



Faith & Life Discovery Journal

God Really is With Us

monday

12/08

Have you ever tried to have a conversation with someone who was physically with you but who wasn't "really there." The conversation was one-sided because their mind and heart were somewhere else. We tell couples they need to "be-there" when talking with their mate so the other knows they are interested in what they have to say. This week we encounter Christ our Emmanuel. God sent his Son to be with us until we could be with him in eternity. God really is with us in the person of Christ. He is our ever-present help in time of need. He will never bail ship when the going gets rough. He is as near to us at any moment as he will ever be. But we have to cultivate that nearness to keep our awareness of it and experiences with it active and alive.

Read John 15:1-8

Not only is God with us, but he longs for deep connection with us. He uses an interesting image to describe the connectedness he longs for with us. What happens when we live like Jesus isn't really with us or available to us?

In verse 4 Jesus says, "Remain in me and I will remain in you." What does it mean to remain in him? Why would Jesus need to instruct us to remain in him? In what ways are we tempted to wander from his presence? How does sin keep us from God?

Is there anything in your life God needs to prune away in order for your dependence on and connection to Christ to grow?

Pray that God will deepen your awareness of his presence in your life.



Faith & Life Discovery Journal

So You Think You're a Wise-guy/gal?

tuesday

12/09

Wisdom seems in short-supply today. People make decisions based not on what is wise and prudent, but based on what makes them feel good or has the most potential for excitement. Believe me, feel-good experiences, as long as they don't cause us to compromise our faith and values, are fine and a little excitement helps keep life interesting. But unwise decisions are the by-product of an unwise life. Throughout the Proverbs we read about the virtues of wisdom. Wisdom is personified as a female virtue (now guys I think a good case could be made for wisdom to be described in male terms, but hey they didn't ask me when they wrote the Bible). Genuine spiritual wisdom is accessed through a relationship with God. When Christ is alive in our hearts his wisdom is in continual supply assisting us in making God-honoring choices with our lives.

Read Proverbs 8 (don't worry it reads quickly)

How does what you read here go against the grain of the world's way of thinking? Anything surprise you as you read this passage?

In verse 14 wisdom speaks saying, "Counsel and sound judgment are mine..." What is sound judgment? How do we know the difference between sound/unsound choices?

In verse 35 wisdom says, "For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord." What do you think that means? What happens if we don't find wisdom?

Pray for wisdom: in your decisions & in your relationships!



Faith & Life Discovery Journal

A Little Light Goes a Long Way

wednesday

12/10

Light a small candle in a pitch dark room and it is amazing how that little candle sheds light on the entire room. The unknown shadows lurking in the darkness turn out to be tables and chairs, not monsters with the power to devour us. Jesus, our Messiah, came to bring the light of God into the world's darkness. The Bible says that when things come into the light the darkness, with its lies, is exposed and the truth is revealed.

Read Isaiah 60:1-5; 19-22

Verses 1 & 2 talk about the glory of God rising or appearing over the people of Israel. What do we mean by God's glory? Some places in Scripture describe God as an all-consuming fire. If that's another way of describing God's glory how would that change our understanding of what it means to be in the presence of his glory?

In what way(s) does the world seem to be covered/veiled in darkness today? Do you think people realize when they are living in darkness or does someone need to help them see it? What about you, are there dark places still needing to come into God's light?

The Bible talks about walking in the light of God. As easy and as wonderful as that sounds, why is it so difficult to stay on the lighted path and so easy to wander off?

Today: Ask God to reveal areas of darkness in your life not yet in his light.



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Pinkie Power

thursday

12/11

For most of us, our pinkie finger's impact on life is little realized. We don't use it for much. Some people extend it when trying to act fancy at a meal. It is very useful if you are speaking sign language to a deaf friend or family member. But other than that we probably never consider its importance. Recently a college football player had his amputated following an injury and he is beginning to notice all the ways it was helpful. Like when getting change at the store it is the plug that closes a clenched palm. It really does help us get a better grip on the things we're holding. This got me thinking, "Does God have a pinkie finger?" I don't know if he does, but if he does there is more power in that pinkie finger than any of us have in our entire bodies. Our God is a God of infinite power and might. Nothing is bigger or stronger or more able than our God.

Read Psalm 136

This passage re-tells the history of God's activity in the life of the nation of Israel. How is God's power revealed in this passage?

Why do you think the phrase, "His love endures forever," is repeated throughout this passage? Why is that important to remember?

Recall the mighty acts of God in your life. What has he saved you from? When has his protection surrounded you? How have you experienced his love and tender mercy? Where do you see him at work now?

Write your own "Psalm 136" as a prayer of thanks to God!



Faith & Life Discovery Journal

New Branch on an Old Tree

friday

12/12

The trees in the yard at the church parsonage just got trimmed/shaped this fall. I gotta tell you we can't believe how good they look and how that has assisted in keeping lots of debris from falling into the yard. But you know what, as long as those trees are vibrant and alive new branches will keep growing and old ones will keep needing to be trimmed off. In the passage we're reading today, Jesus' arrival on planet earth was prophesied many years before he actually came to earth as savior of the world. Today's passage describes the Messiah (Jesus) as a branch in the line of Jesse (Jesse was David's father and Jesus was a direct descendant of King David). Jesus was a new branch on an old tree and his life has never stopped bearing fruit for God's Kingdom.

Read Isaiah 11

How does this passage's description of the Messiah sound like what we know about Jesus from reading the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John)?

Verses 6-9 paint a picture of a peaceful world where even wild animals get along. The Bible says we should pray for peace. What gets in the way of peace between people? Why do we let our differences matter so much?

Verse 10 gives us the picture of people flocking to the Messiah. The indication is that in his presence is rest and peace. How has God been a place of refuge and rest to you? In what ways do you need to experience the peace and rest of God in your life now?

Take some time to pray today!