

Marks

of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

August 6, 2023

Day 1: I Corinthians 15:1-2

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

“Being saved” does not imply a process even though the words seem to point in that direction. It means that salvation is complete when we are with God in eternity. We can experience that salvation now because we have accepted God’s love and feel forgiven. We do not earn our salvation, we just do not completely experience it until we are with God. Holding firm to the message allows us to feel that salvation, but if we don’t hold firm we doubt and wonder if it was just a dream.

Question: What was good about the news?

Challenge: How would you explain this concept of knowing you are saved but not having it completely yet?

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-20

Day 2: I Corinthians 15:3-5

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Cephas is Peter. We have here the oldest written statement of the Resurrection, because all of Paul’s writings pre-date the Gospels. The account of the Resurrection was known because those who witnessed and experienced it were compelled by the experience to witness to others. People today wonder how a person can believe something as incredible as the Resurrection based on someone saying they saw something 2,000 years ago. This mystery becomes real as we believe with our whole being that Jesus is Lord. What we experience is new life and forgiveness. The new life is the experience of being connected to God. As we experience this new life we actually know what the first disciples knew on Easter morning - Christ is alive.

Question: Where did Paul “receive” this information about the Resurrection?

Challenge: Find the differences in the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection and Paul’s.

Scripture: Mark 16:1-17

Day 3: I Corinthians 15:6

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

In Acts the church has its formal beginning at the day of Pentecost. However, there were believers in other parts of Judea before Pentecost. This appearance to the 500 took place in the Galilee region (which is about 60 miles north of Jerusalem). There were believers in various villages where Jesus and the Disciples preached. People who had heard Jesus preach and became followers did not necessarily leave their villages. Many stayed home and worked their farms. We have the Biblical accounts of the 12 and about 20 others who did go about the regions around Jerusalem. The church also spread through the witnessing of many others who did not leave home. As in the 1st century, today most people come to Christ through the witness of another Christian, not by coming to hear a speaker.

Question: Why do you think that Jesus only appeared to the five hundred? Why not everybody?

Challenge: Look about you this week and see where you find signs of the Resurrection.

Scripture: Luke 24:1-11

Day 4: I Corinthians 15:7

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

James was Jesus’ brother and he became the leader in the Jerusalem church after Peter. He was martyred for his faith. Early in his public ministry Jesus was questioned as to who his family really was and he said it was all those who follow him. At the cross when Jesus told John that Mary was now his mother and told Mary that John was now her son, Jesus was merging his spiritual family (the followers) with his earthly family.

Question: What happened to the rest of Jesus’ family?

Challenge: Do some research to see how James died.

Scripture: Acts 11:27-12:7

Day 5: I Corinthians 15:8-9

Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Paul, like the other disciples, witnessed the Resurrection by having a vision of Jesus while on the road to Damascus. Paul always felt he was unworthy because he persecuted the church in the years before he came to faith. Even though Paul felt “unfit” he still knew that God had called him to be an apostle (a witness to) of Jesus’ Resurrection. Paul’s statement of unfitness was a statement of humility. He never once believed his call was less than any of the 12.

Question: Do you think Paul, because he was last to see Jesus, is the least of the disciples?

Challenge: Paul, as Saul, did persecute the church - read Acts and see why.

Scripture: Acts 8, Galatians 1:13-16

Day 6: I Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Paul knows it was the love of God that reached down to pull him out of his sin. He knows that his life (as it was going) was not leading him to God but just the opposite. He knows that the law, though of God, would not bring the Jews back from feeling exiled from God. It is God’s action that brings us to a place where we know our life has become unmanageable and that we are powerless to change. We then come to believe that God does have the power to change us. We then make the move of responding to God’s action by accepting and turning our will over to God in Christ Jesus.

Question: What is grace - a meal prayer or what?

Challenge: Think back to the time when you first believed that you needed God’s forgiveness.

Scripture: John 1:12-20, 3:16-17