



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

Week 43, Day 1 --- Mark 9 - Luke 9:28-62 - Matthew 17

Week 43, Day 2 --- Matthew 18

Week 43, Day 3 --- John 7-8

Week 43, Day 4 --- John 9:1-10:21

Week 43, Day 5 --- John 10:22-42 - Luke 10-11

Week 43, Day 6 --- Luke 12-13

Week 43, Day 7 --- Luke 14-15

Week 43, Day 1 --- Mark 9 - Luke 9:28-62 - Matthew 17

Which version of these stories did you most enjoy reading? The transfiguration is an interesting story. It is clear that Jesus is looking toward His death on the cross. One explanation for the transfiguration is that Jesus was in need of reassurance that He was doing the right thing. The other explanation is that Moses and Elijah are witnesses to the divine nature of Jesus and that they come to reassure the disciples and us. Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the prophets from the Old Testament.

One of my favorite verses is at the end of this dialogue from Mark 9.

<sup>21</sup>Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. <sup>22</sup>"It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." <sup>23</sup>"If you can't?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." <sup>24</sup>Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

I think this boy's father is just like us. We want God to do things for us. Sometimes our unbelief comes from our doubts about whether or not God is willing to do something. At other times our unbelief comes from our doubts about whether or not God is able to do something. Regardless of the reason for our doubt we are often crying out to God with both confidence and doubt. I do not believe that our faith will ever be perfect in this life. We will always doubt because we will never fully understand God. Fortunately, Jesus is not limited by our lack of faith. He sees the boy's need and He heals him.

TITLE: How To Translate "believe"

AUTHOR: Rev. Robert L. Moss; First Church Of God; St. Joseph, Michigan

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ILLUSTRATION:

When missionary John Paton went to live in a remote corner of Africa, he taught the native villagers the Christian faith. John Paton was the first person to teach the villagers about Jesus Christ. As his work progressed, he baptized some new converts and started a church. Then he began the difficult, exhausting task of translating the Bible into their own language. With the Bible translated into their own language the people could read and study the Bible.

As John Paton carefully and painstakingly translated the Bible, he realized that they had no word in their language for the word “believe.” This presented quite a problem. “Believe” is an important word in our Bibles, appearing more than 200 times in the New Testament alone. Paton was stuck. How could he translate the Bible for the people without the word “believe?”

One day, as he was grappling with this dilemma, one of the villagers came in for a visit. The native villager was exhausted from a hard day's work in the hot sun. He sat down and leaned back in the chair. In his native language the villager said how wonderful it is when you are tired to “lean your whole weight on something.” It was as if lightning had struck. That was the image Paton was searching for. “Lean your whole weight on something” was what it meant to believe. Now he could continue his work translating the Bible.

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(James W. Moore, When All Else Fails Read the Instructions. Dimensions for Living: 1993, p. 25.)

Week 43, Day 2 --- Matthew 18

Forgiveness is one of the core values of those who follow Jesus, at least it should be. The money amounts in the parable of the unforgiving servant may not make sense in your translation. The servant owed the equivalent of \$100,000. He owed more than a year's wages for a wealthy man. The man who owed him money owed him \$10. What should the servant have done when he realized that he had been forgiven his incredibly large debt? Do you think anyone in your life still owes you something? What should you do with that debt?

Week 43, Day 3 --- John 7-8

John 7 – Jesus Visit Jerusalem

It is true that the entire gospel of John is intended to reveal who Jesus is. This chapter begins a series of stories through which Jesus reveals Himself in a variety of ways. His words can be confusing at times, especially since we are not Jews with a deep understanding of the Old Testament and Jewish tradition. Feasts were major events in Jewish life. The Feast of Tabernacles was a celebration of the time that the Jews spent in the wilderness living in tents. This is the period of time described in Exodus to Deuteronomy. To celebrate God's provision for them during this time many of the Jewish people would go to Jerusalem and everyone there would live outside in tents during a week long party. There would be special sacrifices in the temple and much eating and drinking. I think Jesus waited because at this time He had a very large following. The only thing that would draw them away would be a feast in Jerusalem. So, after the crowd leaves Him and heads for Jerusalem He also goes to Jerusalem, but is able to arrive without the fanfare that would normally result.

However, when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem He doesn't hide out or join in the partying. Instead, He immediately goes to where most of the people gather and begins teaching in the temple courts. The rest of the chapter describes the continuous argument between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the religious police of their day. They ensured that everyone kept not only the law, but also the tradition associated with their religion. It is interesting that there is a group just like this within Islam in Saudi Arabia and they have the power to sentence people to death for violating Islamic law. The key accusation that the Pharisees had against Jesus was that He worked on the Sabbath. In this encounter

Jesus points out that even the Pharisees would work on the Sabbath to circumcise a male child if the eighth day came on the Sabbath. The Pharisees send soldiers to arrest Jesus, but they and the people are so amazed at His teaching that the soldiers return empty handed.

- What do you find most amazing about Jesus' teaching in this chapter?
- Where was Jesus born? Why is this so important?
- The Jews were celebrating and remembering their 40 years of wandering in the desert. Water is very hard to find in the desert and over and over God provided water for His people as they wandered. What does Jesus tell us He can provide?
- What would you have done if you had been one of the soldiers with orders to arrest Jesus?
- Is the picture of Jesus in your mind becoming clearer or fuzzier after reading this chapter?

#### John 8 – The Light of the World

Most of this chapter records a conversation between Jesus and various Jews in the temple courts, but it begins with a story that tells us much about Jesus. The Pharisees were the religious police of their day and they wanted more than anything to find something against Jesus so that they could have Him arrested. In this story they attempt to catch Him by presenting with a situation that has no acceptable resolution. They bring to Jesus a woman who has been caught in the act of adultery. How they caught her is an interesting question, as is why they didn't bring the man. They are right when they say that the Law says that she should be stoned to death. However, the Romans won't allow the Jews to do that. They have reserved the right of capital punishment for themselves. So, if Jesus tells them to stone her He will be guilty of breaking Roman law and the Romans can arrest Him, but if He lets her go, then He will be breaking God's Law and the Pharisees can arrest Him. Read the story and see how Jesus easily escapes this trap.

Jesus says that He is the Light of the world. This may not mean much to us, but it meant a lot to Jesus' Jewish audience. Light for them was a symbol for God and when Jesus makes this claim He is claiming to be God. That is why when Jesus describes His relationship with His Father the Pharisees know exactly who He is talking about and it makes them very angry. It is very common for Jesus to have these kinds of conversations with the Pharisees and you can see in verse 30 that many people believe in Him as a result. The Pharisees were not popular with the people, so this is understandable.

In the rest of the chapter Jesus does something that is hard to understand. Our expectation is that He would say easy things that would attract many people to believe in Him and follow Him, but again He says some things that seem to chase people away. The Jews are a very proud people and they will not acknowledge that they are in bondage to the Romans. When Jesus tells them that the truth will set them free they immediately respond that they have never been slaves as a people, and this is a lie. They were slaves in Egypt (see Exodus 1). What follows is a typical conversation with Jesus. He is speaking about spiritual things and the people are all thinking about physical things. They are Jews and this means that they are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are the people that were

promised to Abraham back in Genesis (read Genesis chapters 12-15 for background on God's promise to Abraham). However, Jesus tells them that spiritually they are sons of the devil and He gives us a really good description of who the devil is.

In John 8:58 Jesus makes a statement that doesn't seem like it should stir up such strong emotions. When He says these two words the Jews who once wanted to follow Him immediately pick up rocks and want to stone Him to death. He says, "I AM". To them this was as clear as if Jesus had said, "I am God" (see Exodus 3 for the background on why this was so important).

Here are a few questions to think about as you read through this chapter.

- How would you feel if you were the woman caught in adultery?
- Where is Jesus going and why is that so important?
- What is the truth that Jesus wants you to know that will set you free?

Week 43, Day 4 --- John 9:1-10:21

#### John 9 – The Man Born Blind

This is one of my favorite stories in the gospel of John. The cast of characters includes most of the types of people in the religious world.

- Blind Man – This man was born blind and even today we know that someone born blind cannot ever see. Even if the physical problem in the eyes is fixed the brain will not have developed the ability to respond to the signals from the optic nerve. However, it is not this man's blindness, but his simple faith and courage that make him one of my favorite characters in the Bible.
- Disciples – These are followers of Jesus. They believe He is the Son of God and have given up everything to follow Him, but they don't understand what He is teaching. They are still struggling make what Jesus says fit with what they were taught by the religious leaders of their day.
- Jesus – God's Son who is fully God and fully man. He is all of God's goodness and love in human form so that we can see who God is and what God does.
- Neighbors – These are just ordinary people and their response to the miracle is typical of what we see in our world today. They all knew the man and saw that he could see again. Some believed and some were so convinced that a miracle couldn't happen that they convinced themselves that it was a different man.
- Pharisees – These are the religious leaders. They are so concerned that their tradition has been violated that they are ready to punish the blind man. They are convinced that Jesus is evil because He uses His power to heal on the Sabbath, the day when no work is to be done.
- Parents – They love their son and are glad he has been healed. Unfortunately, they are more afraid they will lose their position in the community than they are glad for their son.

Read through this story several times. Try to put yourself in the place of each of these characters and ask yourself these questions.

- What do they see and hear?
- What do they do based on what they have seen and heard?
- Why do they respond this way?
- Who do you most identify with in this story?

### John 10 – The Good Shepherd

In John 10 Jesus introduces Himself as the good shepherd. Sheep are incredibly dumb animals and their primary characteristic is that they are followers. They must be led or contained. If they aren't they will get into dangerous situations and where one of the sheep leads the others will follow. They are also very useful animals. They produce wool which is useful for clothing and they also provide meat. Sheep are also dirty and smelly, so the job of a shepherd was not one of the higher positions in Jewish society in spite of sheep being so valuable. Most shepherds did not own the sheep they watched. Someone else owned the flock and the shepherds just watched. Whenever a predator came, whether human or animal, the shepherd would run away to save his own life.

- Why does Jesus compare us to sheep?
- What makes Jesus a good shepherd?

Week 43, Day 5 --- John 10:22-42 - Luke 10-11

Luke 10:27 He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

This is called the great commandment and it is the most important part of today's reading. This is what should guide every follower of Jesus every moment of every day. I think it is important to understand what the word love means in this verse if you are to understand what Jesus is acknowledging. This word love does not involve feeling. Love is a decision of the will that is made to take action in the best interest of someone else. Let me try to paraphrase.

The man answered, "Every decision of your will that comes from your heart, every expression of your unique personality, every action you take with your body, and every thought you have should be in God's best interest and should benefit Him. And, just as you always look out for your own best interest you should look out for the best interest of everyone around you."

This is an excellent verse to memorize. This is not a new commandment. God first gave it to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6:5. What did Jesus add? Why do you think He added what He did?

Week 43, Day 6 --- Luke 12-13

If you wanted to be really popular what would you tell people? Jesus was popular, but that wasn't His focus or desire. His desire was for people to turn toward God. His message is hard to hear. You may have experienced the division that Jesus talks about. Some people hear the message and turn toward

God. Others, like the Pharisees, hear the message and turn away from God. What do you hear Jesus saying in these chapters? What does Jesus say that doesn't make sense to you?

Week 43, Day 7 --- Luke 14-15

Today's reading includes one of the best chapters in the New Testament. It also includes one of the most difficult to understand.

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Luke 15:31 " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. "But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

Look at these two verses. The first one sounds like Jesus is trying to scare people away. The second one clearly communicates that God desires everyone to be with Him. How do we make sense of this? In the parable of the prodigal son Jesus clearly communicates God's love for those who have rejected God. They have experienced hardship and rejection. They feel totally hopeless and lost. When they come to God He is ready and willing to welcome them.

When Jesus talks about the cost of following Him He exaggerates to make a point. Many people want to follow Jesus and continue to live the same life they lived before. Jesus makes it very clear that this is not possible. Following Him means going a different direction and being willing to cut all attachment with your previous life. This is actually what the prodigal son demonstrates.

Think about it. How hard would it have been to turn to following Jesus when your life was going well? What would it have cost you to begin following Jesus before you were arrested? At the same time, how grateful are you that God is ready to welcome you as a son?