

DAY ONE

Personal Reflection time:

Read John 13:1-17

A few years ago, I was having a conversation with another youth pastor. We were talking about a student and how we could better reach this student. The youth pastor had a conversation with the student about being humble. The student replied, "I am the most humble student here." Think about that phrase again... "I am the most humble student here." Hopefully you caught on to the irony. If you claim to be the most humble, then chances are you're missing the point and pride has set in. The student had a misconception of humility and it was clear that pride ruled the student's life.

Humility is a difficult word to understand. It is contrary to our culture. If you appear to be humble or meek, the world walks all over you. Therefore it is hard for us to consider others better than ourselves and do things for them because pride often gets in the way. For some of you, it might be athletics, academics, or other places of achievement; you're proud, your good and you know it. You walk around with a little strut in your step knowing and believing you're better.

The thing I have noticed about various students is the fact of entitlement. Many students believe it is their right to play sports or their right to have a car or their right to have a boyfriend/girlfriend. This is a sense of pride and it is a sinfully wrong attitude that creeps in all our hearts and all our lives. Those things are opportunities not rights. It is vital in your life that you escape the attitude of pride and allow humility to become part of your daily life. It can be little things like opening a door for someone, helping someone pick up a mess, letting others eat before you. Or perhaps it's just seeing a need and helping out such as cleaning the church because the church janitor or your youth pastor could not get to it or helping your youth pastor set up for the youth program. Pride can set in when you begin to think you know more than the people around you. Maybe it's a teacher, youth pastor, or even a coach who is trying to teach you something. If you stop learning and listening you're not showing a humble spirit and you are allowing pride to run your life. There are so many things you can do to show Christ-like humility in your life.

"Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Matthew 5:3)

1. How was the experience this morning similar to what the Disciples experienced years ago?

2. What are some of your feelings about your experience this morning? What was hard about it?

3. What are some different ways that Jesus (in his life) demonstrated humility?

4. Why is humility important?

5. What are some areas in your life that you struggle with humility?

6. What are some ways you can show humility today? This week? At home?

DAY TWO

Faithfulness

When I was a senior in high school, our youth group decided to take a mission trip to Mexico. We worked hard doing fundraisers trying to earn enough money to go on our trip. A few weeks before we were expected to leave, our sponsors realized we were short a considerable amount of money and the trip was in jeopardy. There was not enough time to do more fundraisers so we were stuck. Our sponsors prayed and encouraged us to remain faithful. A week past and a generous individual gave us the amount of money that was needed to fund our trip. Looking back on it, that was a life changing experience. We all felt that God wanted us to go on the trip but at the time it was easy to doubt that we were going to be able to go. God provided what we needed, whether we reacted with doubt or with faith, God provided for us.

Open your Bibles to Hebrews 11.

This is one of my favorite chapters in all of scripture because it gives us a look at the elite followers of God. This chapter is often coined the Hall of Fame of Faith or the Hall of Faith because this chapter lists numerous individuals who lived lives full of faith. There are characteristics of each person in the chapter that we should aspire to be like. In verse 6 we are told the importance of faith: “without faith its impossible to please God.”

Today, I want us to focus on a man named Abraham whose full story is located in Genesis 12. Here, we are given three separate instances of Abraham living by faith.

Read Hebrews 11:8-10

Imagine you are well advanced in age-no not in your twenties, we are talking 75-80 years old. You have lived in one place your life and suddenly God comes knocking at your door and tells you need to leave this place. I am sure Abraham asked where he was going and God quickly responded I will let you know when you get there! Imagine packing up and moving but not knowing where you are going. Abraham was forced to make an important life decision without all the information. He relied on faith to get him where he was supposed to go--Faith is obeying even when you don't understand.

Read 11:11,12

Part of the promise God made with Abraham was that his descendents would be numerous as the stars in skies. The problem being he had no kids and was old -well you are smart enough to figure out the problem-biological clock ticking away—no Viagra. or Cialis- you get the idea. How would Abraham and his wife have kids? Abraham lived by faith; believing even when he could not see!

Read 11:17-19

Abraham finally had a child. God came knocking at the door and said I need you to sacrifice your son on an altar. Here was the child that Abraham had longed for and had raised for sometime (16 years) and God asked for him to sacrifice him on the altar. Just as he was about to sacrifice his son, God stopped him and provided another sacrifice. Think about the faith it took for Abraham to put his son on an altar and nearly sacrifice him. Faith is giving even what you can't afford to give.

Perhaps God is calling you to do something that you don't understand or you can't see why or maybe you can't afford what God is asking of you. This is when you need to live by faith.

1. What about the story of Abraham stuck out to you?
2. Would you have been able to do the things God asked of Abraham? Why or why not?
3. What is God calling you to do that you need to live by faith?
4. Do you find it hard to believe in things you can't see?
5. What areas in your life do you need to have more faith?

DAY THREE

When I turned 16 and I got my first car, one of the first warnings my dad told me was to watch your speed coming home at night. I listened for about a week or two. I had the advantage of growing up out in the country, away from town. This provided me with some nice long straight a ways where you could really get going fast without any fear of curves. One Friday night, I was driving home and guess what was flashing in my rearview mirror. My father had warned me but I did not listen to the warning. I thought I knew best.

Often times that is how we treat our Heavenly father. He gives us warnings or tells us what not to do but we go ahead and do it anyways.

Read Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-4,10

God came to Jonah and he ran the opposite way; complete disobedience. God was not done with Jonah and gave him a second chance and as a result of his obedience numerous people were saved from annihilation.

Sometimes in our lives, like Jonah, we deliberately run from God but at other times we are just slightly disobedient. Trevor Brown, a former Tri-State speaker said, "Partial obedience is complete disobedience." Meaning, if you are only obeying God partiall,-you're still being disobedient.

One of the biggest areas of disobedience I see from working with students is the concept of relationships. Students feel the need to be in relationships with the opposite sex. I am not going to get into the ins and outs of whether or not you should date or how old you should be when you date. However, there is one principal that always get overlooked and that is the issue of dating a person who does not believe the same thing as you. Time and time again, I see students being disobedient to God in this area and it gets them into trouble. Are you being obedient to God in this area of your life?

Evaluate your life. Are you being obedient in the following areas:

Forgiveness

Witnessing

The words you use

Sexual purity including oral sex, masturbation, lust, pornography

Abstaining from drugs and alcohol

Humility

Faithfulness

Kindness

1. In what areas do you struggle to be obedient to God?

2. Share a time when you were disobedient to God. What were the consequences?

3. Why is it hard to be obedient to God?

4. What are some things that can help you to be obedient?

DAY FOUR

In 1878 a Baptist minister and his wife gave birth to a son and named him Mordecai Ham. From a very early age, Mordecai felt an intense desire to preach. Probably because being a minister was in his family's blood. Mordecai became the 8th consecutive generational Baptist minister in the family. By the age of sixteen, he had become the Sunday School superintendent at his family church. After he finished school he was blessed with the opportunity to go to college and he began studying law. He finished school but was too young to take the bar exam in Kentucky so he took a job for a picture enlarging firm headquartered in Chicago. In February of 1899, Mordecai's grandfather passed away and it was at this time he decided to renew his call to preach. He quickly gave away his share of the business and dedicated himself to the service of God.

He delivered his first sermon in 1901 and soon began holding his first revivals. He had a very unique pattern of reaching the lost. Each town he entered he would ask and try to locate the town's "biggest" sinner and work at reaching him for Christ. Ham's ministry continued to grow and spread throughout the southeastern states. His ministry was not without adversity as two years after getting married his wife died. As his ministry gained popularity and his impact was becoming immeasurable, there were people who began persecuting him. It was not uncommon for him to show up at a church revival and have a small minority throwing rocks at him or pulling knives out and threatening him. Mordecai continued to hold revivals and began radio ministry which increased his popularity and the kingdom of God benefited greatly as a result of his service. When his ministry was all said and done over 300,000 people had officially given their life to Christ. Mordecai was an example of allowing God to use him in whatever capacity God had willed.

In the fall of 1934, in Charlotte, North Carolina, Mordecai held a revival and during that revival a young sixteen year old boy came forward to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. That boy went on to become the most famous evangelist in the 20th century-Billy Graham.

Mordecai did extreme things for God. Preaching, witnessing, doing whatever was needed for the cause of Christ. Because of his willingness, peoples' lives were forever changed as a result of his ministry and the ministry of Billy Graham. Together, they have reached millions of people for Christ. Think about that-millions!

Chances are your life has been challenged this week and you have decided to make some changes. I hope one change you will make is to be open with your faith; be more willing to allow God to use you to do extreme things. Maybe you will be the next Billy Graham or maybe you will be the next Mordecai Hamm and lead the next Billy Graham to Christ. Whatever it is, are you willing to be open and do whatever God wants?

Read Matthew 16:24

1. What does it mean to deny yourself?

2. What does it mean to take up your cross?

3. What are some things you can do to be more public with your faith?

4. What are some things that prevent you from being public with your faith? How can you overcome them?

5. Who is someone you know who has an extreme faith? How do you know?

6. What are some things that God wants you to do when you get home?