

May 13,2020

Dear Sunday School Class,

What an example the Apostle Peter is for us! This week he was the focus of the lessons, and the Scripture was Matthew 16, where he declared Jesus to be the Son of God, and Luke 22 where he denied Jesus three times during the crisis of the trial and condemnation of Jesus. What a flip-flop he did when things got difficult. Don't we find ourselves in his story?

The chapter was titled "You Surrender" and the opening question for us was who in our lives asks us the tough questions, and holds us accountable to evaluate who we are, and where we are going in our faith walk. It could be a spouse, a friend, or a mentor, but we all need someone with the courage to put us on the spot when we need it. Not that we like being confronted with our choices and motives for making ourselves number one, but God intends for us to mature, and when we constantly excuse our selfish actions, and act as we please, we don't grow in Christ, so we need to be held accountable.

The next question the lesson asked was , "If you had eight floors of elevator conversation with a stranger who asked you, 'Why do you believe in Jesus,' what would you say?" The point was that how we talk and act reveals our life of faith way more than anything we might say. A surrendered life speaks louder!

Then the question was "In what ways is it obvious you follow Jesus?" And "In what ways do you hide your commitment to Him?" Ouch! We can find ourselves being sure we don't offend people who are important to us by hiding our faith, and never mentioning it. We are obsessed with being well thought of, even loved, and it is so difficult to say or do something that points to our faith when we fear man's rejection or anger. But the truth is that the Scripture tells us the world is looking for a Savior, and "the fields are white unto harvest." If we will just be willing to share Jesus with others we will often find them receptive to God's love. How sad that we withhold the truth out of self-love. Peter was so willing to proclaim Jesus as Lord in the safety of the disciples and believers, but when Jesus was arrested and Peter was accused of being one of His followers, Peter couldn't stand the pressure and adamantly denied knowing Him. Later Peter would repent and have a wonderful conversation with the risen Christ avowing his love for Jesus when Jesus asked him, "Peter lovest thou me?" and Peter was able to promise that he did love Jesus. Thankfully, Jesus extends grace to us just as He did to Peter, and when we deny Him in our lives, we always have the chance to repent and return to Jesus for forgiveness and restoration, IF WE JUST WILL!

The lesson talked about our "self-prescribed legitimate fears" about living our faith. We can come up with all kinds of excuses for denying Jesus as we avoid being the witness we should be. We are great at justifying our denials. Then we wonder why God's grace doesn't seem evident in our lives. We should always remember that He gives us a choice in how we speak and act. He will never override our decisions, and make us behave in faithfulness to Him. It is a moment by moment walk with Him, and although the Holy Spirit is always there to guide us, we have to yield to Him. It certainly isn't always easy, but it is possible!

You will all get this by Friday, and we are extending an invitation to those who would like to join us to fast and pray on Friday. We need to pray for rain for our dry land, for physical healing for those among us who are ill, and for our church body to stay strong in the Lord, that we may be a real witness to our community and the world to the love and grace of Jesus.

Blessings,

Judy and Stephen