

Group Discussion/Devotions – Jan 3, 2010

Group Application Questions

1. Take a look at priorities this New Year. Where does the incarnational life we have in Christ fit in? What is the biggest obstacle to growing in Word and Spirit (for now, let's look at obstacles to prayer life, devotions in the word, and stepping out where you feel God is calling you to go and/or grow)?

2. Review Luke 8:4-15. Which soil resonates the most with you? Perhaps you identify at times with more than one type of soil, sometimes producing fruits of the Spirit and sometimes dry and withering. What causes each? Complacency, fear, uncertainty or lack of motivation in the dry soil? Passion, closeness with God, strong devotional life in the soil that produces fruit? How can you make good habits turn into a LIFeStyle in Christ this year?

3. Is there something in particular that you feel is an obstacle to your spiritual formation that the Lord has laid on your heart to overcome – an addiction, lustful desire, emotional battle, negative thought, past guilt? If you know God wants to take you beyond this, when will you decide to go "all in" for Him? Maybe write a journal of thoughts and prayers on this in your devotional time.

Personal Devotional Exercises

A teacher brought a glass jar into the classroom. After taking out some golf balls and filling the jar to capacity, he then asked the class, is this jar full? The students of course said – yes! The teacher then took some small rocks and poured them in the jar between the spaces in the golf balls. He again asked if the jar was full, and of course the students smiled and said yes. Then the teacher took some sand and poured it into the jar, allowing it to fill the empty spaces completely. The same question met with the same answer. Certainly the students saw the jar as full now. Finally, the teacher took out a bottle of iced tea and poured it into the jar, soaking it in the sand.

After this demonstration, the teacher told the students, the golf balls are the most important things in your life – absolute priorities you can't be without. If you don't put them in first, they will never fit later. The rocks are perhaps not the same necessities, but still important for you. The sand represents things that are not necessities or priorities per se, but still bring you joy in life. After this, a student raised her hand and asked – what then does the iced tea represent. To that the teacher said, "no matter how busy life is, you always have enough time for a drink and a laugh with a friend."

Look at your life as you begin this New Year. What are the golf balls, those absolute priorities and necessities in your life? What are the rocks, those things still important to you? How about the sands of joy (for me this is some time on the bow of a boat!)?

Where does spiritual formation fit in? How does your actual time, talent, and treasures reflect your answers to the questions in this exercise?