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Women's Bible Study

Rev. Janelle Y. Greene, Minister to Women
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Tuesdays at 6:30 PM

December 5, 2017
Rev. Ronda C. Littleton-Johnson, Facilitator

Subject: He Exudes Truth (Chapter 9)

Scriptures: Psalm 33:4; Proverbs 19:8; John 8:31-32, Proverbs 22: 20-21, Proverbs 22:17-22 (The Message); John 16:13 (NIV)

Psalm 33:4

For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does.

John 8:31-32 (NLT)

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Proverbs 19:8 (NIV)

The one who gets wisdom loves life; the one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper.

Proverbs 22: 20-21 (NIV)

Have I not written thirty sayings for you, sayings of counsel and knowledge, teaching you to be honest and to speak the truth, so that you bring back truthful reports to those you serve?

Proverbs 22:17-22 (The Message)

Listen carefully to my wisdom; take to heart what I can teach you. You'll treasure its sweetness deep within; you'll give it bold expression in your speech. To make sure your foundation is trust in GOD, I'm laying it all out right now just for you. I'm giving you thirty sterling principles—tested guidelines to live by. Believe me—these are truths that work, and will keep you accountable to those who sent you.

Psalm 31:5

For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does.

John 16:13 (NIV)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Discussion:

DISTANCE, DISILLUSION AND DISCERNMENT

When we think about our relationship to God, or the lack there of, it seems that one of these three “D’s” is lurking just below the surface. Consequently, distance is usually the first the three that crops up and for various reasons we discover that there is a gap or chasm between us and God. Could it be that despite our efforts that our prayer time gets shorter and our reading time is relegated to 1 or 2 verses while we drink our morning beverage and our meditation time takes place while we are in the shower? Is it any wonder that we are so easily disillusioned? Nothing seems quite right or everything we say or do does not quite workout the way we thought? Then unexplained fear seems to creep in and surrounds us—jobs, family, health and personal relationships. Before we know it, there is a lack of discernment and the concentric circles are complete. It is not that God is not talking to us; it is more often that we are racing, trying to close the distance and overcompensate for allowing the disillusion to take hold in the first place. After all, we are Christians and we know better and yet, we can’t or don’t recognize God’s voice. Simply put, whatever the reason, the bottom line is that we need to know who God is for ourselves, despite the three “D’s. Perhaps then we will stop asking ourselves “how can I tell” whether it’s really God talking to me or not?

Shirer begins Chapter 9 with a bold statement “*When He Speaks, He speaks the Truth. He is the God of Truth*”¹ based on Psalm 31:3. This statement is truly at the crux of the foundation of our Christian beliefs. If it were not so, then we would have a really difficult time understanding of just who God is and how God does what He does. As I read this chapter, I was reminded of the words from one of my favorite childhood songs “Do you hear what I hear”. There are times when we think that we are listening so intently that we miss the very point of what we were trying to hear because as we listen (in that emotional state), our antennas are up, as we search for that one thing that would indicate whether or not what we are hearing is the truth. We believe that God speaks to us, but doubt what we are hearing. We get so caught up in our emotions that we often forget about our relationship with God. Each of us has our own distinct way of discerning what we think is the truth or will help us to find it. Sometimes we are right, but all too often, we are wrong. There will always be extenuating conditions that emits wrong signals and cloud our underlying need; however, when we were in right relationship with Christ, then we would know the truth. Reading the Word will enhance our ability to discern God’s voice. Just as we knew as children our mother’s call, so must we know our God’s voice, and the only way to do that “is to be consistent and remain constant in your study and meditation on the God’s Word”. (Pg. 128) In doing so, **Disillusion** disappears, **Distance** dissipates and **Discernment** demonstrable.

Every time we open the Scriptures, we witness God’s truth. Sometimes its relevancy may not jump right off the page at us or even resonate with our current situations. However, I contend, as does Priscilla Shirer, that when we do read, if we keep our hearts open and our minds focused on our relationship with God, we will be enlightened. Perhaps not in that instant but, in the future, it will be useful. That’s what makes reading the Word such an important part of our daily

¹ Shirer, Priscilla, *Discerning The Voice of God*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2012

lives. I agree with Shirer, “the more intimate we become with God and His Word, the more quickly we’ll be able to tell who’s really speaking.” (Pg. 129) It is our job to get to know God because God already knows us. We will not have discernment if we do not get to know God’s Word. Then the question becomes, “if we don’t know the Word, how can we know God as truth?” Shirer contends “So not only do we need to know the Scripture, because we can get to know God, but also because we can get to know His standard that He will never compromise His personal word to us.” (Pg. 133) We can NEVER substitute cultural norms or feelings for God’s Word. No matter the reason, God’s Word cannot be manipulated to suit our emotions. I think Shirer’s litmus test (Pg. 136) will help us navigate those troubling questions that crop up in our lives:

- Will it contradict the truth found in the scripture?
- Will it cause me to indulge in sin of any kind?
- Will it encourage me to hypocritically cover up my sin?
- Will it give glory to God by magnifying His truth to the people involved?

There are times when we can do all the right things, read, fast and meditate on the Word and still, something happens and we find ourselves inside one of those concentric circles. I believe this is because there is a hidden stronghold that we’ve not identified. Sometimes it may be something major, but very often it is something that we’ve dealt with and thought it resolved. These are the things that we least think of because we are, in all other aspects, “doing the work”. I find it interesting that some of our ideas and thought processes usually run counter to God’s truth. In all likelihood, these are things such as gossiping. We don’t call it gossiping because we are sharing information with “our friends”. I really am a forgiving person, but I just won’t ever forget what was done to me. I’m not a cynic, I’m just being real. We build up strong defenses based on our emotions so as to justify our sinful behavior. We create the distance that fosters disillusion and creates doubt that makes it more difficult for us to learn God’s voice.

I agree with Shirer as she contends that our spiritual strongholds can only be conquered with spiritual weapons—the Word of God (Pg. 138). Ephesians 6:11:12 (NIV) instruct us “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. It’s time to play a demolition derby—no more dipping in and out of the Word for occasional snacks of inspiration. We must demolish anything that keeps us being in right relationship with God.

I find that the words of Apostle Paul “nothing, is as wonderful as knowing Christ—not even hearing His voice and knowing His will is as precious,” brings new meaning to “getting to know” Christ. Remember, “The Bible is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions.” Finally, if nothing we remember nothing else, John 10:27, is there to remind us—“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me”.

Questions:

1. How you have been spending your time with God?

a. Have you been “voice hunting”?

OR

b. Have you been “God hunting”?

2. What’s your priority?

a. Knowing God’s purpose for your life?

b. Knowing God more intimately?

Homework

3. What could be your secret stronghold?

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|---------|
| • Fear | • Insecurity | • _____ |
| • Anger | • Pride | • _____ |
| • Jealousy | • Doubt | • _____ |
| • Unforgiveness | • Low self-esteem | • _____ |
| • Cynicism | • Tell-all (gossiping) | |

a. How do you plan to demolish it?
