guy had real conviction. **Q:** Where are some places that we are all alone, where we must show conviction and preach the word? [In a crowded bus, where all can listen to us inviting someone. At a crowded bus stand. *At work. *With our families. *At the local market. *When doing follow-ups, and a negative family member starts questioning us. *At hospitals, when visiting the sick.]

2. Axe at the Root of the Trees.

Luke 3:7-9. C: Even though John was in the desert, crowds came to hear him. If we preach boldly and follow up aggressively, crowds of people will come. **Q:** How do you think John said this? {Use a few different voices and read v.7 a gay, soft voice, a religious voice, and a powerful voice.} C: John was powerful. He warned that God would cut down anyone who did not repent. The message of the gospel is not wimpy. It is hard-line- God does not tolerate sin. Anyone who does will be lost forever. C: In vs 5 he warns the religious Jews not to rely on their religious upbringing, saying, 'We have Abraham as our father.' He warns them that God can raise up faithful disciples out of the stones. No background is necessary! Example: It is exciting to see the way _____ has risen up to help many people. Even though he does not have much spiritual background, he is doing great things for God!

3. A Man with Practical Advice.

Luke 3:10-14. **Q:** Have you ever been to a religious meeting that is very dull and boring? {Let a few people share, and SHARE YOURSELF.} C: John's preaching was not practical. **Q:** What did he tell them? In v.1 t, he told them to share if they have plenty. In v.13, he challenged the tax collectors not to extort money. Many people use their jobs to make extra money. They will take money from the boss for an auto, then take a bus, and keep the money. [Or they'll keep the some of the change when they buy things. Or they'll get the shops to make a "higher" bill, and then get a kickback. In v.14, we see that Jesus told the soldiers not to use force to get money, and not to falsely accuse others.]

C: John the Baptist did not have a fairy-tale, weird, intellectual message. He was talking about normal people's struggles, and how they should change their daily behaviour. **Q:** Think about it: What would he say to you tonight?

4. A Humble Man.

Luke 3:15-18. **Q:** What did John say about Jesus? [John was very humble. He said

that he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of Jesus (v.16).] John was not excited about his own role. He was fired up about preaching the good news of the kingdom of God to them.

5. A Man who overcame His Doubts.

Matt 11:2-6. C: We know from John 1:29-34 that John the Baptist knew from the beginning that Jesus was the Son of God, who would die for the sins of the world. Yet after he was put in prison, he started to doubt, wondering if Jesus really was the one (v.2-3). Jesus, of course, explained that many miracles had been done, proving that he was the son of God. But it is encouraging for us to know that John was a guy just like us. He had moments of weakness. He doubted. Q: Isn't it encouraging to know that John the Baptist had moments of weakness? C: But the great news is that John did not give in to sin. He did not quit. He could have been released from prison if he had just apologized to King Herod. But he kept his faith in Jesus. and ultimately he died for it.

Have you overcome your doubts? Or are they still eating away at your mind. Making you weak in commitment? C: Example: I appreciate who has become confident and faithful in spite of lots of problems.

6. A Martyr for God.

Matt 11:7-14. C: Jesus talked about John. He was not a soft reed, blown here and there by the wind (v.7). He was not a rich man dressed in nice clothes (v.8). He was a prophet of God (v.9). He was God's messenger (v.10). Jesus said that John was the greatest prophet of all time (v.11). What an encouraging compliment! Yet Jesus says that the lowest in the kingdom (You and me) is higher than John (v.11). He said that because of John, the kingdom of God was forcefully, not slowly advancing. Look at what happened to him in the end. Man 14:8-12. C: It says here he was killed to please the guests at a party. But John could have escaped, if he had stopped preaching.

C: Think about your life. Are you forcefully advancing the kingdom of God? Or are you lazy and uninvolved? Are you doing follow-ups on the people you've met? Or are you too lazy to follow-up? C: If we actively invite people every day, and follow up a lot, we'll have many visitors every week. Let's remember that John the Baptist died as a Martyr for God, and we can have a great life now, just like him.

Conclusion:

C: Let us become radical in our faith like John the Baptist! He had a message that no one could stop him from preaching! And it changed people's lives. He was a man like you or me. But he did great things for God. Let's leave our mediocre Christianity, and be inspired to do amazing things by the life of John!

ELIJAH

Elijah was one of the most dynamic prophets in the Bible history. He lived a radical life. He played an incredible part during the time of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. God made no mistake in choosing any of us like Elijah was. We anointed by God are called to be prophet and prophetess and make history as we live.

1. Set apart yourself:

1 King 18:20-24

On the mount Carmel Elijah called out to the people to believe and trust and live a life pleasing to the true God. People were blind and did not understand the calling. The prophet got radical to prove to the people about the God who created them. He called out to the false prophets of Baal to prove their God. It was a challenge and Elijah had no doubt as he did it.

It was a test and people gathered to witness the sacrifice made by both Elijah and the false prophets.

1 Kings 18:26-29 30-38 The false prophets failed in proving to the people and how the fire consumed the sacrifices of Elijah. People were amazed and appalled to see what Elijah had done. The false prophets were handed to death.

1 Kings 18:41-46 Elijah radically prayed to end the drought and ran as fast before the king to the entrance of Jezreel. His life stood out and till the end of 2 Kings 2 did incredible racial things. His zeal for God was incredible. He led a life full of conviction and love for God. He even anointed a successor behind him who was equally radical. Today what excuse can we make to be radical for God? Whether sickness, poverty, persecution, problems or sin.

How radical are we? Ask yourself: Do I stand out in the crowd like Elijah or shy away. Am I living a life of a prophet or prophetess chosen by God? Today, decide to get radical and set yourself apart for God to use you powerfully.

2. Preach the word

2 Kings 21: 17-24

Elijah prophesied about the disaster that was going to take place to Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. He was not just a radical man but also bold in preaching to people. He was not scared or fearful of the consequences. What is that that is stopping you from being bold and preach the word. Are you ashamed or fearful. Are you lazy and bored? Or is something else more important than preaching. As a disciple decide to be radical and preach the word. Pray to be bold and powerful and let God lead you.

Remember the reward is in heaven. **2 Kings 2:1-11** one day suddenly a chariot of fire separated the two of them and Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven.

JOB

Character of Job reminds us of someone who preserved in the face of suffering. God was his rock when everything else was falling like mire pins. Many in pain through centuries have drawn comfort from & contentment comforted today through this incredible story.

1. Job was a righteous man :

Job 1:1 describes Job as a righteous man who feared God & shunned evil. He stood in front of God & Satan as a righteous man. Satan desperately wanted to get him. He had to ask God for permission to tempt him so he could make him stumble. The dialogue b/w God & Satan attest to how much God believed in Job's righteousness even his riches(1:3) didn't lead him to be unrighteousness.

2. Job fortitude in facing trials

The attitude of Job even as he suddenly lost everything he had is amazing as seen in Job1:20-22.

He understood gratefulness in the deepest sense of the world. How could your reaction be if you were in his place ?

Would you give up & walk away from God?

Would you develop an attitude towards God?

Would you disbelieve Him ?

Even when he was struggling from painful sores from head to toe on his body and his wife was discouraging him he stood for God. **In Job 2:10** even James writes in **James 5:11** about Job's perseverance amongst the struggles. How have you been persevering in your latest struggles.

3. Submission leads to blessings.

When God challenges Job to brace himself like a man (Job 38:4)

He submits to God in **Job40:3-5**

Do you take challenges well?

Do we have a submissive attitude when challenged?

Here, in **Job 42:4-6** He repents in dust and ashes. Do you have a godly sorrow when challenged?

Because of his submissiveness we see how God blessed **Job (42:10-16)** and he ended up having more than were he started. Perseverance through hard, will lead to many rewards in the end.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

C: Today we'll study about a woman who was very sinful, but who totally changed after meeting Jesus. She was a Samaritan, a group of people who lived near the Jews. But the Jews looked down on these people as being 'untouchable.' In those days also, men did not speak to women in public. So this is quite an amazing situation (For the reading, choose different brothers & sisters to be Jesus, the woman, the disciples, and the narrator.) John 4:1-42 [read by 4 different disciples in parts]

1. She repented of being unspiritual

John 4:7-15 C: When Jesus talked about "living water" in vs. 10-11, she did not have a clue about what he meant. "Living water" is the truth of God. It is the gospel which sustains us every day. It is the truth, which sets us free. **Q:** Why do you think she did not understand Jesus? (Let a few people answer) She did not understand because she was in sin she did not have a relationship with God.

C: Some of us are not spiritual. Perhaps we are not disciples yet, and so we are blind spiritually. (SHARE YOURSELF about how you did not understand spiritual things before you came to the church.) C: Some of us are disciples, but we are not spiritual enough. We read the Bible, but we don't understand it. **Q:** If you read the Bible but don't understand, what are some solutions to this problem? [You can read more, write things down and ask questions, read with someone else there, pray for insights] C. Our unspirituality comes out in different ways: We get discouraged when bad things happen **Q:** Why is that unspiritual? [Because we forget that God is in control. What is the solution? (Pray, read the Bible, talk about the problem, but stay fired up. God will take care of you when you trust him- -**Prov 10:3, Matt 6:33** teach us this.

?We face big decisions and we are not godly. For example, we have to choose a husband. Or we must go out of town. Or we must take a new job with bad timings, or a boss who wants us to sin. Or we are tempted to take a new flat far away from disciples. Or to take classes with bad timings for the meetings.

C The good news today is that like this woman, we can change in our spirituality. Example: I appreciate.....who has really grown in his/her walk with the Lord. he/she views the world spiritually now...

2. She Repented of Being Unopen.

John 4:16-26. C: When Jesus confronted her with her sin, first she lied (v 17). Then she tried to change the subject to a religious debate (vv. 19-20). Finally she tried to act religious and spiritual (v.25). But Jesus was not deceived by her **Q** How do we feel when someone confronts us with our sin? Discuss. SHARE YOURSELF humbly about a recent example where you did not respond well to a challenge on sin [Sometimes we react by getting angry. Or hiding. Or becoming quiet Or saying, "I'm OK,"

and laughing.

Q: What is the right response to challenges? (Do a little bit of “role playing” with your assistant) **First**, you challenge her on getting bad attitudes too often and not forgiving people, and she responds defensively. **Second**, you challenge her on being independent (never in touch with her discipler, and unreliable, not turning up for evangelism time, prayer times, meetings, etc This time she is humble)

Q Why *is* it bad to be defensive when we are challenged? [Challenges are for our own good, and they prevent problems and suffering later. What do we gain by being humble? [Our relationships improve. Others will be more ready to listen to us when we challenge them if we are humble.] **C:** The woman in John 4 learned to be open about her sin. For many years she had secretly been immoral with many men. Jesus exposed it (v.18), and she admitted to everyone that he had told the truth about her (v 29. We must all be open about our sins. Don’t wait for someone to catch you in the sin. Talk with others you are close to about

how you are really— doing. Tell your discipler about your sins and temptations. God will forgive us, but we must be open and not let our hearts get hardened. If we are unopen, it can lead to us falling away and going to hell.

3. She Repented of Being Selfish

(John 4:27-30, 39-42) Q: After Jesus talked to her, the woman really changed. How did she change? (Discuss) **Q** How can we tell if we’ve repented? (SHARE YOURSELF about one area of your life where you’ve really changed recently) When this woman changed immediately she started evangelising. The whole town heard about Jesus. Many people from the town came to meet Jesus (vs.30, 39)

Q. why do you think Evangelism is the result of repenting (because when we leave our sins we feel joyful, excited. We want to talk to others. We want to share our joy and boast about what God has done. We want them to share the power we have felt.)

Q: Think about it: how is your evangelism going? Did you invite someone while you were alone this week? **C:** If you have not been inviting people on your own, change! Invite people on your own this week You’ll feel great about yourself. Pray for boldness, pray for open people and God will use you in a great way. **Q** If your evangelism is weak, what does that say about your heart? [Lack of gratefulness to God, lack of understanding of God’s grace, Lack of concern for others’ pain, lack of faith that God can use us, and we’ve forgotten how and why we got saved.] **C:** This woman repented of being selfish. Let’s not be selfish Example: I appreciate.....who always brings visitors because she is grateful for her salvation.

Q: How many people became disciples because of this woman. [Verse 39 says many people believed] How long did it take? [Just a few days. Do you have the faith to go into a neighborhood where you have a contact, share with everyone how your life has changed, and then bring large numbers of people to Jesus? **C.** I want to encourage you to by having new Bible discussions in different places this week It could be in a

friends' house one time or at work or near a shopping area. Q: Do any of you have ideas on when we could do some new Bible discussions? (Discuss. Figure out times and places, and who can come for a one-time, "instant" Bible discussion. Pray for the ones that you decide to do.)

Conclusion: The woman **WAS** very sinful, yet she totally changed .
Forget how you have been until today. Change from now on:

1. Become spiritual
2. Be open
3. Become unselfish

This Sunday, let's bring visitors for the great worship service.

THOMAS

We will be looking at one of Jesus' 12 Apostles, the Apostle Thomas. His life is a great example for us because he had to change many things to become a great disciple. We will look at 4 mistakes that Thomas made and see how Jesus helped him change.

1. See the Bright side of things

John 11:1-4. Lazarus was Jesus' good friend and he was sick. Jesus got the news (vs.3), but he did not get sad. Instead, he said "this sickness will not end in death" (v.4). He said that the sickness would somehow glorify God (v.4). Jesus knew that God was in control. Even in sad times, he could see the bright side of things. This is one of the secrets of joy that Jesus had to teach Thomas. Perhaps he must teach us this today also!

John 11 :7-16 C: Jesus announced that he would go back to Judea to see Lazarus (vs.7). Q: What did his disciples warn him when he wanted to go there? [That the Jews there had tried to stone him. They thought that he would not go back (v.8). But Jesus was determined to go and help Lazarus (v.11). The disciples did not understand—they thought Lazarus was not yet dead (v.13). Jesus explained that Lazarus was already dead (v. 14) Q: When Thomas heard that Jesus was going back to Bethany, how did he react in verse 16? [He said sarcastically, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."] Jesus was not afraid, but Thomas was scared. His words were harsh and negative. He thought that the disciples also would come under attack this time. He was not looking at the bright side of things.

Q What are some common problems that we face that can bring us down? (House problems, Money problems, Family persecutions, relationship troubles, Health difficulties, Joblessness & Sin.) C: Whatever problems you are facing, be like Jesus and not Thomas.

Jesus saw the bright side of things "this sickness will not end in death" (v.4). Thomas saw only the troubles. **Q:** Have any of you ever been like Thomas, only seeing the dark side of things? (Let them share, and SHARE YOURSELF.) C: Jesus is with us. Let's get fired up.

2. Stay focused on heaven & Jesus

John. 14:1-7. C: Here Jesus calms the hearts of the disciples. (v 1) He tells them to put their trust in God and him (v.1). He explains that in his Father's house (heaven), there are many rooms, and Jesus will prepare one for each of them too (v.2). He promised to come back and take them to be with him (v.3). He wanted their minds to be on heaven, not on the troubles of this world. But Thomas was still worried, and he asked Jesus, "'we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (v.5). Jesus explained that he is the way, the truth, and the life. If we follow him and know him, we'll

get to God (v.6-7). Jesus made it clear that if we keep our eyes on heaven and on him, we can't go wrong spiritually.

C. Even this month, we must make a decision to keep our eyes on God through studying the Bible and praying every day.

3. Serious commitment to the church

John 20:24-31

Q: According to v.24, where was Thomas when Jesus met the other disciples? [He missed the meeting] What are some reasons why people miss meetings? (Relatives come from out of town, Urgent work from boss. Sick children, discouraged. no money for the bus. sick friends and relatives, they go out of town, sin) C Whatever Thomas was doing that day, he certainly missed an important meeting! The disciples told him that Jesus had come (v 25) But instead of saying "I'm sorry, I've messed up," he said, "I will not believe it" (v.25) Thomas did not trust his own closest friends, the disciples. He was not committed enough to the church. Of course, then Jesus came and proved to him that he is the Son of God (v 27). He said, "Stop doubting and believe!" Some of us need to do that today. We need to say, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (v.28) Jesus has given us all the evidence we need in the Bible (vv.30-31). And he blesses us who believe and yet have never seen him (v.29)

Q What are the ways that we show we are seriously committed to the church? [We'll give a real special contribution, monthly contribution, we'll trust each other 100%, we'll marry in the church, we'll get advice before making travel or job plans, we'll regularly bring visitors

4. Sin wants to come back you:

John 21:1-6.

Q: What happened in this passage? [Several disciples decided to go fishing. Where was Thomas? [He was with them] C: Peter and the others were going back to their old life of fishing and worrying about money. They were going back to sin. Sin will always welcome you back It wants you to leave Jesus and follow it. Satan makes sin look attractive yet Jesus reached out to them and called them his friends (v.5). He let them catch a lot of fish (v 6) Then they realized that it was Jesus (v.7).

Q: What are some old sins that can tempt us as disciples? [old girl/boy friends, smoking, drinking, anger, laziness, pride., selfishness, fear of our families]. C:

Let's never go back to sin. It may look attractive, but it leaves you empty. Thomas learned his lesson this time.

He followed Jesus with all his heart. He was there when the apostles were praying in Acts 1 13-14 In the end, history tells us that Thomas came to India to preach the gospel, where he established churches in Kerala and Tamilnadu.

In the end he was murdered for his faith near Madras

The doubter became a martyr for Jesus.

This gives us all great hope, for we also can change.

Conclusion.

Let us learn the lessons from these 4 mistakes of our apostle Thomas.

ENOCH

Introduction :

God created us to have an incredible relationship and he valued that relationship. The Bible makes it clear that from the earliest part of Genesis we see that God wanted a relationship with man and woman.

Enoch – There is no mention of early honors obtained or wealth amassed. , no record of sermons preached, or of good deeds, nor even of the souls he led to God . Neither are we told how famous or popular he became.

No instead of all this his life is summed in that 3 terse sentence

- 1 He walked with God – Gen 5:24
- 2 He pleased God – Heb 11:5
- 3 He witnessed for God - Jude 14.

Let us today learn these 3 things that is recorded as the testimony of Enoch’s life

1. He walked with God :

For many years (300 yrs) Enoch walked with God. This great man walked with God so much that finally God just took him on to heaven even before he died.

A. Walking with God means talking to God.

Walking with God is the heart and soul of being a disciple of disciple. It is the engine that propels the entire boat. There should not be any substitute for taking the time and energy to walk daily with our Father (Job7:18 - ...He visits us every morning ..(NKJV).

Walking with God means having an awesome quiet times with Him

- It is not about saying what we did something.
- It is not about some kind of religious performance.
- It is not about christian checklists

But it is all about having time just to be with God

It is about doing what Jesus did (Lk 5:16)

When we really love someone and cherish a relationship with him/her from time to time we’ll go with him/her to do something out of the ordinary.

From time to time we just need to take a half-a-day, a day or may be an overnight and go do something very differently with God

Q: When do we have our quiet times?

Q: How long do we have ?

Q: Do we sense that personal intimacy with God when we pray ? (Ps :18:1-4,73:25)

Q: Do we enjoy or walks (QT) with God?

Practical tips :

Pray through psalms.

Go to a quiet spot in the mountains, rocks, parks, by a lake side, ocean, beach. (Spend some money if you have to in order to ge there – God is worth it (Mat 26:6-11)) and

take time to adore/praise him , worship ,sing, weep before God, express your deepest feelings, fears, worries, share, ask, meditate etc...

B. Walking with God means listening to God.

Walking with God means having an awesome Bible studies times with Him
This means not just reading but studying, driving out in to ourselves those deep convictions that God wanted us to .

Q: How are our Bible studies ? Are we learning, getting insights or boring ?

Q: Do we enjoy listening to God through his word?

Q: How much do we study daily ? When do we study ?

Practical tips

- Have a journey (separate insight book)
- Have a topical Bible study(like pride, obedience, purity, maturity, prophecies ..)
- Have a character studies on different personalities (Jehu, Caleb, Philip, etc)
- Study out the background of the book (who wrote, to whom, why, purpose he wrote)

C: Walking with God means growing to God.

Walking means progressions(moving) which means growing

Q: Are we growing in our christian life or are we struck ?

Q: Are our weakness' turning out to be our strengths ?

Q: Are our love for God is increasing daily ?

Q: Are we becoming more and more like Christ ?

Practical tips

- Have monthly personal goals of what character /weakness to change
- Get lots of advice from your spiritual leaders.
- Time and again check your growth (ask others weather you are same or showing some progress)
- Study out in the Bible on those characters

2. He pleased God – Heb 11:5

He pleased God - Just 3 simple words but very convicting He never pleased himself .
I am sure that he would got tempted in so many ways as we humans does, But he chose to please God not himself.

Jesus, also never pleased him self(Rom 15:3)

This man Enoch lived just pleasing him but Bible says he pleased God.

What is pleasing God?

- a) Offering our bodies as a living sacrifice - Rom 12:1
- b) Being righteous - Rom 14:17
- c) Purity – Pro 15:26
- d) Caring for our family (spiritual family) – 1 Ti 5:3

Are we pleasing God or ourselves self desires ?

Are we offering our bodies as a living sacrifice in terms of time / money /denying / energy etc.. for God

Are we righteous in our speech, fellowship, giving contribution, confession, etc.?

How is our purity – lust, Internet pornography, wanted to get married outside?

Are we digging more in the Bible just to find out what is pleasing to God?

Are we trying our best to impress/ please God or ourselves?

Practical tips

Find out more from the Bible of what pleases God?

Take advice/input from your spiritual counselor ?

Give more time to God

3. He witnessed for God – Jude 14

In **Rom 15:16** Paul says God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

I am sure one of the greatest offering that we could give to God is saving souls for Christ.

Are we proclaiming Christ & offering them spiritually to christ

Are we a true witness for Christ ?

Are we the true ambassadors for Christ (who represent Christ to this world)

Practical tips:

Share your faith and your life in Christ ?

Share scripture and invite him to the meeting with some one this week?

Write cards to your old friends / contacts with a scripture and a your testimony?

Conclusion :

Let us today decide to be like Enoch .

If there was a Bible(testimony or books) written about us let that be written like Enoch?

JOSIAH-THE REFORMER

Josiah was born in a time where Judah was in the depth of spiritual misery still it is amazing to see how he made a difference for God. He was one of those unique Kings to be appointed at the age of eight. As young as 16 Josiah was making an impact, If you are a teen it's time to do great things for God. Age is no bar. As we read through the life of Josiah (2 Kings-22: 1, 23:30. 2 Chorinicals-34: 1, 36:1). We could see how he reforms Judah & Jerusalem to the Almighty God. Truly we are in a movement of God to reform the whole world. From the life of 'Josiah- The Reformer', the call is for each one of us to be a reformer.

1. REFORM YOUR HEART

2 Kings-22: 11,18:20,23:25

Josiah had a great heart, when he heard the word of god read by Shaphan he tore his robes and responded to it. His response was with tears and humility of heart. God was impressed, Bible says (V-23 & 25) that he turned to God with all his heart, soul & strength. Josiah understood that reformation should first happen in his heart.

How is your response to the word of God?

How is your Bible study? Is it reforming your Life?

Many of us are waiting for meeting and retreats to get Convicted but how about your Bible study?

As disciples of Jesus everyday walk with God should reform our hearts, nothing but only the word of God can reform our hearts.

2. REFORM YOUR LIFE:-

2 Kings-23: 3

Every change must start from our heart, many times we try to change our life's without changing our hearts which leads to only behavior changes, But the heart does not change only God can change our heart and others heart.

There where times in my life when I was challenged, I use to work to do the right things without getting my heart right and wondered why things are not changing and later understood that I have not taken things to heart-No heart change. I had not gone to God for my challenges.

It is very inspiring to see how Josiah's life turned so radical that he went around breaking the alters, burning and crushing the Idols, he brought about many radical changes that had never happened before.

3. REFORM OTHERS

2 Kings-23: 1-3, 21:23

When Josiah heart and life wear on fire for God he called the whole Judah and Jerusalem to make a covenant with God, He was so fired up that he himself read laws to the crowd and not waiting for the Priest.

Are you reading the scriptures to your non-christian friends?

Are you bringing friends to Church and studying the Bible (Josiah called everyone to the Temple V-23)

Or do you leave it for your leaders to do it?

Josiah was calling people to do what is right before God and it was backed by his own heart and life. That had the reform others when our life's is a and we are not able to make a impact, but if your heart and life is on fire for God then will able to reform others.

Lets decide to be reforms inside out, to truly reform this generation to God.

HEZEKIAH- HIS PASSION TRULY PLEASED GOD

Hezekiah ruled over Judah in the third year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel. He was twenty-five years old when he became king and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. Hezekiah was an amazing King who did many things to benefit the Kingdom. He was a man reminded God of his ancestor David. He trusted God, followed him wholeheartedly and did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight. Let us learn from his life today.

1. Trust in the Lord: 2Kings 18:4-8

Here we see how Hezekiah trusted in the Lord and the Lord blessed him in everything that he did. When we trust in the Lord, the Lord blesses us in everything that we do as well. Do you trust in the Lord? Is your trust in your Career? Property? Education? Let us learn from Hezekiah to trust in the Lord exclusively.

2. When trouble strikes where do you turn? 2 Kings-19:14

We see how when Hezekiah receives an insulting letter from Sennacherib, he directly goes to God. The way he goes to the Lord is something we need to take a note of? Hezekiah knew that Sennacherib is not insulting him but the Lord. We should never to take insults from others personally. That is why he spread Sennacherib's letter in front of God in the temple. What a creative way to pray and what complete trust in God. Where do you turn when trouble strikes? Do you spread out your trouble in front of God through prayer? Is your Prayers to God creative? When was the last time you did something creative in your QT that would catch the Lord's eye? Would you want to be creative like Hekeiah was when he spread the enemies' letter in front of God? 2 Kings-19: 15-19 reflects the incredible relationship Hezekiah shared with God. His prayer truly reflects faith, passion and creativity.

3. Tears move God's heart -2-Kings-20:3

When Hezekiah wept bitterly before the Lord, He heard hid weeping and had compassion on him here, we see how the Lord, blessed him by adding 15 more years to his life. When was last time you shed tears in your prayer to the Lord? When was the last time your tears moved the Lord so much that he blessed you? Let us decide today to move God through our tears. God feels for each one of us for sure.

4. Pride strikes you hard if you don't watch out- 2 Chronicles-32: 24-25

Even with years of service, witnessing the great deeds of God, Hezekiah lost something in his relationship with God, so much so that the preaching of the prophet Isaiah, the memories of the great victories over Assyria when the city was being surrounded no longer brought glory to God. Pride was what Hezekiah carried away from being delivered by God. Memory plays havoc with the truth. You can be a minor player on a great team when they win the championship, and as the years pass you become the

central figure of the team, and then you grow to be the one that leadership and we think that we have caused it all. Pride and selfish-ambition take control and you believe that you are the pivot, not God.

5. Repent.

The great thing here is Hezekiah made a decision to repent from his pride and again gave glory to God. Is pride ruling your heart today? Make a plan to overcome the sins that dog your heart. Share it with brothers and sisters and share it with family if it helps. It is good when we all work together. With prayer and fasting comes a new heart, with repentance comes refreshment.

ABIGAIL

“A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones”

As wife’s, women must show respect, be aware of and sensitive to her husband’s needs, do the things that make him feel loved, build him up instead of criticizing him and be protective of him. Let us today learn from a woman who did show respect for her husband – a man who did not deserve it.

1 Samuel-25

David sends servants to Nabel during the time of feasting asking for whatever gifts he could give. Nabel very unwisely mocks and shows great disrespect for David and spurns his respect. David is male in Nabel’s household and that’s where Abigail comes in.

In her actions Abigail showed strong spiritual qualities:-

1. Great courage –

She knew that anyone of Nabel’s household who got in his way, but she rode quickly to meet David and his men.

2. Positive Action-

She could have whined and complained about Nabel’s bad judgment, but instead she moved into action to do something positive.

3. Deep Faith-

She believed with all her heart that God’s will would be done.

4. Generosity-

She took enough and more for David and his men.

5. Honesty-

She perfectly understood the situation and did not make the situation and not make excuses for Nabel’s actions. The next day she was honest with her husband.

6. Love-

She showed love for her husband by saving his life.

7. Sensitivity and Self-control-

She waited till the next day and talked to him when he was sober.

8. Wise Thinking-

She thought quickly and acted on it.

Abigail was a courageous, resourceful and faithful woman. She followed her man, ready to support him and trust her God – may it have been Nabel or David.

As a wife’s are you whining and complaining always?

Are you giving up on God’s view of marriage?

Do you withdraw your love until “he changes”?

So you love unconditionally and allow God to be glorified in your marriage?

You singles, may not be married but do you stand out like Abigail in her character in all situation?

We will all be tested in this area. But allow loyalty, love and trust to bring that intimacy, gentleness and peace in your lives.

JONAH

We will study about Jonah a man of God who fell into Sin, and then needed to Repent and change.

Jonah-1: 1-4, God gave a Mission to Jonah. He told him to preach to the people of Nineveh, What did Jonah do when God called him? (He ran away from God) How did God react to this? He sent a storm on the boat. There are several ways we run away from God. We miss discipling time, we miss meetings, we go out of town for a long time, we make decision without asking advice from our discipler, we make secret plans, we don't confess. Think about your life? Have you been running away from God?

1. Preaching Is Our Mission.

Jonah-3: 1-9, when God came to Jonah the 2nd time, what did he say to him? The same things on the 1st time. He told him to preach God's message. This time what did Jonah do? He went and preached the Word of God. Jonah had forgotten that Preaching is our Mission, when we follow God (Vs-4) He started Preaching on the way 1st day he was there in Nineveh and thought the People there were wicked. Vs-5 they believed God and they started fasting and repenting.

We must be dedicated to bring visitors, studies with people and making our family group grow, sometimes we think no one is open in my area, or people won't come. But when we preach to many people then many people want to do what is right, Just like us.

Jonah-3: 10, here we see that when the people repented, God blessed their lives. He decided not to destroy Nineveh. When we do what is right, we are blessed. Joy comes from money, or fun, or nice marriage. Joy comes when we know that our life has a meaning. The Christian life is a happiest. When we are righteous and fruitful. When we are saving souls. What is our Mission? To make Disciples. Has that been your Mission? How is your Evangelism going. Do you think people in your area are open? When preaching is our Mission, will change and enjoy the Christian life and many people will change.

DORCAS

Today, we'll learn about a very special woman. I believe this lesson will change our lives.

C Two thousand year ago, in the little town of Joppa, there was a funeral were a part of life *in* Joppa Mourners, wailed; friends & relatives comforted each others, the *rituals* were performed; the body was prepared. Yet there was something very different about this funeral. The weeping was more intense; the tears were more sincere, the mourners' hearts were more broken Someone really special had died,

Someone who would be missed by many. Her name was Dorcas. She had a disciple, and therefore, she was going to heaven. *Q*: Why was there such intense grief? Let us read in the Bible.

Acts-9:36-43. *Q* Why so much grief? [Because her life made a mark; It made *an* impact on many people. She had quite a reputation to Joppa when others talked about her. there were true things they would say.

1. Heart that feel.

C: We can see that to Dorcas, being a disciple meant loving *and* saving others, taking care of their needs, and considering them better than herself *Q*: What does v.36 say that she did? [She was always doing good and helping the poor."'] She look to people in need, and her heart would go out to them. She could feel their problems, their hurts, their loneliness. Her mission in *life* was to help other's overcome their pain, and so she served them selflessly. Dorcas understood the heart of Christianity.

Q: Have you ever encountered someone facing horrible problems? Tell us about it (Let a few people share about intense stories they've come across. And SHARE YOURSELF about someone you've seen facing tremendous pain here in India.) *C*: There is so much pain and suffering around us, sometimes we harden our heads and stop feeling. We go to meetings, we invite a few people, we have quiet times. But we don't love from the heart *Q*: Is that your life? Are you just going through the motion of Christianity, or do you really care? If one of the sisters *is* missing, do you fed for her? Or do you not even notice that she is missing? Do you feel the pain of poor people that you see on the road? Or do you ignore them?

C: I want to talk one minute about beggars. Sometimes we see people begging for money on the street. The Bible teaches that if someone is not handicapped, they should work (1 Thess 4:11-12). So love for a beggar does not mean giving them money. You can give them food if you want. But you certainly must talk to them Become their friends. Take an interest in their life. Encourage them to get an education, or to find a regular job. Feel for them—they must be *in* bad shape to be begging. But don't be like rich People who give beggars 50 paise, and then forget about people.

Give them Opaise, but talk to them and care for them as fellow human beings. They appreciate that a lot more than money. Let's care for them!

2. Hands That Heal.

C: Dorcas probably was not married, because we do not read about her husband here. Perhaps he had died perhaps she had been single all her life. But we don't read here, "every day Dorcas would sit and cry, moaning 'Who can I marry? Who will arrange a good marriage for me ? We read that she acted like a mother to all of the widows in need. She was busy. She made clothes for people. She took care of them. She prayed and read the Bible with them. They couldn't imagine life without her, and so they called Peter to come and bring her back from the dead (v38). Q: Is your life disciplined? Or it is a mess, all disorganised? If people come to your house, would they say, "here is a disciplined women of God," or would they say, "who made this mess?" When people meet your kids, do they think, these kids are brats," or do they say, "What lovely, obedient children"? C: If you are disorganised, you'll never have time to serve others and do great spiritually. People will not respect your example. Make a decision to keep a schedule every day, and to use your extra time for God and other people. Let us have hands that heal—around our homes, with our families, with the disciples, and with the lost.

Q: Think about t if you died tonight, who would cry for you? Who have you truly helped with your life

C: If you can't think of many people who'd be very sad about your death, it is time to change your behaviour.

C: Darcus was not lazy. Imagine she would get up in the morning, clean herself have her quiet time, get water, prepare food for everyone She'd meet with people and tell them about Jesus. She'd sew clothes, and listen to their problems. She was not sitting around gossiping she was using her time for others. Q Is that what you are doing? *Are* your days full of work for others? Are you "always doing good and helping the poor?" (v-36).

Example: I appreciatethe way she/he give always, she/he is hospitable. Everyone knows them. And if she/he died, many people would cry so much for her.

C: One of the best ways to be remembered is to lead someone to Jesus. Let's not be lazy, but let's work hard. Let's make sure we all participate in the group, let's all reach out for people. Let's have hands that heal.

3. Love That Real.

C: When Dorcas died, crowds gathered. But these were not the usual mourners at a funerals. Their tears and their pain was real. They had felt real love from Dorcas, and so they truly missed her so much. Her love was not just from the lips. it was from the heart They had many pleasant memories of her. Q: What about you? Do you have a love that is real? Do you care about the Christians? Or are you not making time for the meetings and the disciples? Let's make sure we all follow Dorcus's example of real love.

Because of Dorcas' real love, the widows had real love for her. They immediately sent for Peter (v.38) when she died. They were crying when he came (v.39). He could see how hurt they were, and he wanted to help (v.40). He real love inspired Peter to have real love for her. And when we have real love for people, just like Peter, we'll pray for them (v.40). We'll hug them and touch them kindly, just like Peter tenderly took her hand (v.41). We'll help them stand up on their own, just like Peter did (v.41). And we'll tell them about Jesus, just like the people did after Dorcas was raised from the dead (v.42).

C: People must have been amazed when she was resurrected. They must have come from all over town and asked her, "How did this happen? She told them, "Jesus did this for me. Believe in him!" And so many people became Christians. Ultimately, if we love someone, the greatest gift we can give them is the gospel of eternal life. Clothing wears out Food gets digested. But the gospel change people's lives forever. **Q:** Are you giving the gospel to the people you really love? What about your family? What about the people at work? What about your old friends? Do they see a real love in you? Or is your love fake? **C:** One way you can tell if your love for Jesus *is* real is if you share your faith when you are alone. If the only time you evangelise is when other people are with you, then your love for Jesus and for people is just an act. We must be loving even when no one else is watching us. We must put ourselves in other people's shoes and truly care for them, just like Dorcas did. And then so many people will love us. If you are lonely, starting loving others! You'll be amazed at how much love you'll receive when you start giving love to other people.

Conclusion

Dorcas was full of compassion for others. Our religion is not one of rituals, but one of caring for people. This week, make every effort to be kind to everyone you meet.

MARY MAGDALENE - A WOMEN OF IMPACT

C: Today, we'll be talking about a woman who was very special to Jesus. Her name was Mary Magdalene. She had a great heart for God, and as a result her life had great impact.

1. A Heart That Needs.

Luke-8:1-3. Q. What do we learn about Mary Magdalene here? [She was with Jesus as he preached in different towns. She was with the Disciples and Jesus all the time. Jesus had driven 7 demons out of her. She was using her money to support Jesus' work.]

C: we can see from these that Mary was a woman in need.

C: She needed God. She had 7 demons driven out of her. She was grateful for her salvation. She was open about her life- everyone knew about her sins. She was not wearing a mask. Q: what do people say about us? Do they know about demons? Are you open and vulnerable? C: when we are with disciples, our disciplers, or friends in the church, or studying the Bible with the lost, abuse of some kind by someone they had trusted.

C: She needed Others. In the Verses we can see she was always with other women. They were such good friends that they did everything together. Q: what are your friendships like? Do you spend a lot of time together or are you always too busy to make great friends? C: we need others. (SHARE) about a close friendship you have in the church and how that has helped you) when you have a heart that needs, people will feel close to you , and they'll want to help. Let's not hide behind a mask, but let's let people see the real us.

2. A Heart That Bleeds.

Mark-15:40-41, C: Most of Jesus' Own disciples were too wimpy to go near the cross while Jesus died. But Mary Magdalene wanted to be there. She watched him die. She felt his pain. She went all the way to the cross. She was willing to get hurt. Being a Christian is all about giving yourself to other people. Sometimes you get hurt, but still you keep on giving.

C: some of us have been hurt in past (disappointed, betrayed, lied to , cheated, criticised), and so we've hardened ourselves to the pain of others. We expect them to be tough in the same way we have survived. Sometimes when you get hurt, you don't want to trust anyone anymore. But Mary Magdalene was ready to let her heart bleed. (SHARE ABOUT a time you were hurt, and how you overcame that pain.) the female Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, once said, "Those who do not know how to weep with their whole heart don't know how to laugh, either."

Q: Think about it: does your heart bleed for the lost people of India? Or have you hardened yourself to the hurts and pains for the people all around you?

3. A Heart That Leads.

John-20:10-18, C: here we see that Mary Magdalene stood out. She led the women to the tomb of Jesus. And Jesus spoke with her Personally after the Resurrection. Again in Mark-16:1-3 we see Mary leading the way. She was always the first to get to Jesus. first at the cross, first at the tomb, first to see the resurrected saviour. She cared more than the others, she was willing to do things they were afraid to do.

C: Someone once said, “everyone wants to do something to help, but nobody wants to be first.” But a leader does it first. You may not be the most talented, beautiful, zealous, or loud in the church. But God chose you. That is why you are here. And he wants to use you. We can decide to lead the way. Decide this week to do something radical for Jesus, something that no one else has done. Let’s set an example for others! I appreciate Who fasted for a week for a weak disciple, and this person turned around.

Conclusion:

The good news today is that you do not need to be the most gifted person in the church in order to have an impact on the world Mary Magdalene was average in her talents. But she had a heart that needs God and other people. And she had a heart that bleeds for people, crying over the lost and the weak in the church, being gentle with all. Finally, we’ve all got to rise up with heart that leads, doing things that no one else is ready to do.

JOSHUA- THE MAN OF GOD

Num 27:18-19 Chosen by God to have His Spirit, and commissioned before the entire assembly

We were also chosen by God to have His Spirit at baptism, and commissioned to make disciples of all nations

1. MAN OF CONVICTIONS

Joshua 24:14-15 Joshua had strong convictions about his spiritual life and that of his own family. This shows a strong relationship with God, which never wavered according to the situations in his life.

Can we honestly examine ourselves and say that we will stand up to live as a disciple

When faced with persecution, when in danger of losing our job, or family relationships, status, or friendships?

2. MAN OF SPIRITUALITY

Joshua 3:5-6 Joshua consecrated the people before crossing the Jordan.

Joshua 8:30-35

After the victory at Ai, Joshua built an altar to the Lord on Mt. Ebal, offered sacrifices, and copied on the stones the law of Moses, and read all the words of the law without leaving out a single word, to the whole assembly of Israel.

Joshua 5-Joshua made sure that the people were circumcised according to God's word. In Joshua, we see a man who constantly reminded people of the word of God, and called them back to righteousness, and renewed their covenant with God.

Are you eager to be righteous? Do you call others around you to righteousness?

3. MAN OF IMMEDIATE AND TOTAL OBEDIENCE

Moses-Ex. 17:8-10 Fighting the Amalekites

Joshua 1:6-9,10-11-Got all the officers of the people to obey God's plan

Joshua 6:2-21 – marching around the walls of Jericho

Joshua 11:15 Joshua left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.

Joshua got instructions carried out immediately. He was personally involved, himself leading the army, whether against Amalekites, Jericho inhabitants, or army of Ai.

He was loyal to God, his discipler (Moses), and his faith in God.

How is your relationship with your discipler? Are you loyal? Quick to obey?

4. MAN OF LEADERSHIP

Ex 13:3,8,16 Among the leaders considered best to go from his tribe, probably because of all his great qualities we saw.

Would people look at you today and trust you to lead them?

Does your family take advice from you?

Has their attitude to you changed to respect and trust over the years of your life as a

disciple?

5. MAN OF FAITH

Num 14:6-10,30- Joshua gives a positive report after spying the land of Canaan despite heavy opposition, criticism and negativity displayed by all the other leaders, and the Israelites. He had firm faith that God would give them victory.

Joshua 10:12-14 -Joshua had the faith to ask God to make the sun and the moon stand still, though to anyone else it would seem like an absurd or impossible thing to ask for. And, God did bless him according to his faith.

How is your prayer today? Do you ask radical things? Do you pray for miracles?

Do you believe that God can turn around any seemingly impossible situation?

Let's decide to be men and women of God with convictions, faith, loyalty, and leadership.

PHILEMON

1. Dear Friends.

Philemon-1:5,7 Q: In vers-1, what did Paul call Philemon? [A dear friend and fellow worker.] C: In Verse-2, we see that a family group met in his house, just like in many flats in our church we have meetings. This means Philemon must have made tea for everyone, and cleaned up the glasses after they left. He took care as his friends.

Q: As we look at verse 4-5, how did Paul feel about this man? [He always thanked God for him.] Who are your closest friends in the church? Do you thank God for them? [Pray together, thanking God for all his closest friends in the Lord.] Notice in verse-7 that Paul said Philemon was very encouraging to Paul, because his love had refreshed the hearts of the saints. C: It is so great in the church when we have friends like this. {SHARE about a time you were down, but a close friend in the church refreshed your heart and lifted you up.} C: I hope you and I can be dear friends for many years, even if I don't always disciple or teach you.

2. Active Evangelism.

Philemon-6 , Q: what did Paul pray for Philemon? [That he be active in sharing his faith.] What would you define as “active” evangelism? {Regular, daily reaching out to people. Taking opportunities every day.} why did Paul want Philemon to evangelise actively? { because then he would appreciate his salvation more.} Why does evangelism make us appreciate Jesus more?[Because as we evangelise we run into people whose lives are a mess. At this point we are thankful for the happiness and peace Jesus has given us in our lives. Though we have problems, too, the world is much worse off than we are.]

Q what about you? Have you been active in sharing your faith? Do you have any commitments who want to come this Sunday?

3. Do Things Out of Love, not Duty.

C: In this next passage, Paul encourages Philemon to forgive his former slave Onesimus. Onesimus as a non- Christian had run away from Philemon and stolen money. Paul met Onesimus and converted him. Now Paul was trying to solve the problem between Onesimus and Philemon, so that Onesimus could return **Philemon-8-16**. C: According to verse-8, Paul had the right to order Philemon to be nice Onesimus. Q: did Paul like TELLING people what to do? [No] why not (see v14)? { Paul wanted people spontaneously and joyfully to do good things.}

C: Christianity always works better when we do things out of love and not duty. No one should have to drag us to the meetings, or to evangelise. No one should have to force us to give contribution. Q: what about you? Are you living the christian life out of your own desire, or put of duty?

4. Don't Forget the Debt Jesus Paid for you.

Philemon:17-21. Q: In verse 18, what did Paul ask Philemon to do? { forgive whatever

money Onesimus owed and charge it to Paul. what did Paul promise in verse 19 [“I’ll pay it back”] But then in verse 19. What did Paul remind Philemon about? [“I converted you, Philemon. You owe me your soul”.]

Sometimes we forget what Jesus has done for us. We grumble about other brothers and sisters. We complain about the weather we act like we are doing God a favour by coming to church and evangelising. We are not doing a favour for God by being in the church. He is doing a favour for us by letting us be in the church. So don’t forget the debt Jesus paid for you.

5. You Also Can Learn to Love Deeply.

Philemon:17-21, C: Paul had many very close friends, like Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. These men were even willing to go to jail for Paul and the gospel (v23) He wanted Philemon to become this kind of a man, so he asked him in verse 22 to prepare a guest room for him. Paul wanted Philemon to learn to love people deeply, not just on the surface. All of us can learn this. The secret is in verse-12.

Philemon:12. C: Paul loved Onesimus the runaway slave so much that he was in his heart. Sending him away was for Paul like ripping out his own heart. Onesimus was a simple, poor guy with a lot of problems. He was a sinner. He was a lot like the people in our churches- poor, lonely, sinful. But Paul loved him as his own son.

C: I want to love you in this way. Q: Do you feel deeply loved by me? How can I improve? {listen to them when they share their heart. Don’t rebuke them if they give you input.} Do you love your disciple deeply enough? C: we need to make disciples and care for them like our own spiritual children. Q: Does this fire you up and excite you? Are you trying to be personally fruitful? C: we can all have our own ministry that we love deeply. Let’s learn from Paul’s love, and start changing others.

TITUS THE TROUBLESHOOTER

Titus was a Greek who accepted Christ as his Lord . He was known for is serving attitude, when ever there was a need to deal with local.....he was really willing to which had a lot of troubles. This talks about his Godliness and boldness to do anything for God and his Movement.

The world is full of problems like pain, hurts, and people around us are liars, gluttons, brutes, murders, etc.

As disciples we take pride by saying I am no more like that I'm changed we become so confidence that our eyes are blinded to see what we are struggling at. We might be doing our basics like prayer, reading the Bible and evangelising. But lets turn back to see what are our struggles. Are we struggling in being righteous, confessing, laziness, being committed etc.

As disciples we need to be responsible for our salvation and others too.

1. Shoot The Troubles in Your Life.

Titus-1:6-9. How are you at home, office, or with some of your close friends. do they see you as a changed person or first the some.

The Bible says we must be blameless, righteous, holy and disciplined. Do you think that you are practicing all these things. We must be self-controlled in many areas like anger, being disrespectful with God. Our lives should match the doctrine.

2. Shoot the Trouble in Others Life.

Titus-2:3-6. Teach others to be right before God. The solution to get rid of all the problems in the Bible. Our own heart leads us to ungodliness. When you set your heart right before God you will be able to face all the struggles and problems. Say no to ungodliness so that you could save both yourself and your listener life. Encourage each other at the same time rebuke when in sin we are authority and help them came out of it. We are accountable to any sin that we commit. let's understand that we are not saved because of out righteousness but because of the mercy of God who sent his son Jesus to this world and died for our sins. So lets devote our lives in being righteous and help others to be the same.

RACHEL

Today we are going to learn from the life of Rachael. Rachael was the younger daughter of Laban, she was lovely in form and beautiful. **Gen-29:16-17.**

1. Am I Precious.

Gen-29:18-28, Jacob loved Rachael and asked Laban to give her as his wife in exchange for seven years of labour under Laban. When Laban deceived Jacob and gave Leah instead. Jacob's love for Rachael was so much that he was willing to work for another 7 years to get her as his wife. For Jacob, Rachael was so Precious that he was willing to work hard, toil, sacrifice and wait for 14 years. Just imagine if God had to shed his own Precious Blood to purchase us. Acts-20:28b) then how much more we are precious to God. If he was willing to lay down his life for us. John-15:13 shows that he considers us as his friends. sometimes though come to us "Am I important in this world" when we go through challenges, struggles, difficult low self esteem. But now understanding how God considers us, let us get convinced that "I am Precious".

2. Am I Sitting On Sin.

Gen-31:19,33-35. Rachael stole her fathers household gods (they believed that it would protect the family from ...) when father came in search of men, she hid it inside her camel and saddle and was sitting on them. She didn't trust in God who had seen blessing her all these days and trusted in the idols for protection, she stole them, she hid the sin, she told a lie. One sin lead to so many sins. (SHARE)a personal Example: of how one sin leads to many sins . that is what will happen if we don't confess our sins and hide it nothing that we can hide from God. Eccles-12:14, Heb-4:13, So let us decide that instead of sitting on sin, I will confess and repent, because of Heb-10:31.

JOASH—THE FAILED KING

2 Chronicles 22:10-12; Joash was hidden, saved by Jehosheba, Jehoiada's wife. He was Proctored by God, loved by God, chosen instrument of God, we was the secret weapon of God to the nation of Israel.

He was put in the safe hands and watched by God.

I believe we have been proctored by God from being polluted by the world. God has set us a side. God put spiritual, honest, righteousness people. To disciples us, train us and raise us up, not to fail. But to become a man of God.

Joash was remained for six years hidden that's not easy to hide him for six years. Truly he was guarded by God.

1. Work as a Team. 2 Chr 23:1-11.

Together with 5 commanders of a hundred, he motivated all the heads of families in Israel (FAMILY GROUP

LEADERS!) you cannot hide forever, you have to bring to light one day. Jehoiada showed the strength. In verses 1-3. They each had different duties, and they worked as a team (vv. 4-1). Are you a team worker? Do you take part in the team? Do you have a team? Who is in the team?

Then they anointed Joash king. Later in the chapter Athaliah was killed.

Each disciple is valuable, and all of us must work together for God!

2. Focus on the Important Things. 2 Chr 24:1-10.

First, we see Joash beginning to assert himself, even challenging Jehoiada for not following up on the collection to repair the temple (v.6). But when he did follow-up, a great amount of money was collected (vs-8-10). In the same way, whatever we are doing, we should follow-up and follow-through. Great ideas often end in failure because we don't expect people to do what we say. We need to focus on the important things.

Another lesson from this passage is in v7. It seems out of context, but it actually has a message for us. Joash and everyone were so busy collecting money for the temple that they didn't deal with his uncles (Athaliah's sons) who were using the temple's sacred objects for the Baals.

What good is it to pour more money into the temple when already thieves are abusing it? They should have dealt with the sin inside the temple, before trying to fix it.

A lot of times we're trying to fix our ministries, or fire them up, when we should be dealing with sin! (See also Joshua 7:10-12; he is told to deal with sin, not to pray!).

3. Listen to the Prophets.

2 Chr 24:2,15; As long as Jehoiada, his "discipler," was alive, Joash did good. 2 Chr 24:17-20. But as soon as Jehoiada died, Joash listened to his worldly advisors (Just like Rehoboam, hundreds of years earlier). He and the people left God.

Verse 19 says, "Although the Lord sent prophets to the people to bring them back to

him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen”. God sends us prophets to tell us the truth. LISTEN to THEM!

4. Never Forget where you came from.

2 Chr 24:21-25.

Joash forgot all the good that Jehoiada did, and murdered his son Zechariah.

(Jesus refers to this in Matt 23:35, where he is called the son of Berekiah (probably an error by a copyist, or may be a different Zechariah after all). He forgot where he had come from, Soon, God disciplined him, sending him the army of Aram, a smaller army that was victorious, because God was using them to punish Joash. He died a miserable death.

We all once were wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked (**Rev. 3:14-20, Titus 3:3-5, 1 Cor 6:9-11**). But Jesus washed us, and we need to remember and be grateful (Luke 17:11-19).

JEHU – THE MAD MAN

Jehu was the son of Jehoshaphath (2Kings-9:2) four grandson of Nimshi. The story of his anointing asking is really interesting. But what is even more amazing is just his zeal in following Word of God given to him by Elisha.

1. The Anointing is from the Lord.

2 Kings-9:5-6, It is amazing to see his one of Elisha men pulls Jehu aside from the council of commanders and take him to an inside chambers and anoint him as King. Its amazing that why the Lord anointed Jehu.

All the commanders were spiritual enough to accept it and blow the trumpets and lift him up.

How is your attitude when some one (may be your peer or a young Christian) is raised up in the ministry? Do you trust him as the Lord's anointed? Do you struggle to accept the leaders that the Lord anoints? Jehu apparently was not keen in the title but in doing God's will. Do you struggle with the title?

2. Zeal for the Lord.

Jehu stands out as one of the most zealous kings chosen by the Lord. Immediately after taking over as king, he got on his chariot and straight away went and killed king Joram because he practiced idolatry and witchcraft as his mother Jezebel (as in 2Kings 9:22-24). He also chased Ahaziah king of Judah because of his evil practices and wounded him and shortly after that Ahaziah died. In 2 Kings 9:32,33 he killed Jezebel who was one of the main reason for the idolatry and wickedness of that day. He later went ahead and killed 70 sons of Jezebel (2 Kings 10:7) because of their idolatry and witchcraft and piled their heads in two heaps at the gate. He later slew all the prophets and priests of Baal. Truly he was a zealous king for the Lord in ridding the sin (idolatry and witchcraft) from that place.

3. Zeal should be backed by knowledge.

In 2 Kings 9:34 we see Jehu's callousness whereafter killing Joram, Ahaziah and Jezebel. He goes in and eats and drinks. In 2 Kings 9:28-29 we see how Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam which he had caused Israel to commit. (worship of golden calves of Bethel and Dan In vs 31 he was not careful to keep the law of the Lord. Thus we see how Jehu's zeal for violence did not translate into zeal for justice. His actions tore Israel apart for generations and he did little to attend to the nations spiritual wealth. Israel began to love political strengths. Today, do you set get carried away by zeal. Zeal without knowledge can cause more harm than good. Careless words said zealously could really hurt people eventually causing people to turn away from God.

Are you careful about the timing and nature of your zeal.

In conclusion zeal as Bible says , never be lacking in zeal. But zeal without knowledge can cause more harm than good.

STEPHEN

Let us learn about an awesome young man who is a great example for every one that is Stephen

1. Prayer and preaching:

Acts 6:1-7 C: In the early church the number of disciples was always increasing (v1). And just as in our church, sometimes there were people who had problems. At that time they used to help the poor widows in the church by giving them food. Unfortunately, the Grecian. Jews were being overlooked in the distribution of food. So the leaders of the church had a meeting.

Q: what was the main concern of the leaders at the meeting (see v2). [They did not want to neglect the ministry of the word of God] What did they do? [They appointed 7 leaders to take care of these things. Stephen was one of the leaders chosen to help take care of the widows.

Q: what are some of the ways we can serve in the church? [Volunteering to help in the hope school, helping the poor, kingdom kids, ushering, cleaning, baby-sit for some married Christians while they evangelize, Make toys for children for KKC, Disciple the children of the disciples in your ministry, Teach other Christians to read and write. Read the Bible with others who can't read, Visit the sick, Pray together with the young Christians, Help clean the flats. Take care of the baptistry, filling it with water and keeping it clean etc.

Q :According to v4 the apostles gave their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. This means they took time every day to pray and to teach others about Jesus. Q: think about it : Have you been doing this? Or have you been distracted by the problems?

2. Service and Smiling

Ac 6:5-15 C: Stephen was one of the 7 leaders chosen. Each one of us needs to have an ambition to be a leader, to do great things for God, to be his servant, just like Stephen. God has a dream and he wants to fulfill through us.

God wants to use us.[Share about how your dreams have grown.....]

Q: Did the early church grow quickly? [Yes v7] Why did it grow? [Every Christian was active in sharing the faith]

C: Stephen was given miraculous powers by the apostles' laying their hands on him v6. He did great wonders and signs v8. But opposition arose from some religious people. Anytime you try to do great things for God you will be opposed.

Q: When they could not argue effectively against Stephen what did they do?[They got some men to say that Stephen had cursed God v11. They stirred up a lot of troubles for him and got him arrested v12. What was Stephen's reaction to all this? [His face was like that of an angel v15. He was smiling. When we are persecuted how should we react?[smile, don't argue, don't compromise, preach the truth, pray don't fear]

3. Courage or Compassion

Ac 7:51-60 Q: Stephen was arrested by these people .Did it sound like he was afraid [no]Q: They were very angry. Have you ever seen someone very angry [let them share]

Q: What did Stephen see when he looked up to heaven? [Jesus standing] What does this mean? [Jesus was encouraging him] Normally Jesus is SEATED at the right hand of God] Q: When Stephen died, what did he say? Who did Stephen get these saying from vv59-60? [Jesus] Was Stephen angry, or full of compassion? How did Stephen's death affect Saul? He always remembered it, even years later. It helped him see that he was wrong Ac 22:30

Q: Have you ever had an event in your life that really affected you? [Let them share and share about yourself]

Conclusion:

Let us this week serve someone else in a special way. It could be in the church, or at home, or at work, or for friends, or for disciples.

GIDEON: A MAN USED BY GOD

When you were young, what was your dream? {SHARE YOURSELF and let a few people share.}

(Eg. Dream to win a nobel prize, be a football player, etc.)

All of us wanted to be somebody, to do something special with our lives. Yet somewhere along the way the dream died. Tonight, I want to challenge you to rekindle your dream, but with a new direction: to be USED BY GOD in a powerful way.

We will be learning tonight from the life GIDEON in the Old Testament.

After Joshua had died, the Israelites struggled without leadership for hundreds of years:

Judges 2:10-19 (Optional)

C. Over and over we see the pattern: God raised up a leader, the people rebelled, they ended in trouble, cried out to God. and he again saved them. But really there was no strong leadership for the nation of Israel. In Judges 21:25 it says “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”

Judges 6:1,6

Here we see that the Israelites had done evil, so God gave them to their enemies.

What are the consequences of sins we face in this world?

Lack of faith / Worries / Stress / Physical disease (head ache; even heart attack etc.)!

Immorality / pregnancy / abortion / death!

Dowry / dowry death!

Borrowing money / piling up of interest / shame / suicide!

Any way Israelites cried out to God in their distress and God heard their cries and answered their prayers by raising up Gideon to be the Judge/leader of Isreal.

I. Go in the Strength You Have

Judges 6:11—12

Here God’s angel comes to Gideon, who is so afraid of the Midianites that he is threshing wheat in a winepress normally used to make wine! Yet the angel says: “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”

Is God only with the strong and the perfect? No!! God can work in anyone’s life.

Judges 6:13-14

Gideon asks, “But sir, if God is with us, why has all this happened to us?”. Why do you think bad things happen even to Christians?

- To teach us to turn to God !(2 Cor 1:8-9)
- To discipline us for Sin!
- to force us to turn to each other and to love each other!

- To build our character – God won't test us beyond what we can bear (1 Cor 10:13), but he is training us to help people!

Sometimes the hardest times in our lives are the times when, we grow the most. SHARE about a hard time just before your conversion: [eg. My business failed...]

What was God's answer to Gideon's question? NONE – he simply said, "Go in the strength you have." How did Gideon respond (vs.15)

"I am the weakest ... HE MADE EXCUSES.

What excuses do we make why we can't bring visitors?

"I can't speak properly to people."

"No one is open."

"I am too shy."

"I don't know how to evangelise."

"Last week someone yelled at me and discouraged me."

"I don't look nice enough"

"I have a lot of extra work at my job"

"My mummy wants me home all the time."

"My uncle....."

God responds to all of our excuses by saying "I will be with you." If you face your problems and go for it, God is on your side! I want to challenge everyone here to GO IN THE STRENGTH YOU HAVE and bring a visitor to one of the meetings this week.. You can do it — God is with you. and whatever problems you are facing, don't worry just go in the strength you have and God will help you.

Old saying: "GIVE YOUR BEST AND GOD WILL DO THE REST."

So then Gideon was ready to face the enemy. Let us turn to Judges:7

2. Follow the Leaders

[Choose 10 people to play a game. Get them to come forward. Then say Let us play a game right now. The game is called "Simon says". If I say "Simon says touch your ear." then you must do what Simon said. But if I simply say "Touch your nose" you should NOT do it. Only do it if I say, "Simon Says". Do you understand? If you make a mistake, you are out!

1 - Play the game. Wait till a few people are out. Then stop.

In this game, you could see the importance of following the leader, paying close attention to what he says and does. Even a moment of not paying attention can make you lose in this game. In the same way spiritually we must be willing to follow the leaders – this is what God expects. Here we find in Judges 7, Gideon is about to face the Midianites.

Judges 7:13—16

Gideon has a dream predicting victory. Now listen to what he tells the troops.

Judges 7:17—21

What did Gideon challenge his men to do in vs.17?

*Watch me.

*Follow my lead.

*Do exactly as I do.

*Shout , “For the Lord and for Gideon.”

As a result what happened? THEY WON A GREAT VICTORY (vs. 21)

How should we follow our leaders? In the same way!

I appreciate..... is a good imitator. Not only he/she hangs out with other leaders but also because he/she follows their lead and instructions.

Gideon said, “do exactly as I do.” We must do the same. For example if you want to pass an exam, learn from someone who already has passed that exam. So, too, in our evangelism, we should do it like the most effective people if want to be effective. It should be out of love and from the heart.

THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN - A PERSISTENT HEART

Tonight we're going to talk about a famous woman of the New Testament. This woman had so much faith that she made Jesus change his mind about helping her! We as brothers and sisters can learn much from this awesome lady.

Matthew 15:21-28 C: This woman came up to Jesus. It is important to understand the situation here. She was a Canaanite. In the Old Testament, Jews were told not to associate with them, or to adopt their practices, or to get married to them, because their religion and lifestyle was evil. Many verses in the Old Testament warned them about this, and you can read them on your own if you like: Deut 7:1-5, Deut 20:17-18, Ezra 9:1, Zach 14:21) The Bible clearly teaches that when we associate too closely with people who don't follow Jesus, they can corrupt our faith and lead us far from God. That is why the Bible says in 2 Cor 6:14, "do not yoke yourself with unbelievers."

C: So we can see that this Gentile woman, this Canaanite, was an outcast in Jewish society. She would be like an Adivasi in some parts of India, or an untouchable. A Syro-phoenician woman going to a Jew like Jesus would be like a tribal or backward class person going to a Brahmin. At first Jesus had to reject her, not because he did not love her, but because his focus was on the more open, Jewish-background people. And he wanted to test her heart. In the end, she got the help she wanted, because...

1. Real Love is Desperate

C: Her daughter was demon-possessed Q: What do you think it was like for her each day? (Discuss.) [Perhaps her daughter would roll on the floor. She would scream suddenly, or start throwing things. Perhaps she would try to harm herself. Day and night this woman had to watch over her child, just to make sure that the girl did not do anything dangerous.. It must have taken a lot of physical effort to control her. The lady must have felt great emotional pain as her daughter was suffering. She must have felt so helpless. She probably was rejected by others because she had a "problem" child. ? And her husband does not appear anywhere—perhaps he was not even around. Maybe he left her because of this difficult child.]

C: Through the years, the woman may have tried many cures, and gone to many "holy people," "gurus," and "healing places," but nothing helped her daughter. Then she heard of Jesus, and even though she was not a Jew or a disciple of Jesus, she loved her daughter so much that she was willing, to go the extra mile, travel to Jesus, and appear foolish before him. She had a desperate love for her daughter. Q: Think about it In your life, who do you love in this way? Are you desperate enough to go to Jesus

with your troubles, and to take others to Jesus so that he can help them? C: I appreciate _____, who really went the extra mile to help _____ become a Christian... (try to choose someone who is not a leader for this example.)

2. Real Humility Is Not Self Focused

C: In verse 22 she cried out She did not care what people thought of her or her daughter. She just wanted Jesus' attention. She was bold and aggressive. She didn't sit around having a self-focused pity party. It is a sign of humility to be bold and say, "please help me." Being quiet does not mean that we are truly humble. Q: Think about it Are you bold or quiet? Do you get Jesus' attention in your quiet times? Are you bold in your fellowship and evangelism? Would Jesus notice you?

C: I appreciate _____. He/she used to be quiet, because he/she was worried about his/her family and reputation. But now he/she is so different—he/she is bold and out of himself/herself (This example can be from outside your group. Don't always use people in your own group for examples.)

Q: Why is verse 23 so amazing? [Because Jesus ignored her completely!] C: This is not Jesus' normal way of behaving with people But he wanted to see if she was humble enough to keep asking for help. And she was humble. The disciples wanted to send her away, And in vs.24-26, Jesus rejected her, first explaining that he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel (v.24), and then telling her that she is like a pet dog (v.26) who does not deserve the children's food! Q: How would you feel if Jesus said this to you? (Discuss) [Angry Hurt. Offended. Sad.] C: Perhaps we would insult him, or fight back, or quietly go away with a bad attitude. Q Think about it when people in the world or even in the church ignore us or are rude to us, how do we react? C: This woman was godly. Let's be like her.

C: She was truly humble. She did not get upset, because she knew that she did not even deserve to be there talking to Jesus. She was happy to get the crumbs he offered her because she was grateful for anything that Jesus could give to her (v.27). She did not get upset, because she remembered her purpose. She had come to Jesus to get her daughter healed, not to get her feelings hurt). Real humility is not self-focused. If we remember our purpose (to seek and save the lost), then we won't get sidetracked by getting our feelings hurt. We'll forgive others quickly, move on, and make disciples.

3. Real Faith Never Gives up

C: Three times this woman begged Jesus (v.22,25, and 27)! Why? She could have gotten really discouraged after the first rejection. She could have had doubts "maybe Jesus can't help me," or "maybe there's something wrong with me," or "he can do it for someone else, but not for me," or I am just a stranger, a Caananite woman, and he won't help some one like, me." But she did not give up. Why? She really believed Jesus would do it. She had made a decision that Jesus was going to heal her daughter. Q What about us? What are some times when we lack faith? (Discuss.) [No visitors.

? When our quiet times are weak. When we are not changing. When we aren't getting married. C: We must decide that we can't do it, but Jesus can!

C: The woman begged Jesus 3 times, first she begged, and she wasn't ashamed. Then she went back again and again, persistently. Persistence is a quality that God likes. Are you persistent, or do you give up easily? Example: I appreciate Regina a sister in Bangalore. She was a disciple for 10 years and was much above 30 years of age. Everybody around were getting married. But instead of looking for some one outside the church, she kept persevering in the Lord and in 2001 God provided a great Borthor in Bombay and they got married in Bangalore.

C: Don't stop asking Jesus! Real faith never gives up.

Conclusion:

Let us all learn from the Syrophoenician woman's great example. Q Are you like her? What do you need to change to be like her? C: There were 3 points today. First, Real love Is Desperate; Second, real humility is not self-focused; and thirdly, real faith never gives up. God healed her daughter. God can do great miracles in your life, too. Let's be bold and persistent!

Let's persevere and bring many visitors to church. Many of the people we have met in the past will come, if we keep on calling them.

ESTHER

Q. Have you been to a banquet What are some of the things you noticed there?

Introduction: Today we are going to look into the Bible and look at an incident that took place during the Banquet hosted by King Xerxes when he ruled in the citadel of Susa.

Vashti's defeat: Esther 1:1-3, 9-12.

C: Queen Vashti was very beautiful To the extent that her husband was so proud of her beauty that he wanted everybody to appreciate it (Vs 10) Just imagine the crowd at the Banquet [King Drank, All his friends are drunk and were laughing, Cracking bad jokes]

(Vs.12). The Bible says king Xerxes wanted Queen Vashti to display her beauty in such a crowd. But she totally rejected him Because of her pride she did not trust God and that God will take care of her if she submits.

C: She totally rebelled because she was proud. As a result the King was furious and burned with anger. That leads to my first point.

I. Pride is Ugly.

Her beauty did not get her the position she deserved. Her beauty had no value because of her pride. She became ugly and was rejected by her husband.

Q: I low does this relate to our lives? [I et them share.]

C: We like to do things our way we argue some times You know what the Bible says about you make excuses.

Esther 1:16-18: When Queen Vashti rebelled she never thought what example she is to all the women in the Kingdom.

That leads to my second point.

2. Pride is obvious

When you are proud it is very obvious. People with good hearts will not learn from you. But others imitate this.

C): In what way can we be bad examples? [Let them share (at home college. work , etc.).]

C: What kind of example are you? Do people learn good things from you or bad things? Think about it.

C: We saw Vashti's defeat, now let us see Esther's victory

3. Esther's Victory: Esther 2: 10-17.

(Vs10) Esther did not reveal her nationality and family background Why"? [She obeyed Mordecai respected his words.] (Vs. 12)How many of you have been to a beauty parlour? [Let them share]

C Just imagine every day someone pulls your hair, rubs your face , etc. You will

irritated It feels good if you go once in a way. But Esther was humble and patient That leads to my 3rd point in Esther victory

3. Humility is beauty

(Vs.13) She could take any thing from the Harem Vs. 15) It says she asked nothing other than what Hegai suggested.

Q: What does this show about her character'? [Let them share She took advice she obeyed, she did not have her own opinion etc. She was humble.

Q: Are you humble? Q: Do you have opinions always? Do you follow instructions given to you?

C: The King fell for her beauty, that is humility and made her Queen.

4. Humility is gratefulness.

Esther 2: 19-20

Even though she became a Queen, she did not stop obeying Mordecai. She did not forget from where she came. She was very grateful.

Q: Are you grateful or are you complaining always?

Q: What are some of the ways people are ungrateful? [Let them share]

Q: Do you see only the negative always?

Conclusion: Let us be like Esther and not like Vashti.

NOAH - THE HEIR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BECAUSE OF THE FAITH

HEBREWS 11:7

Q: Why did Noah build the ark? - HOLY FEAR what is holy fear?

Healthy respect for God, obedience, reverent spirit and a fear of God's coming judgment Today. We'll learn from Noah and how by his faith he become the heir of righteousness.

1. Heart that feels the pain Gen 6: 5-8

Q. How did people behave in those days? - All they ever did was evil

How did God feel? -His heart was filled with pain

He was grieved that he made us (VS.7)

So he decided to send a flood. How does God feel about hunger, hatred, murder, violence, drunkenness, poverty and jealousy? -Pain

C. We need to see and feel the pain of people around us. We need to feel hurt for their sin, and share our faith with them to help save them.

Share yourself about someone you know that made you feel pain for their sins

2. Heart of a righteous man Gen 6: 9-14, 6: 17-7:1

Q. When God saw the sin of the world, how did he react?

He decided to find a righteous man and save him and start all over again.

Why was Noah's righteousness such a great example?

Because everyone else was evil, he had the conviction to do what was right anyway

Have you ever done wrong because the people around you led you into sin?

Let them share and share yourself

What is God looking for today as we are in a new millennium?

Just few righteous people who will stand up for the truth despite our surroundings

Q. Can you imagine what Noah's neighbours said while he built the ark

"He is crazy", he thinks God spoke to him

Why did he persevere? -He had faith!

Then the flood comes and everybody got destroyed except Noah and his family.

He was saved because of his faith in God. He was willing to act on his faith and build the ark.

Similarly against opposition we have to act on our faith to build the kingdom of God in our cities.

Challenges: Rituals and festivals, urgent work for family need, worldly friends, cigarette or a drink, extra work during financial problems or relatives visiting from out of town.

3. Heart that is set on Fruitfulness Gen 8: 1, 8: 21 - 9: 7

Q: After the flood what did Noah do? (8:20)

He built an altar to God and sacrificed animals to show his gratitude

Do we need to sacrifice animals? No, but we need to be grateful to God

How can we show gratitude to God?

By praying to him, fasting, listing the things that you are thankful for, letting others know about God, being pure, reading His word

What did God tell Noah to do in 9:7? - Be fruitful and increase in number

Did God care about the food Noah ate? [No]

Each can eat what he likes without judging others.

But what does God want us to do? -To be fruitful and multiply

C. Think about your life. Are you devoted to being fruitful and multiplying the church?

Do you have a dream to help your family group grow?

Is your dream to multiply your family group so that it would become a zone of 50 soon?

Do you want to be a righteous person like Noah to lead others to God even though others are misled by Satan?

Share: About a disciple who's being abundantly fruitful especially in the last six months.

Challenge: Do something this week., that you've been afraid of doing before.

Invite a group of people and have an open talk with your family (without arguing), stand up against your friends and your boss and share it next week. Let's pray

JACOB - YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW

Today, we are going to learn about another great person, whom God chose to fulfill his promises that he made to Abraham that to his offspring I will give this land (Gen 24:7). This person's name was Jacob which means, "he deceives" and true to his name, he became a "deceitful man in God's family".

Let's see from his life and character and learn 4 things, which we need to reject and avoid.

1. Avoid emotional decisions:

Gen 25:27-34

What were Isaac's sons' names? (Esau and Jacob) Who was older? (Esau - v25) Whom did Isaac love more (Esau). Whom did Rebekah love more? (Jacob).

Is it right when parents show favoritism with their children? (No, it hurts)

C: For many of us, we may have come from a family where a brother or a sister or even we were the favorite child. This kind of favoritism really hurts us.

Q: One day Esau came back very hungry from hunting (v29).

What did he ask his brother for? (Some red stew).

Did Jacob give him? (Yes, but he asked for Esau's birthright as the oldest son)

Did Esau give it to him? (Yes)

C: The oldest son has the first rights in the inheritance and also in getting his father's blessings. Look at Heb 12:16-17, God thought Esau's decision was stupid. Should we make emotional decisions? (No)

Even though he deceived his brother by getting his father's will and blessings Jacob did not make quick & emotional decisions.

Like Esau, avoid emotional decisions when you get married move away from the house fall away from God quit job making friends etc.

Make decisions only after prayer and getting advise from godly people. This saves a lot of pain later.

2. Always give to God:

Gen 28:16-22

Years later Jacob had a dream in which God promised that he will bless him.

Jacob greatly feared and respected God. In Vs. 22 what did Jacob vow?

Why did he say this? Jacob had immense gratitude towards God.

How are we in the area of giving? Are we sacrificial on a daily basis?

Are we serving on a daily basis? When we give are we cheerful?

How much do we give to God and others today?

Be sure to give our very best to God.

3. Ask God for help:

Gen 32:6-12

How did Jacob feel when he learnt that Esau was coming? (he was afraid)

When he was afraid, what did he do? He specifically asked God to help him.

In Gen 32:22-30, God sends an angel to wrestle Jacob and in the process gives Jacob a new name, Israel.

Sometimes, when we are in trouble, we run away from God and the church.
We drink, smoke, gamble, become idle, and worry etc.
But Jacob did what was right - he asked God for help.
We should develop the attitude of not giving up with the Lord. We should tell God to help us and not give up till he helps us.

E.g. Shalini , who was a disciple in Banglore church had chronic diabetes from young age. She became a disciple and gained a fighting spirit. She was medically advised not to have children but she had a desire to give birth & raise up her own child.

*In the process she had miscarriages couple of times but never gave up.
With lot of prayer finally she gave birth to a healthy child. Even though her non christian husband was against her coming to church with all the sickness and with the baby she kept wrestling with God till her last breath*

4. Avoid favoritism: Gen 37:1-4

Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons and he made a special robe for him.
He even listened to Joseph whenever he had complaints.
How did his brothers feel about this? They were filled with jealousy. They hated him.
Just like his dad, Jacob makes the same mistake of showing favoritism.
In our own families we should avoid showing favoritism to our kids.
(Share an incident of favoritism you have seen in your family or relatives)
In the church we must love everyone.
Not just those who are racially or socially or economically like us.
Who are your friends at church? Why are they your friends?
Let us decide to avoid favoritism in our families and in the church because it causes a lot of damage.

Challenge: Make a new friend who is different in many ways from you.

JOSEPH - THE DREAMER THEY HATED

It's great to be together as a family this evening.
I believe we all had a great QT and Bible study today.
I also believe we shared our faith with some of our friends today.
Today, we are going to learn about a very interesting character in the Bible.

1. Joseph the dreamer:

Gen 37:1-11

Joseph was the youngest son of Jacob.

He was born to Jacob in his old age.

Joseph was 17 years old when he used to tend his father's sheep.

Because he was the youngest his father showed favoritism to him and that made his brothers jealous of him.

Joseph was a dreamer. He dreamt about becoming a leader or a king.

His brothers hated his dreams to the point that they decided to kill him.

But what we can learn about Joseph is that at a very young age as a teenager his dream was to lead. God gave him that dream.

Dreaming to be a leader is having high expectations from oneself.

Not settling for a lukewarm life. Joseph had lots of family problems but still he wanted to lead.

All these dreams he had was from God and it came true in Ch.42.

What kind of dreams do you have today? lustful, horrific nightmares, bad movies etc.

When you are innocent and soft at heart you will have Godly dreams.

You will have dreams to do great things for God and His kingdom.

Let's dream Godly dreams.

2. Joseph the blessed:

Gen 37:36

Joseph was sold by the Midianites to Potiphar who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

Gen 39:1-6 In Vs 2, the Lord was with Joseph.

In Vs 3, the Lord gave him success.

In Vs5, the Lord blessed Potiphar because of Joseph.

Joseph had a great relationship with God.

He wasn't discouraged because his family members ill-treated him.

He didn't curse God but instead trusted God.

How are we today? Are we close to God like Joseph?

Will God bless everything and everybody who are along with us?

When we are close to God we will see success.

So, let's get our prayer times deeper and passionate.

3. Joseph the loyal and righteous

Gen 39:7-12

Potiphar's wife was lustful and disloyal to her husband. She wanted to sleep with Joseph. She called Joseph to come to bed with her but Joseph ran off.

Joseph was loyal and righteous.

Joseph could have taken advantage of the image he had created in Potiphar's mind and could have slept with Potiphar's wife.

But he was righteous enough to run away from the sin.

How are we today? Do we have a double life?

Are we different in front of our leaders and different at home or office .

How do we act when we are alone?

Today we learnt three things from Joseph. Let's be like Joseph.

RUTH - SPIRITUAL RAGS TO SPIRITUAL RICHES

According to **Lev 26:1-16**, God promised his people blessings if they obeyed Him and curses if they disobeyed Him.

The OT is full of God telling His people to remain faithful and of God warning them of severe consequences if they strayed away from Him.

In **Ruth 1:1** we see that there was a famine in the land.

Obviously God was not happy with His people.

Elimelech left and settled down in Moab (a country of idolaters).

His son married Moabite woman though God was against inter-marriages.

Ruth was not only a devoted daughter-in-law but she was also a woman of deep conviction. How can we say that ? She made decisions based on convictions .

she could have easily compromised but she didn't.

In **Ruth 1:3-5**, after the death of her sons, Naomi decided to return to her people.

1. Pagan life to godly life: Ruth 1:16-18

Ruth said "Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Where you die, I will die. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God".

What actually she meant/said is "I no longer want to be Moabite but I want to give up everything to worship the true God".

Though she knew that trouble and hardship lay ahead still she was willing to give her security because of her conviction.

She was willing to go with Naomi to a new land, live with a new race, die and be buried with them.

What caused her to make this decision?

Why didn't she decide to follow the true God when her husband was alive?

Was her husband a God-fearing man? probably not.

Was Naomi God-fearing? very likely.

Even though she struggled with bitterness, the death of her husband and her two sons, her daily devotional lifestyle is probably what attracted Ruth to God.

Naomi had an impact on her. Maybe Ruth saw Naomi being a great mother, maybe she saw how devoted her worship was etc.

But the book of Ruth is not just about Ruth's loyalty to Naomi but about Naomi's impact on Ruth also.

The seed of being a great example was sown, watered and raised up by Naomi's godly lifestyle.

Ruth was not an emotional person, who was trying to please Naomi.

She was giving up everything to go with Naomi.

This kind of decision can come only of deep convictions.

What are we teaching people around us? At home? At work? In our neighborhood etc.? Does our love for God shine through?

Do people know our stand on issues like abortion, marrying only Christians, idol worship love for the lost etc.

Let us make a decision to guard our own life and to teach others who our God is.

2. *Barren to be Blessed Ruth 2:12*

Boaz asks God who protected Ruth to bless her richly.

He knew it was under God's protective wings that she came with Naomi.

Though the people knew she was a Moabite by birth, they also knew she had decided to seek refuge in God.

This was not a secret; it was obvious to all.

They did not ask one of her previous gods to bless her.

Her conversion was obvious.

How are we in our convictions? Are we trying to be faithful in secret?

Ruth 2:17 -18

Here we see Ruth taking care of her mother-in-law. She went to work trusting God. She could have been hurt, or attacked work. But she trusted God.

Ruth 4:9-12

Boaz was so taken up by her that he marries her. Ruth gives birth to Perez.

Through the lineage of Boaz and Ruth, Jesus came into this world. Spiritual rags to riches. Ruth married Boaz against all odds.

Are we willing to be faithful and wait for God to give us our right life partner?

Ruth was not young, she was already married once, and she was a widow.

But God took care of her.

MOSES : THE PRINCE OF EGYPT

Today, we will learn from the life of one of the greatest man of God.

He was a deliverer, a leader, a prayer warrior, a humble man, and a friend of God.

When we think of Moses we see a coward, a man who cannot speak properly and so on. But even before God called Moses he was a powerful man.

According to Josephus (a historian) Moses was brilliant and had great speed and eagerness in what he learnt. When Moses grew up he became one of the greatest Egyptian generals and had led a victorious campaign in far off Ethiopia.

We will learn from his life and his leadership and his walk with God.

1. Born and prepared

Jacob's descendents had been in Egypt for around 420 years, and were now slaves. Pharaoh considered them as a threat.

Since their numbers grew daily, he instructed the midwives to kill their male babies.

Later orders were given to toss the male babies into the Nile.

Ex 1:22-2:10

Moses was brought up in the Royal House

Just imagine the kind of upbringing he would have had?

Imagine his confidence, his brilliance, his speech, his clothing, his food, his friends etc.

This kind of upbringing really helped him in his future leadership.

And at this time Moses would have had no idea of God.

Maybe he was just worshipping some Egyptian idols.

Think of your life, how God uses the past to shape the present and the future?

It is amazing how God chooses people from entirely different backgrounds into his kingdom.

SHARE: How God chose you, and share about your background too.

2. Called and equipped

Moses comes to mt. Sinai as a shepherd.

What an opportunity for a prince to learn meekness?

In **Ex 3:1-10** Moses learns the heart of a shepherd.

Probably this was the time he came to know of the God of Israel.

These 40 years in the wilderness were years of learning and changing.

Moses was definitely a man of great learning and talents, but these were the years his characters grew.

God allows all of us to go through different phases in life that shapes us.

But we see in **Ex 3:11-4:17**, Moses makes lot of excuses to God.

I believe it was not that he could not speak or the lack of power that really stopped him, but it was just that his heart was not ready.

When we make excuses, it is a heart issue.

SHARE: how people make excuses to do something for God?

What are some excuses we make?

When our heart changes we are ready to do anything for God. How's your heart today?

Are you ready to do anything for God?

Are you ready to sacrifice and hear God's calling?

What if you are asked to be on a mission field? or to be in the full time ministry?

For Moses it would have been an incredible change from a prince to a preacher, from a harsh man to a humble man. Once his heart changed he just went for it.

3. *Human yet motivated*

Moses was the man who inspired all the Israelites of the promised land, yet he was not going to make it there. Deut 32:48-52 Num 20:12 .

Though Moses did not make it he inspired and gave everyone this incredible vision of the promised land.

Moses was willing to be cut off from the promised land for the sake of his people.

This shows the heart of Moses. The pure motivation to please God.

Today are you willing to work hard even when there are no results?

Do you work hard even when there is no fruit?

Persevering for fruits is more important than bearing fruit.

Do you work for glory or praise?

Do you get discouraged when no one encourages you?

What is your motivation? Why do you do what you do?

Why do you bring or don't bring visitors?

The true leadership of Moses can be seen even after his death. Joshua conquers Canaan!

Brothers and sisters our ultimate reward is in heaven.

Let's never forget that! Let heaven motivate us till the very end.

Challenge: Make a strong decision to use your talents to bring glory to God. Talk to your leader of how this can happen.

DEBORAH - THE UNFADING BEAUTY

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight “. (1 Peter 3: 3-4)

God raised up many incredible women in the past who put their hope in God’s will and word.

Many of them displayed great faith and courage in what they did for God.

One of them was Deborah, chosen to be ‘**Judge**’ over Israel.

Whenever we read about Deborah, we always think of her as a woman who stood up when men were cowardly.

Little do we realize that we are being arrogant and disrespectful towards men?

Sometimes as women we think we are being like ‘Deborah’ when we belittle men of the Kingdom and refuse to be led by brothers.

We are wrong and sinful. Infact Deborah was one of the most submissive women.

She never compromised on her convictions,

But she led without violating God’s law of submission.

Today, we will study and learn from her character

1. Woman of Honour Judges 4: 4-16

Deborah was a prophetess, a woman of wisdom.

People trusted her and came to her to settle their disputes.

Think about this! Why would they come to her, if they had seen her being bossy, proud and judgmental or disrespectful towards men?

I am sure we all have this image of her in our mind.

She was probably like ‘Indira Gandhi’ –making decisions, bossing over all the men, intelligent, smart, and sometimes rude.

But if we read further, we see Deborah being an inspirational, yet a submissive woman.

She inspires Barak to lead and she decides to support.

In spite of Barak being hesitant and insecure, she does not mock him or pull him down.

She speaks the truth in love and is still willing to be ‘led’ by him.

In vs. 14, she inspires him and increases his faith and confidence by helping him to focus on God’s strength. Barak wins!

How are we when we see others’ weaknesses in church?

How are we when we see the lost messing around in the world?

Do we have a compassionate and submissive spirit towards our leaders?

Do we believe in increasing their faith?

Do we still see God’s victory and see the positive in all?

We need to be like women of honour, women who are noble and patient, wise in our action and words.

I am sure God saw that in Deborah and he knew that she would always be like Sarah as

in 1 Pet 3:1-6.

2. *Woman of Praise:*

Deborah praised God and sang a song along with Barak.

Read **chapter 5** of Judges.

In vs. 31, we read that the land had peace for forty years.

Pr 31:29–31 talks about the noble women who feared God and realized their beauty in that.

We need to be like women who praise God at all times, thankful in all circumstances. According to **1 Peter 3:6** we should be like the women who do what is right and do not give in to fear.

At any time of the day, let us crave for righteousness and let us not stop taking responsibility for our faults.

Let's grow in respect for each other and towards authority.

Challenge: Read Judges 5 and praise God in your Quiet time tomorrow. Encourage your family group leader in your devotional this week.

DAVID : A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

1. Secret relationship 1 Sam 17:32-37

The moment we remember David we remember Goliath because we see a situation where David accomplished something that no one else of his age or size or experience could accomplish.

He was able to do that because he was not relying on his own strength or capability but he saw God as his strength.

It didn't happen within a day but the Bible says that David had a great relationship with God even when he was in the wilderness tending sheep.

He cherished his relationship with God.

You and I can do amazing things for God not with our own strength and talent, but through an incredible relationship with God.

2. Open confession 2 Sam 12:7-13

Even though God blessed David, still he was very wicked in the way he behaved with Uriah the Hittite by putting him to sword and taking his wife.

When Nathan rebuked him for his sin, he got broken and humbled himself before the Lord. He decided to be open.

Though he was King, he was not thinking about how others looked at him but he was concerned about how he looked in front of God.

Then he openly confessed his sin in Psalms 51.

Though it was very humiliating, he understood that his salvation was more important than anything else.

Open confession is what will keep our heart soft.

This attitude is what made David, a man after God's own heart.

3. Crazy Love 2 Sam 6:12-23

David is known for his craziness.

His love for God was so deep that he was literally willing to do anything for Him.

As we read through Psalms, we understand his love for God by the different ways he expresses it - shouting, dancing, blowing the trumpet etc..

This is evident when we read about David dancing in the streets as the ark of God was taken into Jerusalem.

He didn't care about his majesty or prestige to the point that even his wife despised him.

When was the last time you did something crazy for God?

Today people are crazy for so many unimportant things but not for God.

Challenge: Do something crazy this week to show your love for God.

DANIEL : A MAN OF DEEP CONVICTION

Introduction: Though the central character of this book is Daniel, the hero is God. Jerusalem was in ashes. The temple was in ruins and God's people were captive in a foreign land.

To compare what he must have had to go through, think about what it would be like for a Christian in India to live like a disciple in the Gulf.

Many of the Gulf States offer limited freedom to Christians.

People who have visited the Gulf often talk about how they feel like second class citizens.

Daniel was raised as a captive.

The people around him worshipped all kinds of idols and false Gods.

King Nebuchadnezzar was an impulsive man who was known to be extremely wicked.

Despite all these factors Daniel was an excellent example of how a person surrounded by pagans can remain true to his principles and not compromise his integrity.

For at least 66 years, Daniel served pagan kings with great diligence and resourcefulness.

Daniel 2: 24-30 The king wanted the magicians and astrologers to interpret his dream but he was not willing to tell them what he dreamt.

Since they were incapable of revealing their dream the king issued an order to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

However God revealed the secret to Daniel in a vision.

Now, Daniel had to face a test.

He could easily have revealed the king's dream without bringing God into the picture.

He had an opportunity to acquire tremendous prestige and advance his own life. Let's see what he did?

1. Conviction gives birth to courage.

He brought to light the fact that the magicians, wise men and astrologers had all failed. This took guts. Daniel was not just a man of God with his friends, he was God's man even among the enemies of God's people.

Daniel was able to stand up and face the lions and the flames because he had an unshakable faith in God.

He was a 24-hours a day 7-days a week Christian.

His statement to the king was very much like his prayer in private.

* Could Daniel have become courageous without a daily walk with God?

* How often did he pray everyday?

* What made him believe in the power of prayer?

* Could there have been some unrecorded miracles that took place?

* Could Daniel have become courageous without facing hardships earlier in his life?

Many of us want dream of doing great things for God.

For our dreams to become a reality, we must have a consistent godly lifestyle.
Daniel was a man just like us. His conviction was what sets him apart.
Make a decision to grow in your boldness by working on your conviction.
Choose one area that you will work on everyday to become a person of conviction.

2. Humility thrusts the focus on God

Daniel made it clear that it was God who gave him the wisdom.
This was the God whom the Babylonians did not worship.
In effect, he was making it clear they (their lifeless Gods) were useless.
Besides being humble he was being outrageously courageous.
Why is this in the Bible? Can we win the world by being 'cool', 'smooth' and 'tactful'?
Or are all these just nice ways to stay away from persecution?
Think about your own life today? Are people getting upset because you are radically different or do you fit in very easily?
Yes, we need to have tact and be wise.
But, have we gone to the other extreme under the garb of being 'sensitive'.

Imagine yourself in a village where you are an outsider.
You are not familiar with the people, the surroundings.
Everything makes you feel like an alien. You are on trial for believing in Jesus.
Would you stand firm in your faith in threatening circumstances?
What would help you to be strong?
Humility helps people to be strong spiritually. Spiritually strong people are confident.
They remain strong even through misunderstandings, conflicts and threats.
How would you rate yourself today? Would others say you are humble?

Few signs of a proud person:
Does not listen to others, but wants others to listen carefully.
Does not confess his sin, but is down on people who are open.
Is critical and very opinionated.
Is not spiritual at a personal level, but is quick to offer spiritual advice.
Boasts and likes to win arguments.
Pride causes downfall. Make a decision to listen, confess, and be supportive, personally spiritual and to stay away from arguments.

Daniel was an incredible man of God.
Let's remember that God sustained Daniel.
God gave him the wisdom.
God helped him develop courage and rescued him when he put his life on the line.
To be like Daniel let us learn from Jesus.

MARY - THE CHOSEN ONE

The world was waiting for the Messiah to be born to a poor unmarried Hebrew girl. Mary was chosen by God to play the role of the mother. In today's devotion, we're going to learn two dominant characters that led God to choose Mary.

1. A willing heart.

Luke 1:28-38

Mary probably had many questions and thoughts in her mind when the angel spoke to her. She must have been surprised and fearful.

Many questions would have gone in her mind

* What will my fiancée think? Will he reject me?

* What will my neighbors and people around think?

* What about my family?

* What is going to happen to my reputation?

Yes, she probably went through all these thoughts but her fear for God stood out rather than her other fears.

This shows a willing heart. What is your response to sudden surprise?

Do you fear God and surrender to his plan, or do you let the fear of your family/work/society control you? We need to have a willing heart.

She had to be willing to move to another town from her town.

She had to deliver in a manger (Lk 2:4-7) She was still willing to surrender.

Are you settled in your work place? (Even if it is worldly and they ask you to work overtime).

Do you feel like you cannot move from your area to help out another ministry or volunteer to go on a mission team?

Spiritual zeal is not settling or looking for comfort or recognition, but to go according to God's plan even though it does not seem pleasing.

2. A supportive heart.

John 19:25-26

Jesus, her son was going through agony.

Throughout the time of crucifixion, she was willing to walk along with him and suffered pain just like him. She could have said –

I cannot bear, it hurts me / Let me stay behind at home / I can't see all the pain.

Instead she was very supportive in the ministry of God.

Today how much are we willing to support the church?

Do we pray with other Christians who need help?

Do we teach young Christians how to be a strong disciple?

Do we take care of widows and sick people?

Do we make excuses instead of being supportive?

I cannot go out / I am busy with my family / I cannot get up in the morning. Willing to be supportive is very important as disciple of Jesus. Write things that you can be a support in the ministry and practice for God to be glorified.

PAUL - MISSIONARY OF THE LORD

It is great to meet together as God's family. Today, we are going to learn from an awesome Missionary from the Bible.

1. Grow Powerfully

Acts 9:19-22

Here we see the life of Paul as a young Christian. Though he came from a totally different background, from being a persecutor of Christianity, he wanted to be a very active disciple.

So he spent several days with great Disciples in Damascus and learnt a lot from them. Then without waiting for a long time, he started preaching the word powerfully in Synagogues – where the enemies of Christianity can gather! There is a saying “What is grown in fire will not wither in heat.” Paul decided to be born in fire. He did not choose to do menial things, or easy things or easy way. He chose the toughest places and people to preach. It led him to much persecution but he never gave up rather scripture says in vs. 22 “.....**Yet Saul grew more and more powerful**”

How about your Christian life? Can God say that you are going through a lot and yet you are growing more and more powerful?

This must be our ambition. There is no stagnation accepted in Christian life. It is the most radical way of life. You better get stronger or our enemy Satan will over power you. Some of the best ways to be strong are :

- a) Daily fellowship with Disciples who are stronger than you.
- b) Sit in a study when other leaders are doing it. (Even if you are a leader, you still can learn from other leaders)
- c) You personally do Bible studies or preach to non Christians. Keep it in your heart, not only leaders but every disciple is expected to make disciples. How do you make disciples without you preaching the Word? If you don't know to do Guard the Gospel studies, learn now and start teaching people wherever you are :- in your college, workplace, bus/train, neighbourhood etc.

2. The missionary Zeal

Message of Christ was the only source of inspiration for Saul to become Paul.

Even though Paul is the only apostle who did not walk with Jesus, he was able to call people to follow Jesus by imitating His example. The biggest challenge for all of us as missionaries is to keep up our missionary zeal.

1Corinthians 9:16 “Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

Paul was compelled by the Cross to preach (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). How do you feel about Preaching? Joy or a burden? Do you feel like Paul felt “Woe to me if I do not

preach the gospel!”? If not there is something wrong with our convictions! When you get an opportunity to share your faith and if you don’t do it, do you feel guilty and confess? Yes, we used to do it before.....! what is happening to our mission? Let us have the same zeal of Paul, let us preach wherever we go!

In **2 Cor 11:16-28**, Paul was able to take up all the sufferings that he faced in his missionary life joyfully.

The difficulties he faced in his daily life brought fruits for the kingdom.

Are you a missionary for Jesus?

Do you preach the word daily?

What do you do when you face difficulties of many kinds?

Does your conviction for Jesus go down? More pain brings more fruit.

Every disciple is a missionary for Jesus.

If you have not borne fruits this year, assess your lifestyle today. Get a missionary zeal in your daily life. The challenge for all of us is to bear one fruit at least once this year.

Challenge: Let us decide to live a life imitating Jesus and his apostle Paul.

MARY AND MARTHA - SISTERS OF GREAT STRENGTHS

We are going to learn about two different sisters who had different characters.

Q: Have you ever invited 13 hungry people to your house for dinner - a challenging proposition even with electric stove, gas stove or microwave?

But this is precisely what Mary and Martha of Bethany did as they invited Jesus and his disciples into their home.

1. A woman of priorities

Luke 10:38-41

Instead of running around and making sure that things are well set, Mary chose to sit and listen to Jesus. Martha on the other hand was very busy in cooking.

Martha was surprised that Jesus was on Mary's side.

Most of us would have to admit that we would think like Martha.

We would probably have thought Mary was insensitive towards her sister.

As a Jewish woman, Mary knew how important hospitality was and she understood that honouring the guest is the heart of hospitality.

Mary had decided to make Jesus the priority of her life.

Life is busy for us. Our days are filled with demands: marriage, children, cooking etc. And yet the more Mary heard Jesus teaching, the more her mind and thinking were changed. She began to trust Him, as she had never trusted anyone before. She felt free.

In **John 11:1-45**, Mary's relationship with Jesus was tested by a tragedy of her brother Lazarus' death.

She knew he loved Lazarus like his own brother.

She had no doubt Jesus could have healed Lazarus if only He had come on time.

When Jesus finally arrived and saw Mary weeping, he was deeply moved and openly wept with her. This moment was a turning point of Mary's faith.

She looked up to him as her teacher and a great rabbi.

In **John 12:1-8**, Mary wanted to express her overflowing gratitude for raising Lazarus from the dead and reviving her own spiritual life.

Everyday she probably waited to see Jesus in Bethany so she could hear his word.

When He came and preached, she was always grateful.

In **Mark 14:8**, we see Mary doing her best to please Jesus.

She did not worry about what others would think.

Today, how are we doing in the area of pleasing Jesus?

How can we be a friend of Jesus just like Mary?

Would we be busy with our own things or would we have time for him?

How are our morning times with Jesus?

Do we make time to listen to his word?

Let us decide to make Jesus our number one priority like Mary and not be distracted

like Martha.

2. A Woman of Service

Being a woman of social standing, Martha's opinion mattered to those around her. She was respected for her ability to reach out and to meet the needs of others. She was very hardworking and sincere.

In **Luke 10:40-42**, Jesus like all of us needed good friends. He needed people he would feel comfortable with - people in whose home he would feel like a family. Martha met this need for Jesus.

In **John 11:1-44**, she went to Jesus regarding the death of Lazarus.

She did not get carried away and be emotional or cut off her relationship with God because of Lazarus' death.

Martha was willing to be discipled by Jesus and she cast her burdens on him.

She was not the kind who sat back and watched.

But rather she stepped out to make things happen.

That is why Jesus was impressed with her.

He was kind towards her. He helped her weakness become her strength.

How are we in the area of serving today?

Would Jesus feel at home if he comes to your house?

Would you be willing to repent like Martha?

In **John 11:21 & John 11:32**, both Mary and Martha waited four days after the death of Lazarus because they had incredible faith in Jesus and loved him.

Let us decide to be a man/woman of priority and a man/woman of service like Mary and Martha.

JAMES AND JOHN - SONS OF THUNDER

It is great to be disciples of Jesus. I am sure all of us are grateful that God chose us. Today, we are going to talk about the life of two brothers - James and John (sons of thunder).

1. The cost to follow Jesus:

Mark 1:19-20

Here we see Jesus inviting them to change their life, their history and give them a new purpose. Bible says that they followed him without delay.

They had to count the cost about their father and business.

When we were studying the Bible there was a cost to follow Jesus.

For James and John, it was not easy to give up and yet they were willing because they understood the need for salvation.

We all decided to become disciples so we could go to Heaven & love God.

But are we staying as disciples every single day (Lk 9:23)?

Q: Today, what is stopping you to be a disciple everyday?

James and John were excited to follow Jesus.

Luke 5:9-10 Here we see James and John along with Jesus fishing.

We notice that they spent most of the time with Jesus.

Q: How much time do you spend with Jesus?

How much do you spend to pray and to read the Bible?

Today, what is the price you have to pay daily in order to follow Jesus? Is it bad attitude, pride or selfishness?

2. Wrong motives will not please Jesus

Remember the first time you were invited by a brother / sister?

How was your heart? After coming to church and understanding the cost of discipleship how was your heart? In our hearts we wanted to change.

Even though James and John were with Jesus all the time, let's see what happened after some time in **Mark 10:35-45**.

Here we see James and John thinking about positions.

When they were young Christians their hearts were right with God.

But later Jesus made them to understand that we should be a servant to be great in God's kingdom.

Older Christians, how is your heart? Do you have a young Christian heart?

Bible says that our heart is deceitful above all and beyond cure - **Jer17:9**.

They were probably wondering who would lead the movement after Jesus.

Their motives were based on position - they were corrupted.

It is easy for us also to become like them - because the heart is deceitful.

Let's check our hearts today and decide to be servants in God's kingdom.

Our only goal is to make it to Heaven.

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

Introduction : Today we are going to learn about Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham was born around 2166 B.C. we are going to learn one quality from Abraham and Sarah,

1. Righteous Abraham :

Abram believed in God and that was credited to him as righteousness.

Abraham believed in God when the whole world was involved in idol worship, witchcraft and so on. The fact that Abraham believed in God itself was radical faith.

Genesis 12 : 1 – 5. God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation at the age of 75, Abraham left Haran and went on to the promised land Canaan.

But now you see for a long long time God did not talk to Abram, here Abram is living like an alien in Canaan and for 24 years Abraham was not even having a son through Sarah. Forget about a nation. We see that through this long time Abram still believed that God would keep his promise

Genesis 17 : 1 – 8. Here God had finally met Abram after 24 years.

But God is still not blessing him immediately. God challenged Abram to walk before God everyday and be blameless before God.

If Abram did the above then God would fulfill his promise that God made to him 24 years ago. Then onwards Abram became Abraham.

God expects his people to walk with God everyday and be blameless before him everyday.

Genesis 17 : 15 – 27. Here Abraham laughed at the point that he would become a father at the age of 100. Abraham could just say forget it, its hard to believe that God would do such a miracle and carry on his own business.

But Abraham went and circumcised himself and his entire household.

He went thru that painful operation at the age of 100. God gives an incredible victory

Genesis 21 : 1 – 5. Here we see that God blesses Abraham with a son at the age of 100, 25 years after the promise God made to Abraham.

Ask yourself: would you be faithful to God like Abraham?

The key for Abraham to be called as a righteous man was that he was faithful to God at all times.

If we remain faithful to God at all times (be faithful to the church) he will fulfill his promises to us and we will be able to taste his goodness in our lives.

2. Submissive Sarah :

Sarai is an excellent example for humility and submissiveness. We see that Sarai followed Abraham wherever he went.

She did not pass on her opinions or stop Abraham from doing what God had told him to do. She followed Abraham when God told Abraham to move from Haran to Canaan.

Genesis 12 : 10 – 20. Sarai was also the half sister of Abraham. Abraham was scared that he would be killed because Sarai was extremely beautiful.

Abraham asked Sarai not to tell Pharaoh that she was married to Abraham and she

obliged the same. Here Abraham and Sarai were being shrewd.

They were indeed half brother and sister so they used that relationship to save their skins, but we see that God dealt with the family of Pharaoh for the Pharaoh desired to take Sarai as his wife.

In Genesis 21 : 6 – 7. Sarah finally becomes a mother. Sarah was happy that God had let her desires come true at a ripe age of 90 years,

1 Peter 3 : 5 – 6. Peter uses the example of Sarah as a great example for submissive wives 2600 years later. Women are called to be like Sarah with their husbands. The challenge for each one of us is to have a submissive heart like Sarah.

Conclusion : Lets decide to have the faithfulness and righteousness like Abraham. Lets imitate his faith and learn to have a submissive heart like Sarah.

HANNAH AND SAMUEL

In the Bible we see many relationships between parents and children go down the wrong way. Adam and Eve with Cain, Lot with his family, Noah with his sons, Eli with his two sons, David with Absalom, the list goes on.

What was common among them? Disaster, yes but the cause was lack of spirituality in all their cases.

Though these men did great things for God, but when it came to their own families, they FAILED.

Today you maybe leading a church, a sector, a zone, a Bible Talk or maybe just your own family, but your spirituality or lack of it would either help you succeed or bring failure in your life.

What you sow is what you reap. Lets look at a great example in the O.T. Hannah with Samuel and pick up a few insights into their lives.

I Samuel 1:1-18.

1. Attitudes are more important than facts.

Vs. 5-8: Everything was going against Hannah, though her husband Elkanah loved her, she faced stiff competition from Penninah, Elkanah's other wife.

Obviously from vs.6 this woman as unspiritual, mean and insensitive and Elkanah could do nothing about it.

Moreover she had children which elevated her position in the family.

Everytime she watched the kids play, eat or sleep it must have caused her grief, because the facts were, she couldn't bear children.

All that Hannah could do was weep.

Have you felt like Hannah at times, Do you feel the whole world is against you, nothing is ever going right for you, where you cannot see light at the end of the tunnel.

When you look around everyone seems to be happy, your brother boasts about his new job, your friends talk about their new car, your friends talk about their awesome relationship with their parents, and everyone is changing! - Except you.

And sometimes you wonder why do bad things happen to good people?

The answer is that good people only become better people.

Even though the road ahead seems lonely, hopeless and unsure, there is good news!

All that you've got to do is change your attitude-get spiritual about the problem.

Vs.10 -Even though Hannah was discouraged, she forced herself to pray.

Vs.12 -She kept on praying. She never gave up till she changed her attitude.

Vs.15 -She poured her heart out to the Lord.

Vs.18 -By the end of her Quiet Time she had overcome her grief.

She had left everything to the Lord and was once again, ready to take on the world.

What's your attitude like when you face the unknown, difficulties and problem?

Do you skip your quiet times because you have a better reason?

Do you get distracted on account of your problem?

Are you spiritual enough to pray the problems away or do you become bitter, lose heart and may even give in to your thoughts about leaving God.

Challenge -Get vertical with God, change your attitude regardless of the facts and you'll be a happier and better person.

2. Your gift that would glorify God.

1 Sam 1:11 - This verse shows the depth spirituality Hannah possessed.

All that she wanted was a child and the best thing that she could offer God for his goodness was the same thing she had so desperately sought -a son.

Hannah was confident of her relationship with God, that

a) she calls herself the Lord's servant,

b) asks specifically for a son,

c) approves of her son working for the Lord.

Hannah asked God unselfishly. So many times we use the gifts for our own glory.

Today the world is looking for talented people, who are sharp, educated, intelligent and sporty, sometimes we are blessed in our families, our finances, in our marriages, in college and even in the church.

But the question is how much of this goes to glorify God and how much do you keep to yourself?

Eg. Albert: During his non-Christian days, he wanted to be famous so he took to sports, football, he worked hard and practiced a lot, he even prayed that he could one day play for his state in the nationals. A few years later he got his first break, proudly playing for his state. But he remembered the times he was so caught up with football that he hardly ever thought of God, he forgot that He was the one who helped him. He got what he wanted, fame. But all that he did was to glorify himself, he used to gamble on soccer, went for wild parties, immorality and all that stuff. But praise God that in '89 he was met on the football field later came to church and shot the most important goal of his life-Baptism! Then he took the best profession : full time ministry and now he is serving the kingdom as a great Evangelist Glorifying God!

Vs.11 - Hannah gave to God the thing she treasured the most, her son.

Think about your life today. What's most precious to you, children? Family? Job?

Relationships? Career or education? Would you give it up if need be for the Lord?

These are some of the questions that challenge us.

Vs. 21-28 - Hannah kept her promise; she was a good mother who taught him spiritual things. She taught him to fear God- that's where it all starts- Prov 22:6.

1 Sam 2 -Hannah's prayer was filled with rejoicing, when the time came to give the boy

to the Lord, she gave with all her heart and never grumbled -we've got to have the same attitude.

Conclusion:

In Chap 3. -We see Samuel grows up to be a great prophet, but we never hear anything of Peninnah's children.

That's the key for all of us today, whether it's one to one discipling, or studying the Bible with someone or discipling our children or even preaching, Like in **Psalms 111:10** we've got to teach people to fear God.

ANNA & SIMEON- MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE SALVATION

Please go through the lesson at least one day before the devotion to make the necessary changes to meet the specific needs of your group.

Q: Tell me the names of some Old Testament prophets?

[Isaiah, Jonah, Jeremiah, Moses, David etc.]

Q: Tell me the names of some Old Testament prophetesses?

[Miriam, Deborah, Huldah etc.]

Today we are going to learn about a prophet and a prophetess, Who lived in BC and in AD.

They were the first to bear witness of Jesus. Turns your Bible to book of Luke chapter **2:21-35**.

First we will read about Simeon...

1. Simeon The Prophet

Simeon was a righteous and devoted man of God.

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit was upon him and the Spirit not only revealed to him about the coming of the Lord but also moved him in to the temple court.

When you are righteous and devoted the Spirit moves you and reveals God's glory. (Like Philip was moved to meet the Ethiopian).

But at the same time when we are not Spiritual we grieve the Holy Spirit:

Q: What would fan the flame of the Holy Spirit?

[Prayer, fasting, Bible study, Sharing your faith, Serving others]

Q: What would grieve the Holy Spirit?

[Unconfessed sin, Doubts, Bitterness Etc]

Simeon prophesied 3 important things –

1. Jesus will be a light to the Gentiles too. Through it was written in Isaiah 49:6, even the apostles had a tough time understanding it.
2. In v 34- Some would fall and others would rise. With Jesus there would be no neutral ground; people either totally accept him and be saved or reject him and be lost.
3. In v 35- He will reveal the secrets of mens' heart and he also told Mary she would go through the pain..!

Q: Paul says we are the ingrafted branches.

Are you grateful that God sent Jesus even for us? (the gentiles)

Q: has Jesus coming helped you to rise and grow or are you falling down?

Let us be like Simeon. He was filled with the spirit and spoke the truth boldly..... though it was contradictory to the Jewish belief that the messiah would save only Israel.

2. Anna, the prophetess.

Read - **Luke 2:36-38**

A normal Jewish girl out married between 14-16 years. Either she was widow for 84 years (see the NIV foot note) or at least for 60 yrs. Spent her life as a widow.

Though Anna was very old, she never lost her hope that one day she will see the Messiah.

Think about Anna's life

She lost her husband as a young woman. Probably she had no child (other wise she wouldn't be working in the temple). She lived in the Dark ages where there was no prophecy and no encouragement from other spiritual leaders.

Yet she never left the temple for 60 years.

Q: How would you feel if you had to stay inside the temple for 60 years and take care of the needs of the temple?

Anna never complained, She prayed day and night.

Q: What are the few things we complain about being a Christian?

[3 meetings / DP-time / going and praying with young disciples / no money / not able to find right Husband or wife / job problem.]

Anna had all these problems but yet she was devoted to God.

To be a prophetess you don't need to predict the future; Anna never did.

But you need to persevere and be faithful to God even when everything goes wrong.

Lets us make a decision to be like Simeon and Anna.

All of us will get old . . . and I want to challenge you to stay faithful.

And also let us encourage those who are older among us because they have more challenges than we do.

Challenges:

Go and do something special for an elderly disciple / elderly family member of yours.

ELISHA'S EAGERNESS

Elisha was a man like you and me. Elisha was hard working and had a great relationship with the family. Elijah met Elisha one day, Elisha decided to follow Elijah forsaking everything. Today we are going to look at how eager Elisha was in serving god and Elijah. We will learn how we can be eager and why should we be eager to follow God.

1. Be Hard Working

1 Kings 1:19-21. There is no substitute for hard work. The more eager you are the more harder you work. When Elijah met Elisha, Elisha was working hard in the field and he himself was driving the 12th pair of Oxen. Elisha did not delay in following Elijah but before that he made sure that his family was taken care of. He went back to his family, said good bye to them, he burnt the yoke, slaughtered the oxen, gave it to the people to eat. He did everything right before he became Elijah's attendant. Elisha's eagerness led him to burn up all temptations to make him turn away from God.

Are you eager today? The way that you know that you are eager is by saying how hard you work for God. Our Prayer, Bible study, our Evangelism, Fellowship are all hard work that we put in to show how eager we are. If we have not been working hard or if we have not been praying, reading the Bible, evangelizing, and having great relationship then you will be thinking about some other worldly plans which you would not have been burnt up. If there is any other priority which stops us from working hard, we should burn it up. Share about someone who gave up a great possession/position to be a Christian in your Family Group.

2. Be Loyal To The Leadership

2Kings 2:1-18. When Elisha knew that Elijah would be taken away by god, he did not want to let him go. Many people discouraged him about his loyalty to Elijah by reminding him about Elijah's departure. But Elisha did not want to talk about it. When the time came for Elijah to be taken away, Elijah asked Elisha what he can do for him. Elisha was eager to be like Elijah. When Elijah was taken away Elisha was grieved and tore his own clothes apart. He did not delay in carrying out the Elijah's mission. He picked up the cloak of Elijah's struck the Jordan just like Elijah did when they crossed over to the side where Elijah was taken away. The water divided and he crossed over. Every one saw that Elisha was Elijah. How is our relationship with our discipless? Why are we loyal to them? Is it because of mere friendship or because of their spiritual life? How eager are you to be with your discipler and meet him/her every day? We need to keep in touch with other Christians specially our discipless every single day. Elisha imitated the heart of Elijah. Are you eager to imitate your discipler's heart? Elisha asked Elijah for help and so he got a double portion. Do we ask our discipler's to teach us the Bible or do we wait till they help us? Share about your personal discipless's good heart.

What are the areas you have grown by imitating your leaders? Write down.

3. Be Serving

2 Kings 2:19-22. In Jericho the water was bad, the land was unproductive. He was the successor of Elijah, the great prophet in high position. Even though he was passing by, he's still willing to help those people who were in K I 4:1 -7 Elisha ~ sea much debts. Elisha was eager to serve her. Elisha could have easily ignored her but he went out of his way to be like Jesus. The widow was faithful till the very end. Elisha's eagerness to serve is seen in 2Kings 4:5-6 How much do you help in people's needs? Simple things like cleaning the room after devotional, washing the cups after others have used, eager to serve and not to be served, helping out in the childcare, communion and ushering. When you serve a person when he is weak spiritually he will always remember what you have done for him even if he leaves God. Share about some struggling disciple helped by another disciple to become strong.

4. Be Bold

2 Kings 6:8-20. The king of Aram was upset with Elisha, because Elisha was giving all the information of the army to the Israelites. So he sent strong force with horses and chariots to Dothan where Elisha was and surrounded it.

But Elisha was not afraid. He was bold because he trusted in God whose instructions he followed.

Are you bold? It is easy for us to be bold when we are with other Christians. But how are you when you are with strangers, your colleagues, your family members who are not Christians? Are you boldly sharing your faith? Are you bold enough to keep away from coarse joking, foolish talk and worldly activities of your worldly friends around you?

Let us be Hard Working, Loyal, Serving and Bold like Elisha.

SOLOMON'S SPLENDOR

Today we are going to learn how to be pure and righteous. Solomon was the son of the great king David. Solomon was born to David from Bathsheba. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah. David married Bathsheba after killing Uriah her husband. God was upset with David because he coveted another man's wife. As a consequence of David's sin God let Bathsheba's son born of David die after he was born. David was rebuked by Nathan for being adulterous. David repented.

(He wrote Psalm 59, a poem of repentance.) After that Solomon was born to David and Bathsheba. God loved Solomon. He grew up to become a great king just like David. Solomon was brought up by David in God's fear. Let us see how Solomon who was God fearing became sinful and unrighteous.

1. Always Teach About God.

1 Kings 2:1-4

David had a great heart. God said 'David is a man after my own heart'. He wrote a lot of poems which were circulated in Israel. These poems are in the Bible in the book of Psalms. These poems taught people about God. David in his death bed taught Solomon about God. He gave charge to Solomon and told him to be strong. David told him to be a man of God. He commanded Solomon to be obedient to the commands and laws which David had taught Solomon. Jesus commands us in Matt.28: 19-20 that we should continuously teach them even after the baptism. Today we need to be taught regularly from the Bible. Apart from the Sunday messages, devotionals and Bible talk we should have regular discipling times with our disciplers every week. Do you have weekly discipling times. When is your discipling time? If you do not have one make sure we fix up a time. Teaching brings obedience and which leads to many blessings. God says we can prosper in all you do and wherever you go in vs.3.

Share about someone in your life who is not a leader yet eager to teach.

2. Always deal with sin.

1 Kings 2:13-25. David and Solomon forgave Adonijah but later Adonijah came to Bathsheba with a request. The request was that he wanted David's wife Abishag, the Shunamite to be his wife. When Solomon heard this he was upset that Adonijah was asking for his father's wife. Solomon was quick to deal with the sin by putting Adonijah to death. Solomon, even though he was compassionate, when there was a sin he dealt with it firmly. Many times we personally look at sin in our personal lives and we do not deal with it firmly neither do we let other people deal with it. If sin in our lives is not dealt with in the beginning, we would have to face the consequence later on. Every sin will be punished. Not only we should deal with our sins, we should also deal with other people's sins. Whenever we see sin we need to try to help them out personally if we are not able to do it take it to the notice of your leaders immediately. Solomon was very grateful the first time, the second time he dealt with it firmly and punished the sin.

We should always have grace. But we cannot sin. Share about someone in your Family Group who is good at correcting people's sin.

3. Always Ask For A Great Heart.

1 Kings 3:4-15. In Gibeon Solomon was offering sacrifices, the Lord appeared to Solomon in his dream. God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you". Solomon answered by praising God for giving David a faithful, righteous and upright heart. He thanked God for letting him sit on his father's throne. Solomon wanted God to give him wisdom because he was only a little child and he had to govern great number of people. God was pleased with Solomon, gave him the discernment in administering justice and also gave him riches and honor along with it. King David had a great heart. Solomon failed to ask God for a great heart, so he was not able to discern what is right or wrong in his personal life and put it into practice. Solomon wrote many Proverbs, Songs of Songs, Ecclesiastes and Lamentations which contain much wisdom. which is useful for us today. Because he did not have a good heart he was not able to put those wisdom to practice. What would you ask God today? Wealth, health, position, talents, fame etc., will pass away but a good heart will always remain, and will always keep you faithful to God. Let's ask God for a great heart. Share about someone in your Family Group who is poor yet great hearted.

4. Only Marry A Christian

1 Kings 11:1-13

Solomon's downfall came when he fell in love with a foreign woman. Even though the Lord had told all the Israelites not to marry them. The Bible says he had 700 wives and 300 concubines and they led them astray.

Nehemiah 13:26-27

Even though Solomon had all the wisdom given by God, he did not use that Godly wisdom in the case of his relationships with women in his life.

Many people who have left the church to get married outside the church have made this comment "I will get married and make her also a disciple!" Do you think that you have more wisdom than Solomon? True wisdom is humbly submitting to God's plan and not assuming that you can do what even Solomon could not achieve!

In Solomon's old age they turned his heart after other gods because in v.4, it says his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord as the heart of David. He built high places for foreign Gods and burnt incense. In vs.9, God was angry even though he appeared to Solomon twice. God dealt with him firmly by saying that his kingdom will be torn and given to his subordinate. But God also had grace and told him it would not happen in his life time for the sake of David. Today if we are tempted to marry somebody outside or if we are having impure thoughts and looks, we should deal with it firmly. Talk to your discipler, openly about your sin and take advice on how to get over the temptation. But if you do fall into it, God will punish you for that sin. Share about a good marriage.

Conclusion:

In **1 Kings 11:14** It says that God raised up adversary against Solomon. Let us ask God today for a pure heart which will repent every time we sin and will be faithful to God till we die.

PETER THE PREACHER

INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts is written by Luke the doctor around 63 A.D. It's the book that links the 4 gospels to the rest of the New testament. The gospels talk about the life of Jesus and starting Romans it describes how the churches spread to different regions. But Acts tells us how the churches started with 120 disciples and then 3000 got added on the 1st day alone. Today we are going to see the life of Peter the 1st 12 chapters are totally about his inspiring life.

1. Reed changed to be a Rock

Luke 5:8-11 After listening to the message preached by Jesus from Peter's boat and even after seeing the miraculous catch of fish, Peter (then Simon) was afraid to be even in the presence of Jesus. he fell at Jesus' knees and begged "go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man." But that was the turn around in his life. Here Jesus gives the 'call of his life' to be a committed disciple/apostle of Jesus.

Mark 8:33 Again Peter's emotional character of a reed came out when he rebuked Jesus for mentioning that Jesus is going to suffer.

At the time of walking on the water (Matthew 14:25-33), at the time of transfiguration, at the time of last supper and at the time of Jesus' arrest, Peter portrayed himself as a reed.

Acts 2:36-41

By this time Peter is transformed from being a reed to be revolutionary rock.

Peter is full of the holy spirit and he is fired up to preach the word of God. He lets them know that they (Israelites) were responsible for crucifying Jesus.

Through his incredible message on the day of Pentecost, he became God's instrument to usher in the Kingdom of God by baptising 3000 people from all the nations of the world.

2. Man of Prayer

He was unwilling to stay awake and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In a few days later he became a man of prayer!

In **Acts 1:12-14** Peter led the group of disciples and Mary the mother of Jesus in prayer while waiting for the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 4, Peter was arrested and jailed. As soon as they were released Peter went back to the group of disciples and led them in group prayer for boldness.

Acts 4:23-31 Their prayer was so effective that the place they were meeting was shaken. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

3. Mouldable Heart

Galatians 2:11-14 : In Antioch, Peter got corrupted by the Circumcision group. Being

an being trained by Jesus for 3 years, being an apostle for many years, being filled with the Holy Spirit, having years of experience in the full time ministry—so much for his credit. Yet he did wrong, again fearing men rather than God!

But what we can learn is the great heart of Peter that could be disciplined by even a young Christian! Who was Paul in front of Peter? A guy who had never got trained personally by Jesus! Ex-Persecutor of the Church etc:

But when Paul realised the mistake of Peter, he was quick to correct him! But when Paul corrected Peter, he was willing to listen and to accept this corrections humbly and change.

How is your attitude towards correction? Do you expect the top leader to come and correct you? What if a young Christian challenges you? How would you react? What if your discipler changes and you happened to get some one young in faith starts discipling you? Are you quick to change and do you respect that person? Peter had great respect towards Paul. It is seen in his letter 1 Peter 3:15-16 he tells Christians to accept the letters of Paul as scriptures!

Let us have a heart like that of Peter. Let us rely on the Holy Spirit and grow in our character. Let us take discipling, corrections and challenges seriously and grow!

JONATHAN

By definition, loyalty is synonymous with faithfulness. However, it is possible to be faithful and still not be loyal, because loyalty requires something more. Loyalty goes beyond just being faithful to someone or some Ideology. Loyalty obligates you to **defend** and **support** that someone (or something) to whom you are faithful. Some people are faithful but are not loyal.

So consider the full definition of loyalty as we discuss it today about Someone who is faithful to something, and obligated to both defend and support it

Let's take a look at the **Jonathan's loyalty** towards David

JONATHAN'S LOYALTY

1 Samuel 18:1-4

1. We must remember that Jonathan was not just Saul's son, but he himself was great warrior and worthy leader.

- a. Jonathan took on 20 men at one time
- b. He often fought along side his father, Saul
- c. It looked very much like he would replace his father as king someday, and he deserved it.

2. But then a little boy named David defeated Goliath and this changed everything.

- a. David won the affection of both God and the people
- b. He became a threat to Saul and to his dynasty.

3. Ironically, David and Jonathan became very good friends in spite of the power shift taking place.

4. READ 1 Samuel 20:1-9

- a. Jonathan was more than faithful to his friend David, he was also loyal
- b. How do we know this? Because of something that David said to him in

Vs.3

- c. "Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes."
- d. Therefore Saul would not tell Jonathan anything that would allow his son to support or defend David.
- e. For David to have used the word, "certainly," there must have been several unmentioned times that Jonathan went to bat for David.
- f. You see, Jonathan showed his loyalty by defending and supporting David, his friend.

5. READ 1 Samuel 20:30-34

- a. Saul tried reminding Jonathan that his own future was at stake as long as David lived.
- b. But you see, loyalty does not waiver every time the stakes are raised are lowered.
- c. Jonathan's loyalty comes shining through as he clearly defends David to his father's face.

d. Then Saul casts a spear at Jonathan to kill him. And what thought goes

through his head?

- He now knows that Saul plans to kill David

- Listen folks, you don't have to be bright to be loyal. - Just faithful and supportive.

e. So Jonathan leaves the table in anger. Why?

- Because he just has a fight with his father?

- Because his own father nearly killed him?

- No, it was because he was grieved for David.

f. Now that's loyalty.

Conclusion:

1. By definition, loyalty is synonymous with faithfulness but requires something more

2. Loyalty produces an obligation, and the "I am an educated, so don't tell me what to do" type of Christians do not handle this very well.

3. Loyalty demands that you both **defend** and **support**

4. Do you really want to return to Biblical values?

a. Don't just be faithful to Christ, be loyal.

b. Don't just be faithful to church, be loyal.

c. Don't just be faithful to your family, be loyal.

NEHEMIAH

Introduction :

People have served as slaves in a distant land for two generations. They are finally freed from their servitude, and allowed to return home. Those who do return find there is a struggle to survive. They struggle to rebuild their relationship with God; they struggle to rebuild their fortifications against their enemies; they struggle to rebuild the nation into a strong and independent union. This is not limited to the condition of the Jewish people in Nehemiah's day - it is strikingly similar to what happens to many of God's people today. People freed from the bondage of sin struggle to rebuild their relationship with God, they struggle to rebuild their fortification against the enemy, and have an ultimate death threat from the ultimate enemy.

1. A MAN OF CONCERN:

Nehemiah was a man of concern, this concern was seen in:

A: Nehemiah's sacrifice A point that is often overlooked with reference to Nehemiah is the great sacrifice he made in work in Jerusalem. Consider Nehemiah's Position and Property. He was a *cup bearer to the king*" (2:1). He amassed a considerable fortune, as may be inferred from the fact that he was able to serve as governor of Judah for 12 years without compensation. Not only this, but 150 nobles of the land ate daily at his table, in addition to the entertainment and sustenance he provided for foreign visitors (5:14-17). Nehemiah was willing to give up a lucrative position and power in the palace of Shushan for the demanding task of removing reproach from his brethren and from Jerusalem - a challenge that consumed more than 12 years of life. I am reminded of another great life of sacrifice. **Phil 2:1-11** Jesus was willing to give up His highly exalted position to be a servant to mankind.

Are we willing to sacrifice our time, money, energy, selfish dreams, wills? Sacrifice is what it will take to make our lives strong and pleasing to God.

B. Nehemiah's sorrow :

1. Showed Concern **Neh 1:1-2** When we have true concern about others and the church we will inquire. How do we know what to do or what to pray for if we never ask about people? Q: How concerned are we about the church? **Neh 1: 4a**. This was not just a superficial emotional wound - because four months later Artaxerxes would be able to discern from physical appearance Nehemiah. There is no shame in weeping - In fact, a real man will weep and can be touched with heartfelt feeling (David, Jesus did). There are many things that will cause us sorrow (indifference, errors, opposition, pain, etc.), but sorrow is good because it is one of the things that motivates us to help or change things. **Neh 1:11** Nehemiah was determined to assist his brethren and prayed to God that he might be allowed to do this. It is a worthless sympathy, which only prays and not be willing to assist in the endeavor.

When was the last time we wept for our brothers/sisters in the ministry who are struggling in faith?

When was the last time we decide to assist our leaders in team work to save somebody?

C: Nehemiah's supplication Nehemiah prayed in times of sorrow Neh1:4 . Nehemiah prayed when about to do something vitally important Neh2: 1-4. Nehemiah was successful in accomplishing great things for the Lord because he was a man of prayer. Confessed not only the sins of the people, but of his family and himself. Do we pray for our brothers and sisters in our ministry or its just about ourselves?

2. A Man of Strength

Neh 2:2 Nehemiah was afraid because he was about to make a very important request of he king - to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls. Nehemiah did not let the fear he felt stop him from doing what needed to be done. It is not always easy to do the right things, and one reason for this is fear Are we afraid of not being popular so we do things we know the Bible teaches against ? Are we afraid being rejected or made fun of so we refuse to openly manifest our Christianity? Are we afraid of losing a friendship so we do not correct a brother who is in sin? To accomplish the work of God we must overcome fear as did Nehemiah

3. A Man of motivation

God has always honored those who were willing to go against all odds, or render an extraordinary service. The name Moses is a household word for millions still today, but the name Pharaoh who opposed him is a matter of much speculation, even among scholars (Ex. 5:1-2) We know well Elijah who stood against the 450 prophets Baal, but we know not a single name among those false prophets (1 Kings. 18:20-40) A woman broke an expensive alabaster box of ointment to anoint Jesus' head: wherever the gospel is preacher, her story is still told (Mk. 14:3-9)4. Hebrews 11, sometimes called "God's Hall of Fame," pays tribute to those of whom the world was not worthy.

Nehemiah not just he had concern to rebuild the wall but got all his friends, brothers and sisters motivated. Do we motivate our friends to see our family group or ministry grown or strengthened? Nehemiah 3 may seem like dull reading for us, but we must realize that it is a tribute to those sincere souls who braved hardships and the sword to restore and fortify the City of God These people were worthy of God's tribute because

A. THEY FOLLOWED A WELL DEvised PLAN Each group had its assigned section of labor, and each individual labored in the craft best suited to his ability. (Neh 2:12ff), Nehemiah surveyed the work and came with a game plan (Pro 13:16, planning ahead, Ezekiel drew plans for a battle (Eze. 4:1-3) Paul planned his efforts for the Lord (2 Cor. 1:15-17)4).

Are we united in following the plans in our ministry or are we independent with the plan?

B. THEY WORKED AS A DETERMINED BODY . They were determined not to allow

mockery, intimidation, nor violence, to stop them from their appointed task. We must be a determined people. Num 23:24 ... relentless determination 2 Chro 15:7 ... Don't give up c. Ps 44:18 ... consistent determination. Psalm 119:10 ... wholehearted determination. 1 Cor 15:58. We must be determined not to allow persecution, gossip, difficulty, failures, or anything - to keep us from accomplishing much for the Lord

C. THEY WORKED AS A UNIFIED BODY. The men working with their hands, the guards who placed their lives between them and the enemy, and the rulers backing the work in every way. They achieved a common goal - working together, and not against each other. The Bible (Gen 13:8b. 1 Sam 14:6-7c. Neh 8:1d. Eccl 4:9-12. Amos 3:34. We can never live up to our full potential. Until we work together as a unified body.

D. THEY LOOK ON THEIR WORK AS SERVICE TO GOD These mentioned in Nehemiah 3 looked on the work - not as a menial task, not as a project of Nehemiah - but as service to God. In Neh 2:18-20 they realized that this was the Lord's work (Col 3:23-4. 2 Chr 31:20-21 . Eccl 9:106.)

How do we view our labors as Christians?

How do we react when asked to serve in ushering, kingdom kids, stage setup, cleaning ?

4. A MAN OF CONVICTION IN DEALING WITH GOD'S WORD

! Discussion Gathering as One Man (v.1) Suggested in the phrase "*one man*" is the idea of unity – they were of one mind as they gathered together to study the word of God They were in agreement that the word of God needed to be read. This was setting the stage for a religious revival Years earlier they were warned Hos 4:6 Lest history repeated itself the people gathered together as "one" for the reading and exposition of the word of God This kind of mentality must exist today in each ministries. We must be unified in our desire to make God's word our authority We must be as one as we contend for truth. We must be unified as we implement these truths (Neh 8: 2-8) The Law was brought (v. 2) How can the word of God be studied if it is not brought ? How can we truly study God's word if we are not bringing our Bibles to worship? What kind of interest does that show on our part? The Law was opened (v. 5) Are we opening our Bible's and studying along .Are we being active, re we reading along, are we taking notes? 2 Tim 2:15 We need to open our Bibles as well as our minds – set a good example The Law was read (vs. 3, 8) God's law was the focal point of the teaching in this assembly We must use God's word to prove our points/views 1 Peter 4:11. The Law was discussed (v. 8) The law was explained and read "*distinctly*," that is, it was made very clear what was required by the law God's law must be discussed, we must study together to make sure we re accurately understanding its contents . Acts 17:11 The Law was understood (vs. 8, 12) They were able to understand the word of God Today we can understand the word of God John 8:32 **Eph 3:4** The Behavior of the People They were attentive (v. 3) Listened carefully – knowledge of God's word was of great importance to them Pro 18:15 They were reverent (vs. 5-6) When the word of God was opened the people stood – for they had reverence for the word of God .

We must have reverence for God and His word **Ps 33:8** Ps 89:7 Hab 2:20

They were persistent and unwavering (vs. 3, 7) The word was read from morning until noon – 4 to 6 hours of reading the word of God, and in all of this time they “*stood in their place*” (v. 7) Today many get mad if the preacher preaches one-minute overtime. These in Nehemiah’s day could sit for hours listening to the word of God read. This showed their great love and respect for the word of God.

The Effects of the Law (vs. 9-12) Sorrow (v. 9) When one has the proper respect for the law of God they will feel sorrow when they have transgressed its precepts “For by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), The word of God also brings joy There is the joy of :salvation forgiveness, protection, instruction, comfort That why the Psalmist said **Ps 119:97**

Discovery and Obedience (vs. 13-18) Attention given to the “how” They found out what pleased God going to His word We must do the same today – it is not what we want, but what God wants Obedience in the things learned It is one thing to know what God wants and it is another to do what He wants – When the Jews found out they had not been accurately keeping the commands of God – they made a change. The same must hold true for us Phil 4:9 It is not just doing a thing that is important, but doing it as God has set forth. If we are going to be successful in doing the work of the Lord, then His word must be in the center of our actions.

Conclusion

So let then imitate this man Nehemiah a great leader, builder, an awesome disciple of the word.

SAMSON

1. Set Apart For God

Judges 13:5 Even before the birth of Samson God had set him apart as a Nazirite.

We are also chosen by God to be set apart for God. We are His children (1Pet 2:9-12)? Chosen people, Royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God to declare the praises of God, Called out from darkness.

Samson was expected not to be polluted by anything unclean. We too are called to be holy, as our Heavenly Father is holy.

Judges 14:1-3 Samson was infatuated by a Philistine woman. Even when his parents gave him the advice to marry only a God fearing woman from Israel, he managed to manipulate his parents and got involved with Philistine women. He did not seem to have been much grateful about God choosing him to be a judge for Israel.

Are you grateful for your salvation and for God choosing you to be set apart for God? Are you keeping yourself pure, righteous and holy or are you like Samson giving in to the sensual desires of your heart?

2. Strong Yet Weak

Judges 16:3 Samson was physically very strong, stronger than any one at that time but he was very weak. He kept on compromising and repeated his sinfulness and folly. It is easy for us also to do some religious things like reading the Bible, praying, evangelism, attending all the meetings, sharing good news and pretend to be strong. What is more important is to be strong within, holding on to the convictions of a disciple in purity and holiness

Are you confessing as soon as you happened to sin? Admit your weakness and have more than one person involved in your life to constantly help you overcome your weaknesses.

It is better to reveal our weaknesses and get strengthened.

3. Driven by the Spirit

Judges 13:25, 14:19, and 15:14 He was filled with the Holy Spirit but only occasionally he was driven by the Spirit. We too have the Holy Spirit with in us but does the Spirit drive us? We must pray specifically for the Spirit to lead us powerfully in every thing that we do. What ever we do we must start with prayer and remind ourselves consistently that we ourselves are the powerhouses of Holy Spirit. (**Ephesians 3:20**)

That is why Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:13** "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

Are you driven by the Holy Spirit?

The SPIRIT helps us :

In our weakness; In our Prayer Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our

hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

In our Character Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let us rely on the Holy Spirit every step of our lives.

CALEB - THE MAN WITH A DIFFERENT SPIRIT

The first appearance of Caleb in the Bible is when Moses formed a very important team of 12 leaders of Israel to go and spy out the land of Canaan. Caleb was one among the chosen ones.

1. Faithful Among The Unfaithful

Numbers 13:21-30

All the 12 of them found that the land of Canaan was surely a land where milk and honey flows as God had promised them. but 10 out of 12 were so faithless that they did not believe that God is able to help them to conquer that land. They saw the power of the people living there and were afraid to attack them fearing defeat. They did not believe the faithfulness of God!

What we see here is that Caleb was not a guy who went by the feelings of the majority. He lived by faith. He silenced the people before Moses and said “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.”

How are we today? ? Or do you follow the majority? Majority of the people in the world believes it impossible to live according to the Bible! The worldly pleasures carry them away. Do you trust in God’s power and his faithfulness to his promises. Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of all the nations! Do you believe that god will help you to accomplish that?

Jesus promised that he would make you fishers of men! Do you believe and act accordingly?

Jesus promised that whatever we ask in his name will be given to us! Do you believe that god will answer your prayers?

True faith is proven by great deeds. Do you have the faith to believe that you can be fruitful this month? Jesus promised the harvest is plentiful!

Let us imitate the heart of Caleb and be faithful to God and his promises even when all around us lose faith.

2. Blessed Among The Cursed

Numbers 14:26-30; 36-38

All the faithless were destroyed because God cursed them. You don’t have to be immoral or a murder someone to be cursed by God! Your faithlessness is enough! That is alarming!

But God was so proud of Caleb Numbers 14:24 “ But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to and his descendants will inherit it.

How does god feel about you today? Will he notice your faith and bless you? We

have to grow up in our faith and deeds to the level God notices us and blesses us. Because of his faithfulness not only Caleb was blessed, but his descendants also! Will your descendants feel proud of you by seeing the blessings they get in the future and understand that it is because you pleased God?

3. Young At Old Age

Joshua 14:10-12

We see Caleb after 45 years of his proclamation of faith! Now he is an old man – 85 years old! Not only that he has grown old, he had gone through a lot in life. Imagine living in the desert for 40 years and seeing all his friends and all other faithless perishing in the desert!

Death of his hero Moses! Working under new leadership! Being led by his partner in faith Joshua. When we read Numbers 13 & 14 we get a feeling that Caleb had more faith than even Joshua. But God chose Joshua to be the leader after Moses! Now even after 45 years he has not got his inheritance that God promised him! But nothing could shake his faith. He was so fired up in this old age!

Vs:11 “ I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out. I am just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then.” Look at his convictions! His faith was not on his physical strength but on the power of God almighty!

Nothing could diminish his zeal for God. Do you see him making any excuses? Do you make excuses? Excuses are not the result of situations or circumstances but the result of lack of faith and reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit in you.

Jesus said in **John 14:12** “.....anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these,.....” what is impossible for you? What do you learn from Caleb today? Are you burdened? Or are you more fired up than ever before? After being a Christian for a few years some feel like settling down. Namesake prayers, legalistic Bible study, rare in sharing faith, difficult to confess, difficult to accept young leaders etc.

Let us learn a lesson from Caleb – it doesn't matter how many years you are a Christian for, let us grow in our zeal for God!

4. Challenged the Young

Joshua 15:16 Caleb gives a challenge : “ I will give my daughter Acsah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher.” He could have easily captured that land also. But he wanted to raise up some leaders in Israel. Othniel took up that challenge and got Acsah in marriage and later on we see Othniel being the first judge of Israel!

May be you are doing well spiritually. Great! But are you calling others around you to do well also? Are you involved in raising up leaders?

I appreciate who rose up recently to be a leader. He is excellent in taking up challenges and growing in the Lord.

I want to challenge you today – if you are not a leader become a leader.

If you are already a leader, raise up another leader like you.

LOT

Lot was the cousin brother of Abraham. He traveled with Abraham when God called Abraham. He got the best opportunity to have the fellowship the best man on earth at that time.

But being a companion of Abraham, and watching and observing the life and faith of Abraham, it looks like he did not learn much from Abraham.

1. Deceived By The Outward Appearance

Genesis 13:10-13

This was the time Abraham suggested Lot to separate from him. Lot looked up and saw the well-watered land that looked like the garden of the Lord! The land looked really beautiful so he chose to live in Sodom. Vs.13 says that men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.

Lot was not a deep person. He was deceived by outward appearance of the land. He saw only the worldly benefits of living in that land but did not see the danger of living among the wicked people.

How are you today? Do you get deceived by the outward appearance of things? When you make friends what do you look for? Glamour, money, worldly benefits that you can gain from them or spirituality? What kind of friends do you have? Do you walk away from spiritual people who will challenge of your sins or do you look for friends who will compromise with you?

When you take up a job what do you look for? Fame and fortune or spiritual benefits? There are many disciples who got deceived by lucrative jobs which made them slaves to their jobs and lost their commitment to God and to the church and finally fell away! Lot made a lot money but when God destroyed the land of Sodom, he lost all that he made in Sodom. Like Lot, many of them ended up losing both spiritual life and found to have not benefited financially as they thought.

Singles: what are you looking for in your future spouse? External beauty or spiritual heart!

(1Timothy 6:6-10 talks about the benefit of godliness with contentment. We must remember love for money is the root of all evil.)

2. Compromises After Compromises

Genesis 19:6 when Sodomites were crying out to Lot to send the men to them to have sex with them, see how Lot spoke to them!

“Friends” ? first compromise. He became of friend of wicked people!

“I will give my daughters” ? what a father!

Genesis 19:14 tells us that Lot not only settled in Sodom, but also arranged the marriage of his daughters with the men of Sodom!

Genesis 19:16 Lot hesitated to escape from Sodom even when the angels helped him!

Genesis 19:20 Let me go to Zoar (means small)

Genesis 19:32 Drunkenness and incest!

What do we learn from Lot? One compromise will lead us to another and it can destroy our lives. Brothers and sisters, isn't it so alarming?

Do you want to compromise? Starting with our quiet times in the morning, Bible study, meeting, fellowship, evangelism, righteousness, purity, confession, and contribution – let us not compromise even a bit in our lives. Let us be on the edge every moment of our life.

3. Wasted Life

In Genesis 18 we see Abraham pleads for Sodom and he got the angels to agree that if they find at least 10 righteous people, they will not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah!

(Genesis 18:32)

Genesis 19:23-26

Finally the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. That shows God could not find even 10 righteous people there! With much difficulty God saved Lot and his daughters. That too because God remembered Abraham (**Genesis 19:29**)

What do we learn from this? Though Lot lived in Sodom and Gomorrah for years together, was he able to save anyone? Not even one soul!

How do you feel about that? **{let a few share}**

Now look at our lives! What about our family? How many are saved since we became disciples? What about our college/work place? What about our neighbourhood?

Let us face the fact! Have you made an impact on the people around you?

Lot had a wasted life! By the end of his life he must have thought, I could have done.....!

Do you want to end your life like that?

{Share : Venugopal is a policeman in Trivandrum; he became a disciples even though his past was bad and the circumstances were against him. He not only started living a great family life, his impact was felt in the police station where he works, wherever he is put in duty; he carries his Bible and preaches the word wherever he is on duty! Amazingly now there are 5 policemen being our brothers in Christ in Trivandrum Church!}

Let us learn lessons from the life of Lot: 1:Let us never be deceived by outward appearance;

2) Let us never compromise on spirituality; 3) Let us not waste our life. Let us make sure that we make an eternal impact on every person that we get in touch!

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah is a great prophet. He wrote 2 Old Testament books: Jeremiah and Lamentations. He ministered during the reigns of last five kings of Judah.

1. Call To Be A Prophet

Jeremiah 1.6-8 “Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.”⁷ But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. 8. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

When Jeremiah was called by God, he was very insecure. But good thing with Jeremiah is that he was always open about his feelings to God. God did not accept his excuses!

We are also called to preach the Word to the people of the world. Just like the people of Jeremiah’s time, people around us are also rebellious and proud. That is not an excuse for not preaching the word. Many of us making excuses saying, “nobody is open brother!”; what would God tell us? Will he say : I understand you, I feel sad for you! Maybe you have to take a break in preaching! That is what we want to hear. But here we see that God did not say that to Jeremiah, even though his situation was far beyond what we can imagine.

What does God expect from us? Keep preaching: whether people accept it or not!

2. Be Bold

Jeremiah 1:17 “Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them.

God expected Jeremiah to be bold! Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. We have heard and seen this passage many times. There is no compromise!

Is it an expectation of God for us to be bold. Though Jeremiah seemed to be a bit nervous and timid, by the discipling he got from God, he grew in his faith and became very bold. Let us see : once God told Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 22:1?) “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there:” he gave a message about what discipline is waiting for the King of Judah and people of Judah. This was not a very encouraging message. One of the points in the message was in vs.18 ?”Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah:

19 He will have the burial of a donkey—dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem.”

Can you imagine you going to the palace of a King who hates God and you and saying

these words? What kind of a treatment will you expect? But Jeremiah understood it is the will of God and he is the messenger of God and he did exactly as God told him to do. Jeremiah became bold from being a timid character.

Are you bold like Jeremiah? However you are God can make you strong, bold and powerful. Next time when you meet a person or crowd that will intimidate you, remember how Jeremiah was and be bold like him and preach the word or share your faith boldly.

3. Be Expressive to God

Jeremiah 20:7-10

Here we see though Jeremiah was bold, repeated persecutions made him feel terrible. But he did not quit. There was no one to encourage him; no one to say even a kind word, no respect or honour. No one thanked him or clapped for him after his great messages; rather they tried to kill him!

Imagine you being there in that position. What would you do? How will you respond? How will you feel?

He too felt bad but instead of being emotional and keeping quiet or quitting, he went to God and expressed every bit of feelings to him. It was very strong to the point (vs7) “O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed.....”

He kept praying and finally, you see he concluded:

Jeremiah 20:11 “*But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior*; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten.”

This is how he found strength. He kept expressing all his feelings – both good and bad to God because he considered God as his father, refuge, stronghold etc.

What do you do when you go through pain? Turn to your discipler – a mere man; your spouse another imperfect being like you? Or to the almighty your God?

It is true that God has provided us discipler, leaders, spouse, friends etc; but no one can replace God. God must be your father, refuge, stronghold and source of encouragement.

Let us learn from the great Prophet Jeremiah: Let us accept the call to be a Prophet; Let us be bold like Jeremiah, Let us be bold in being expressive to God in our walk with God!

RECABITES

During Jehu's time Jehonadab son Recab was the leader of conservative movement among the Israelites that was characterized by strong opposition to Baalism as well as to various practices of a settled agricultural society, including the building of house, the sowing of crops and the use of wine. His followers still adhered to these principles over 200 years later and were known as Recabites. Rural Israelites really respected Recabites and considered them to be Godly.

{courtesy : NIV Study Bible reference page No. 541, 2 Kings 10:15}

Jehu was appointed by God (*through Elisha the Prophet*) to be the king of Israel and to bring an end to the Baal worship in Israel. He had already killed (2 Kings 9) the wicked queen, the wife of Ahab who spread Baal worship so much in Israel. Now in his incredible zeal, Jehu was going to destroy all the prophets of Baal. Jehonadab came to know about the zeal of Jehu to destroy Baal worship. So he was on his way to meet Jehu. Now let us see:

1. Spiritual Hangout

2 Kings 10:15-17

Jehu meets Jehonadab and calls him to join him in his chariot to 'ride along'.

Jehu knew the convictions of the Recabites. Jehu used this opportunity to hangout with a great man of God who equally hated Baal worship. Public association with Jehonadab gave Jehu added credentials among the rural populace as a follower of the Lord.

What kind of hangouts do you have? Is it only good food and nice talk? Or some jokes and fun? Look at what kind of hangout Jehu and Jehonadab had:

2 Kings 10:23-27

They had great fun in achieving some incredible spiritual goals. They put to an end to Baal worship and made the temple of Baal to be latrine! Not only they could laugh about it, but they gave a chance for us also to laugh!

What do you do with your friends? do you do anything radical like Jehu? There are brothers and sisters who prayed the whole night together (not the usual ministry all night prayer; just 2 or 3 of them); some had prayer walks around the city; some invited great number of people together and became fruitful together; some went and helped the poor radically; some built houses for poor Christians.

What is something radical you have done with your friends(Christians)?

Next time when you have even a plan to hangout with other Christians, think of Jehu and Jehonadab and do something radical.

Even today, you can find a partner in this group to do something radical.

Examples of spiritual hangouts:

Moses and Aaron
Jonathan and the armor bearer
David's mighty men
Daniel and his friends
Elijah and Elisha
Jesus and the Apostles : feeding 5000, miracles, Transfiguration etc.

2. Lasting Convictions

Jeremiah 35:1-16

God was very upset about the Israelites not honouring God. They disobeyed God in every way. God sent prophet after prophet and yet they did not listen. Here God is giving them one more chance through Jeremiah. God wanted Jeremiah and the people of Israel to be convicted by the lasting convictions of the Recabites.

A prophet calls them to the Temple of God and provides wine! Even then did they drink? They refused to even taste it. Why? they were holding on to the instruction given by their forefather Jehonadab who lived nearly 250 years before Jeremiah; the same Jehonadab who helped Jehu to destroy Baal worship.

They respected their father and obeyed his instruction without any compromise for centuries. But people of God did not honour God or obey God's commands!

Let us not disappoint or grieve God brothers and sisters. Let us learn a lesson from the Recabites. Let us not just attend meetings, hear the messages, read our Bible regularly, but have convictions to respect God as our father and obey everything we learn from him for ever. Let us also teach other disciples and our children also to have lasting convictions.

Many of us have gained deep convictions. Some of us have never lied since we became Christians; never drank alcohol, never smoked, never missed meetings, never failed to give contribution, never went out of station without taking advice, never missed quiet time, never missed Bible study, never missed family time etc. That is wonderful.

What is something that you are holding on? Let us have more such convictions that we hold on for the rest of our lives!

See what God has done for the Recabites:

Jeremiah 35:18,19 "Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Jonadab son of Recab will never fail to have a man to serve me.' "

Wow! See the blessing that you can get from your faithfulness to God and for lasting convictions.

Note: various traditions in the Jewish Mishnah claim that the Recabites were later given special duties to perform in connection with the Jerusalem temple built after the return from Babylonian exile.

Even though they were not Jews, see how God noticed the goodness in them; the lasting convictions to respect their father and how God blessed them to have a promise given to them by the Almighty God himself as he did to only to a chosen few in the Bible.

Let us learn to be like the Recabites :

- 1) Have great spiritual hangouts;
- 2) Have lasting convictions.