

Home Group notes for the week following 25 June 2017

DISCIPLESHIP

AS WE GATHER

Wiersbe writes that God established three institutions in the world – the home, human government and the Church. He goes on to state that in the last days these three institutions will oppose truth instead of promoting it.

Matthew chapter 10 records Jesus' preparation of His disciples for their task. His emphasis is 'do not be afraid'.

READING SCRIPTURE **Genesis 21:8-21** **Psalms 86:1-10 & 16-17** **Romans 6:1b-11**
Matthew 10:24-39

THINKING TOGETHER

When Jesus sent His disciples out to continue His work, He gave them specific instructions (Matthew 10:5-11), but He also prepared them for their task and assured them that, as His disciples they need have no fear about confessing their allegiance to Him (Matthew 10:24-26 + 28 + 31). This assurance is as relevant today as it was then.

Reasons for Christians not being afraid to openly confess Christ include the following –

- Suffering is to be expected (Matthew 10:24-25)
People do not like to hear truths that make them feel uncomfortable / disturb the status quo, and will see good as bad of evil. In rejecting the truth, the messenger will also be rejected. Just as Jesus was accused of evil so too will be His disciples. Disciples need to develop discernment to constantly seek truth.

Who are the accusers today? Discuss

What kind of suffering do believers experience today? Discuss

- Ultimately truth will triumph (Matthew 10:26-27)
God will bring everything to light. We cannot speak truth if we have not heard and do not know truth. Believers have nothing to hide and can and should be open and courageous in their lives and witness (John 8:20). The disciple's task is to proclaim God's message, not to please people.

Is this always possible? Discuss

How can sacrifice and suffering for Christ be viewed as a privilege? Discuss
(Acts 5:41 Philippians 3:10)

- Disciples need fear God only (Matthew 10:28)
Reverence for / awe of God [holy fear] springs from love for and of God, and cancels fear of human being and of death (Romans 6:1b-11). It is the fear of disappointing Him or grieving His holiness by our response to human sanctions.

What is the cost to the believer of retaining personal comfort, security ease, bought at the expense of dishonour of / disobedience to, God? Discuss (Proverbs 16:6 + 13-14)

- God cares for His own (Matthew 10:29-31)
God cares for all of His creation. He is present with each creature no matter where they are or what their circumstances (Psalm 86:1-10 + 16-17 Psalm 136).
The courage of disciples is founded on the conviction that whatever happens they are never beyond the love and care of God

How does this knowledge make you feel? Discuss

- Christ honours those who confess Him (Matthew 10:32-33)
When we state and live our belief (walk the talk) Christ is our
High Priest as He brings us into the presence of, and presents us to, God the Father
Advocate as He speaks on our behalf – intercedes / defends us
thus reconciling us and restoring our relationship with the Father (Romans 14:7-9
2 Corinthians 5:7-10 and 1 John 2:1-2)

**How does Christ's heavenly ministry benefit / bless the faithful? Discuss
(2 Timothy 2:8-13 1 John 2:17)**

- We cannot escape conflict (Matthew 10:34-30)
Once we have identified with Christ and confessed our belief in Him as Him and Lord and Master, we enjoy peace in our hearts (John 14:27) even as we are part of God's war with Satan (Genesis 3:15).
Spiritual conflict is inevitable in this world as we daily, in the power of the Holy Spirit
 - Die to self and live to Christ's interests and purpose

What does it mean to you to take up your Cross? Discuss

- Resist compromising our witness in order to avoid conflict with others

In what ways is it possible to deny Christ – as individuals and as the Church? Discuss

**How does this denial of Christ affect - the individual emotionally, physically, spiritually ?
- the functioning of the Church? Discuss**

IN CLOSING

The Church today is built on the unbreakable loyalty to Christ of those who remained steadfast in the face of trials, temptations and persecutions. There is no policy for safety in the Christian life. Today those who let go self will experience the adventure of freedom from their old life and experience the freedom of finding a new and exciting life in Christ.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
you tell us not to be afraid, challenge us to abandon ourselves,
and encourage us to risk the sacrifice of following you,
that we may find the abundant life you promise;
for you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Blessed Trinity,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen