

Introduction

Two campers go out into the wilderness for a period of forty days, right at the close of fall and the beginning of winter. One goes with all the equipment he'll need to survive the elements and live well – adequate clothing, shelter, cooking utensils, fire... The second man just goes without much thought to equipment that would suit him well or resources to preserve his life and give him strength. The first man searches the entire first day to make camp where there's plenty of life sustaining water and food source. The second man doesn't give much thought to that either. He just picks the first spot he likes, never mind water, shelter, or food. He decides to enjoy one of the last days of that Indian summer. Finally, the forty days move on to the second, third, and fourth to the end...

Questions to Consider...

Take a moment and discuss the spiritual truth for us to discover in this story? Spiritually speaking how does this describe our lives on earth? Spiritually speaking how do we become one or the other campers in this story?

Illustration:



A. Stay Connected to Christ. (Christ does not command but faith does demand these things...)

1. Through Public Worship

Hebrews 10:25 – “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

NOTE: Our worship at Faith is guided by 4 principles: 1. Let the Gospel Predominate 2. Let the People Participate 3. Let the Past Be Honored 4. Let the Best Gifts Be Used. We hold to these principles because they are in line with the Scriptures and help each of us to connect to Jesus all the more as we care for each other. We also are a liturgical Church (Follow the Church Year and Emphasize Word & Sacrament) because we recognize that this style of worship helps us follow the 4 principles of worship and emphasizes how the Spirit Works and God's grace is applied. Furthermore, our order of service: Confession & Absolution; Praise to God; Meditating on his Word; Confession of Faith; Offering; and Prayer form a wonderful practice for daily life and relating to one another.

Any idea on how the last elements listed (our order for worship) gives “practical” guidance for everyday life?

A/D How we worship is not commanded in Scripture, so we need not give much thought to what we do, as long as it feels right.

2. Through Personal Study

1 Timothy 4:16 - Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Ephesians 4:11-12 – It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

3. Through Prayer (Not a sacrament but a response to God's grace)

Ephesians 6:18 – Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

NOTE: Prayer is known as the heartbeat of a Christian's faith. Prayer is simply speaking to God as he invites us to in Jesus' name. There are many prayer tools out there to help us offer more well thought out prayers, but for this discussion we offer just a couple thoughts: 1) Prayer is something God invites us to do, so it's something we'll want to do – both planned and spontaneous. 2) Reading prayers or "from the heart" prayers which consist of true faith in Christ are the only acceptable prayers. 3) The Lord's prayer can be found in Matthew 6:9-13 or Luke 11:2-5 for a perfect prayer to ask which touches on all our needs. The acronym A.C.T.S. can also help remind us of an order to pray in – Adore, Confess, Thank, Supplication.

B. Protect Connection Part 1: (WARNING!!! AVOID ALL FALSE TEACHING!)

During his ministry, Jesus reserved his harshest words not for hardened criminals but for those who claimed to follow the Lord but didn't (Pharisees Matthew 23). What lesson can we learn from this?

1. Jesus does in fact want us to know all his teachings.

Matthew 28:19-20 ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Illustration: Wheel with Missing Spokes

2. All false teaching is damaging to faith. In addition, although not every false teaching will destroy faith, every false teaching has the potential to do so.

Galatians 5:7-9 ⁷ You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? ⁸ That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹ "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." (This all came about over what some might consider a minor teaching – Circumcision.)

Illustration: Food with or without Poison?

3. Therefore, test all spiritual teachers.

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (View next...)

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Illustration: Should Angels Speak Contrary... (Galatians 1:8)

NOTE*: It is impossible to detect all false teachers simply by outward appearances. Many are only detected by what they teach which may only subtly contradict the Scriptures. These are the wolves “in sheep’s clothing” Jesus referred to in Matthew 7:15.

4. To support False Teaching: By fellowship with (join with others in a religious purpose other than searching for the truth) or by ignoring/accepting the false teaching or sinful living of someone else is a sin against God.

2 John 10-11 “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him (context – support him). Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.”

2 Thessalonians 3:14 “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter (Concerning teaching on end times and Christian living), take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed...”

NOTE*: More than believing in Jesus is required for religious fellowship with others.

A/D Prayer is a great witnessing tool to use with someone of a different faith or a nonbeliever. When you pray with them they can learn about Jesus.

Evaluate: I decided to pray with my cousin once who offered a prayer up in Mary’s name, the mother of Jesus. I went ahead and continued praying with her because we’re both Christian.

5. We have the responsibility to point out false teaching to those who hold to it.

2 Thessalonians 3:15 “(See Above) Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

Titus 3:10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

NOTE*: We, therefore, generally speaking do not worship, pray, or do any other religious activity with those who are not united with us in Jesus’ teachings and are uninterested in that. We strive to resolve the doctrinal differences then join in fellowship out of love for God’s Word, our own souls, and theirs.

C. Protecting Your Connection Part 2. (WARNING!!! AVOID ALL WILLFUL SINNING)

1. Live as the children of God he has made us to be through Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral (fornication/any sexual activity outside of marriage), nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders... And that is what some of you were. But you were washed... in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

A/D As Christians we should shun and completely avoid alcoholics, homosexuals, and even those who cuss a lot...

A/D When guilty of sin, out of love for Christ's grace, we will look to amend our life quickly.

A/D We should not judge, so if someone is caught in a sin, we should let them be. Again, we're all sinners, so who am I to say anything to them?

Note: The Ministry of the Keys is what is referred to as the power Christ gave his people to judge others according to God's standard of holiness to those impenitent and his grace of forgiveness to those penitent (John 20:22-23; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 & 6:2), not our own standard of what we think is right or wrong. In that regard, we are not to judge (Mt 7:1). What we are ultimately speaking of here is the basic fundamental of the faith known as "repentance". Trust in Christ means we will turn - have the desire to turn - from our sins, especially willful ones.

2. Live according to the roles God has given us.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (All have equal status before God) - Equal

1 Timothy 2:11-14 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. – Different supporting roles (servant leaders and servant helpers.)

A/D Authoritative Leadership in the Church is quite different than Authoritative Leadership in the World. (See Mark 10:42-45...)

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

A/D There aren't to be women pastors in the Church.

T/F Since binding and loosing sins to someone according to God's command is authoritative in nature, God would have a male leader or male leaders (voting assembly) in the Church perform that over another male once the entire church has had an opportunity to speak to the issue.

Illustration: Ephesians 5 Husbands and Wives as Christ and the Church

A/D If every man was Christ to women and to their families, and if every woman was the Church to men and their families, there would be no problems with this teaching. In fact, the world would be a perfect place in regard to people's interaction with one another.

3. Live in the freedom Christ gave us.

Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

A/D Freedom means you can live any way that you choose.

NOTE: That means we do not allow anyone to force on us something that Christ has neither commanded nor forbidden (adiaphora), nor will we do that to someone else (Romans 14:6).

NOTE: Freedom is the ability to do what is right, when at one time we could not. (John 8:34-36).