

Home Group notes for the week following 3rd September 2017

DISCIPLESHIP: Following Jesus

AS WE GATHER

In chapter 16 of his Gospel, Matthew identifies 4 levels of faith in Christ, and their resulting behaviours / consequences –

- No faith (verses 1-4) - as demonstrated by the religious leaders when they tempted Jesus to prove He was the Christ
- Little faith (verses 5-12) - when the disciples misunderstood Jesus' words as they interpreted them literally instead of spiritually
- Saving faith (verses 13-20) - as confessing Jesus as the Christ is the basis of salvation
- Serving faith (verses 21-28) - when believers follow Jesus Christ, Son of the living God in total obedience and commitment.

These levels of faith are still present in society - and may be found in every local church today.

**READING SCRIPTURE Exodus 3:1-15 Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26 + 45 Romans 12:9-21
Matthew 16:21-28**

THINKING TOGETHER

After Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah (Matthew 16:16), Jesus began to be explicit concerning what lay ahead of Him as He tried to prepare the disciples, and make it clear that for Him this was the only choice (Matthew 16:21). To Peter (in fact to all the disciples) this was a horrific concept and incredible that the Jewish understanding of a Messiah of power, glory and conquest was wrong (v22)

**Why did Jesus respond to Peter by calling him Satan (the Adversary)? Discuss
(Matthew 16:23 Matthew 4:6 Luke 4:13)**

The basic difference between Peter and Satan was that Peter spoke in protective love and incredulity as a follower of Jesus. Often our most difficult temptations come from those who care closest to us, love us and want to protect us

Have you ever been given advice that seems right, but in your heart you know it is wrong for you? Discuss

Satan – and those who wish us ill – try to get us to leave God out of the picture (Exodus 3:1-15)

Do you agree with this statement? Discuss

Jesus, again expressed very clearly to His disciples (Matthew 16:24-26) what they had heard Him say many times before (Matthew 10:37-39 Luke 14:25-27 + 17:33 John 12:23-25).

The challenge of the Christian life requires the believer to –

- Deny self - dethrone self and enthrone God

**What does it mean to deny oneself? Discuss
(Romans 12:1-2 Philippians 3:7-9 Galatians 2:20)**

What has this entailed for you? Discuss

- Take up his or her cross - live a sacrificial life of service

What does it mean to take up your cross? Discuss
(Philippians 3:10-11 Romans 12:9-21)

What has this entailed for you? Discuss

- Follow Jesus - give Jesus (perfect) total and constant obedience in thought, word and deed (Psalm 105:1-7, 43 + 45)

What does it entail for you to pledge / commit your entire existence to the service of Christ? Discuss

What are the earthly / immediate rewards of becoming a “living sacrifice”? Discuss

What are the future rewards promised for / to all believers? Discuss

IN CLOSING

In a world in which values, morals and laws are constantly changing, we can find stability in an unchanging God (Hebrews 13:7-9).

Jesus presented His disciples with two approaches to life, just as He does to every believer (member of His Church) today. The cross was not the end. After the cross came the resurrection – the beginning: the release of the power of God’s kingdom into the world through the Church.

PRAYER

Holy God, in love you gave your only-begotten Son to save the world.
Empower us to follow the example of His obedience so that we will
take up our cross and follow Him. Amen