

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, October 13, 2014

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

Message: Honor without compromise

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

- I. When navigating through the ups and downs of life, we can choose to navigate the journey alone or with others. However, God never designed us to walk through the ups and downs of life by ourselves.
 - a. God, in His foreknowledge, chose to birth us in a world filled with other individuals, in which we have to learn how to trust in God while leaning in to the people that God sends into our lives
- II. Navigating through the ups and downs of life forces us to wrestle with competing truths: We have to rely on God while He utilizes human vessels to accomplish His will in the earth.
 - a. *Isaiah 31:1* Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord.
 - b. *Ephesians 4:11-16* It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
- III. The Writer of Hebrews deals with this competing tension in Chapter 12: We have a great cloud of witnesses but we must keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.
 - a. What is the cloud of witnesses?
 - i. The Writer refers to the honor roll of faith recorded in Hebrews 11. The Chapter records a litany of individuals who lived by faith and were commended for their trust in God.
 - ii. Hebrews 11 reflects on the life of: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets.
 - b. All of these individuals bear witness to the genuineness of God's faithfulness. Their testimony is encouragement through our trials and provides us with the motivation to keep our commitment to a life of faith. We look to these heroes of faith for encouragement in the midst of our everyday journey.
- IV. Since we are assured of God's faithfulness and our ability to live Godly lives in this present age, we must do what is necessary to win our race. The Hebrew Writer instructs us to (1) throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, (2) run with perseverance the race marked out for us, by (3) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.
 - a. When we encounter difficulties in our journey of life (ups and downs), we tend to change lanes from the race marked out for us and fix our eyes on a way of escape rather than on the author and perfecter of our faith.
 - b. To succeed in running our race, we have to first throw off the weights that hinder us. Two vital areas of hindrance are: comparison/competition and covetousness. These two areas rob us of joy!

V. 1 - What is the race that is marked out for us?

- a. We await the time that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Each of us has our own God-given gifts to accomplish this task. We are each called to run our race by using whatever gifts we have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.
 - i. **TITUS 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.
 - ii. **EPHESIANS 2:10** For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- b. There are unique roles that God created each of us to do in the kingdom of God. When we spend time exploring our purpose, it allows us to thrive in what we have been called to do. We must also recognize that sometimes God challenges us to work outside of our areas of purpose so that we may be fully equipped for what we are called to do.
- c. The race that we are called to run can be considered as a relay race rather than an individual sprint: we all have our individual laps but we are connected through the faith delivered once and for all. (**Jude 1:3**)
 - i. We cannot run our race successfully by isolating ourselves from community.
 - ii. **Hebrews 10:23-25** Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
 - iii. God designed for us to learn from the examples that He places in our lives and to honor their faith and commitment in running their race. As Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1**)
- d. The difference between honor and competition is not who is in our lives but the responsibility that we give to the other person.
 - i. When we honor the examples in our life, we allow their influence to shape and motivate us in the race that WE have been called to run. When we compare and compete with others, we give them the responsibility of defining our self-worth and accomplishment.

VI. 2 - How does comparison rob us from the joy of running a good race?

- a. Competition and comparison wrongly shift our attention from completing what we are called to do to finding our esteem and value in being better than others. We can succeed at being better than others and never be the best at what we were called to do. Our gifts may have different functions but they are all equally important. Comparing gifts and assignments diminishes the value that God has placed on our unique role in the kingdom of God.
- b. In **1 Samuel 8:3-22**, the Lord rebuked the children of Israel because they neglected the abundant benefits of having God as their Lord and King and instead settled for the opportunity to *be like all the other nations, with an [earthly] king to lead them and to go out before them and fight their battles*. Competition and comparison rob us of our reward and the joy that comes with that reward.

VII. How do we honor others without competing?

a. 1 – Recognize that we all need Godly examples in our lives

- i. **Romans 15:4-6** For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ii. The Bible refers to the importance of community and that no prophecy of Scripture is given for private interpretation. **Proverbs 12:15** reminds us that the way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

b. 2 – Acknowledge that God provides for us through human vessels

- i. God inherently designed us to depend on Him and to welcome His provision through human vessels. **Hebrews 10:24** declares that one of the blessings of community is that human vessels spur us on toward love and good deeds.
- ii. **Proverbs 9:9** - Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

c. 3 – Be willing to imitate the faith of our predecessors without having to compare their accomplishments or compete with their journey

- i. Honor means to “esteem, value, or have great respect.” The idea of honoring others, especially those in authority, comes from the fact that they represent God’s ultimate authority. Honor does not mean to recycle someone else’s journey.
- ii. The Scriptures remind us: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (**1 Timothy 5:17**) and that we are to be “devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” (**Romans 12:10**)
- iii. Don’t compromise honor by focusing on competing!

d. 4 – Recognize that true significance comes from the genuineness of our faith rather than the perceived significance of our accomplishments

- i. In Hebrews 11, the ancients were commended for the level of their faith rather than by the prominence of the things that they did through faith.

Group Resource

Let's Talk Notes – Sunday, October 12, 2014

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

Message: Honor without compromise

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

- 1) Refer back to your journal entry from last week's session. What have you learned by meditating and putting into practice your insight from the Scriptures, sermon or prayer time.
- 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) **Read** Hebrews 11. If your name were added to the "roll call" of faith, what would like it to say? (Ex. By faith *insert name*...) What are some immediate steps that you can take to walk in your unique calling?
- 4) Pastor Joseph compared our Christian journey to running a race and encouraged us to "stay in our lane." Have you ever found yourself running outside your lane? What lessons did you learn from that?
- 5) What does it mean to honor someone? **READ 1 Timothy 5:17** and **Hebrews 13:17**. Why should we honor spiritual leaders in our lives?
- 6) Who are present-day or biblical figures that make up your cloud of witnesses (those whose faith you admire)? What are some ways you can imitate their faith while still being true to the specific race God called you to run?
- 7) Read **1 SAMUEL 8:3-22**. What did Israel seemingly gain by getting an earthly King? What did they lose? How did comparison and competition affect their ability to fully receive God's blessings?