

Being Fruitful: Practicing Faithful Growth

Study/Reflection sheet for Week 3: Oct. 31, 2010

What You'll need: A Bible; A Copy of the book **Five Practices of Fruitful Living** (available at the Maritime Christian Book Room); A Pen; And 15 minutes a day!

What You'll need to do: Read these passages aloud. Take the time to look them up and place them into context. Then spend a minute or two reflecting on what you've read: write down your thoughts if you need to; ask questions of the text – or of yourself and current practice; then let these thoughts percolate through your mind or heart for the rest of the day.

Reflection Texts:

“Make to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.” (Ps. 25:4-5)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

“You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

“Let people learn and devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive.” (Titus 3:14)

Reflection Statement: *“Sanctification involves our growing in faith and how the Holy Spirit works within us to help us mature in Christ. Faith is not like a light switch, on or off. It is a growth process, as we step-by-step mature in grace intentionally following in the way of Jesus. By the grace of God, we pray that we are closer to God and further along in our following of Christ now than we were five years ago. And we pray that we will be closer to God and further along in our walk with Christ five years from now than we are today. Sanctification means our faith journey has direction, trajectory, purpose, a path. We desire to become more Christ-like. We grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.”* P. 71 (**Five Practices of Fruitful Living**; Robert Schnase)

For a disciple of Christ a life dedicated to learning – growing in faith – should be as natural as a vine growing from seed to maturity, yet many of us either never grow or live stunted lives when it comes to our faith development. Growth is a process – faith isn't meant to be static – but for us to live up to our created potential, we must be willing to grow, to become who we were created to be. Jesus spent His life teaching: how open are you to learning about God's grace?

Focus questions (Answer one a day or as time allows):

1. What do these verses teach us about faith development? Which verse is most significant to you—“speaks” most loudly to you? Why?
2. In your own words, how would you define or explain *faith development*? And how would you describe your faith journey – where are you? Are you moving? What would it take for you to become more *intentional* about practicing faithful growth?
3. Try to recall when you experienced the most growth in your faith – how did it feel? What did you do – did you attend a Bible study, read a study guide, attend a small group? Why (if it did) did your growth slow or stop?
4. The Old Testament – especially the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy – are full of references to how God's laws are to be taught to and learned by the People of Israel. Later, in the New Testament, Jesus came as a teacher (“Rabbi”) to teach the world about God's grace. If learning – growing in our knowledge of God – is intrinsic to our faith; how are you doing with both?
5. How did Jesus practice faith development with his followers? What can we learn from his example? What did the Acts 2 Church do? How can we – as individuals and as a community of faith – learn from their example?

Closing Prayer: *Gracious and Loving God, you desire us to pray, learn, grow and question so that we can grow in our knowledge of, and closer to, you: you even offer us gifts that make this growth possible. You call us to rouse ourselves from complacency – even at the risk of feeling awkward or being inconvenienced – so that we might embark on a journey of faith guided by your Holy Spirit and accompanied by your Son, Jesus Christ. And, as a community, may we come to know you together. By your grace, O God, let every step we take brings us one step closer to you. Amen*

If you have any questions that might have been raised by this study, please feel free to contact me – Rev. Geoff Ross – by phone at 892-2839 or by email at geoffrey.ross@pei.aibn.com.

Reminder: Each Wednesday there will be a Being Fruitful Brown-bag Lunch Discussion group in the Parlour from 12:00-1:00 – all are welcome!

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