

Questions for Sunday, February 23

Note to Leaders: Every group is unique and therefore if a question in the group is not helpful, feel free to move to the next one. Each group should spend some time going over the personal reflection section as well.

Personal Reflection:

1. As Jason talked about the impact of the sermon on the mount, which parts of Jesus' words are hardest to embrace, and why?
2. When is a time you have had to respond to someone or something differently by understanding Jesus does invite us to embrace the words of Matthew 5-7 as a way of life?

Personal Study:

1. Read Matthew 5:1-12
 - a. Thinking about verse 6, what is it that you typically hunger for?
 - i. Think deeper than food...what is it you desire in life?
 - b. Thinking about verses 10-12, they list the idea that followers of Jesus will be persecuted, why is that?
2. Read Philippians 4:8
 - a. What do you typically think about?
 - b. What might happen if you thought differently and thought on the things that Paul writes of?
 - c. What are the things that you are primarily thinking on, filling yourself with?
 - d. How might you go about thinking on the things that are what Paul is talking about versus what you are likely to find online or on television?
3. Read Matthew 4:1-11
 - a. Jesus went away and fasted from food and from people in the desert, what might be something you need to live 40 days without?
 - b. Have you practiced fasting of some kind? If so, why?
 - c. How might we think seriously about fasting something significant so that we can be able to live into the person described in the sermon on the mount?

Personal Application:

1. We live in a world that consumes so much (food, social media, television, "stuff in general"), what is it that maybe you need to consume less?
2. What if this week you committed to consuming more of the words of Jesus than anything else?
3. Begin each day this week by thinking on the things that Paul describes in Philippians 4:8

Personal Prayer:

Father, thank you for the invitation to know your love. This day will you help me to embrace the presence of your Holy Spirit in all things so that I look and live more like your son Jesus. Help me to think on the things that truly matter rather than on the things that distract me from a life of lived knowing God's love as the defining part of me. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Group Conversation

Group Reflection:

1. Why do we consume other things before we think about God?
2. When thinking on the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7), why do we resist this being the way Jesus calls us to live?
3. What would our connect group look like if it we focused on the words of Jesus and helping one another to live them out?

Group Study:

1. Read Matthew 5:6
 - a. What do you think it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness?
 - b. In what way might it be difficult to live this way?
 - c. What are the things that distract us from living this way, why?
2. Read Philippians 4:8
 - a. Describe the things that Paul is writing about?
 - b. Consider Paul's words and think about what it might look like in your life to put this advice into practice?

Group Application:

1. How do we help one another to hunger after the best things?
2. What are the things that sometimes keep us from thinking on the things that help shape us into better things?

Further Learning Opportunity:

- "In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership"; Henri Nouwen
- "Letters to Marc about Jesus: Living a Spiritual Life in a Material World"; Henri Nouwen

Serving Opportunity:

- What are some better ways our connect group can encourage one another/others to hunger toward the best things?

Personal Spiritual Practice:

- Fasting is not a practice most of us want to embrace. The idea of giving something up goes against our nature. However, what fasting teaches us is that we can change what we hunger for. Begin to fast a meal, or two, or even for a day. What you will find over time is that you don't "need" that meal, but you craved it. Fasting can help us change what we long for. Substitute prayer, silence, solitude, or Scripture reading during the meal time you fast.