

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, September 28, 2014

Series: Navigating through the ups and downs of real.life

Message: The Blessing of Faithfulness

Scripture: Luke 16:10-12; Proverbs 28:20

- I. WANTED: Faithful men + women for Kingdom work in the earth.
- II. We all desire to experience more ups than downs in real.life. One of the greatest ups that we can feel is achievement and accomplishment.
 - a. It is exhilarating to complete a task or goal that we set out to do. We yearn for that feeling of success in all of our endeavors, but these opportunities do not come to everyone.
- III. How do we position ourselves to advance towards greater stewardship responsibilities in the kingdom of God?
 - a. **Proverbs 28:20** - A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.
 - b. **LUKE 16:10-12** - If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. 11 And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? 12 And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?
 - c. **MATTHEW 25:21** - "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
 - d. God is ultimately looking for **faithful men + women** who can be entrusted with greater responsibilities.
- IV. What does it mean to be faithful?
 - a. Webster dictionary defines it as being "true to the facts, to a standard." Followers of Christ must be faithful to the standard of honoring God in all that we say and do.
 - b. **Colossians 3:23** - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
 - c. Faithfulness is our willingness to live a life according to God's higher standards.
- V. **1. Faithfulness requires us to focus on what God HAS given us rather than on what we DO NOT have.**
 - a. The key insight in Luke 16 and Matthew 25 was that each person had been entrusted with something of precious value and they each had a responsibility to be a faithful steward.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 4:2** says, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."
 - c. While God desires for us to dream about the vast array of possibilities that are available through Christ Jesus, if dreaming causes us to be blind to what we DO have, then it becomes an idol.
 - d. We often need to pray as Elisha prayed for his servant: Open our eyes that we may see the many blessings that you have given to us! (2 Kings 6:15-17)
 - e. The songwriter said "Count your blessings, name them one by one"

*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

f. We constantly have to ask ourselves, what do we have and are we being faithful with it?

VI. 2. Faithfulness challenges us to control our own actions rather than trying to manipulate other's responses to our actions

- a. When our goal is advancement and accomplishment, we will do whatever it takes to advance and unknowingly place other people's responses and opinion in the seat of defining our self-worth and identity.
- b. In contrast, when our focus is faithfulness – it frees us up from becoming a slave to pleasing people and instead, makes our higher aim to please God in everything that we do.
 - i. **2 Corinthians 5:9** - So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.
 - ii. Pleasing God doesn't require that we ignore the responses of others, but instead, we evaluate their responses and opinion in context. Otherwise, we will elevate their opinion above God's and become a slave to them.

VII. 3. Faithfulness is not contingent on external circumstances

- a. Whether we are entrusted with something big, or small; much, or little; belonging to you, or to others, God instructs us that our faithfulness should not be dependent on external circumstances.
- b. Luke 16:12 – And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?

VIII. 4. Faithfulness opens the door for greater stewardship responsibilities

- a. God is looking for faithful stewards and he wants to ensure that every opportunity for promotion is truly a blessing and not a hindrance.
- b. **Matthew 7:7** - "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"
- c. Greater stewardship responsibility without demonstrated faithfulness in current responsibilities is like giving a snake to a child instead of bread or fish.

IX. 5. Faithfulness trumps ambition

- a. **Galatians 6:9** states: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."
- b. **1 Corinthians 15:58** - Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
- c. Pure ambition relies on personal strength to advance but faithfulness trusts that God will utilize our personal strength for His glory. Faithfulness requires FAITH to believe that God will ALWAYS have the final say.
 - i. **Matthew 19:30** - But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Group Resource

Let's Talk Notes – Sunday, September 28, 2014

Series: Navigating through the ups and downs of real.life

Message: The Blessing of Faithfulness

Scripture: Luke 16:10-12; Proverbs 28:20

- 1) What are 1-2 things you would commit to doing zealously without being paid or even acknowledged for? What is the satisfaction that you get in doing these things? How do we develop the same level of satisfaction in doing the work of the Lord?
- 2) As you reflect back on last weekend's sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp?
- 3) Faithfulness requires that we focus on what God has given us rather than on what we do not have. List three blessings that God has entrusted to you over the last year. How do you balance dreaming about the future while being a faithful steward of your present?
- 4) As followers of Christ, the standard of our faithfulness is that God is pleased. What does it mean to please God? If we adopt the mind set of Colossians 3:23, how does that affect the way that we manage our responsibilities? (Think about your relationships, work, school, ministry, talents, health, time, etc...)
- 5) 2 Kings 6:15-17 tells the story of Elisha who prayed that God would open up the eyes of his servant so that he would see that God was with them. Has God ever opened your eyes to show you that He is with you? If so, please share your experience with the group.
- 6) Faithfulness doesn't always put us immediately in front, but God always has the final say. God reminds us in Proverbs 28, that He rewards the steps of the faithful. How has God rewarded your faithfulness even when it wasn't the popular thing to do?
- 7) The Scriptures teach us that increase in various areas of our lives is contingent upon our faithful dedication in what God has already entrusted to us. How does this lesson apply to our relationships, as well as our possessions? What are some ways that you have been faithful in cultivating your relationships? Journal/discuss areas of opportunity for growth.