

Shepherd's Guide for Week of 8-9-09

Different Beliefs Within The Same Faith Pt.2

Day 1:

Read Romans 14. Discuss as family/friends if there are any areas where you find yourselves despising someone else, simply on the grounds that they aren't doing what you feel led to do. Consider examples from both the present and the past. Discuss the issues that bring about these feelings in us...

I want to prepare you ahead of time that this week should be humbling for all of us. We all have a tendency to despise and judge and set our standards as the standards for others to live by. As a Father, it is beautiful for your children to see your transparency as you confess your sins. If your children and spouse do not hear you confessing your sins, they will miss out on the opportunity to see how God is working in your life. They need to see how great and mighty God is... not that "mommy and daddy never make mistakes"...

Pray together as a family that God would help us to be more patient with each other and others.

Day 2:

Read Romans 14:1-6. Discuss as a family what it means to be judgmental. Then ask the personal questions. Is there any area where, as I am abstaining and refraining from this thing that I feel led to abstain or refrain from, that I am judging those who have decided that they can faithfully partake of or take part in the same thing?

Remember, we are not talking about if someone has broken God's law, but those who have broken the standard that you have set for yourself because of your convictions... When the Jews were looking at the Gentiles and saying, "You dirty meat eaters need to be more like us Jews", Paul interceded and said, "Be careful, Jews, the Gentiles are being faithful, and honoring the Lord with thankful hearts in that which they are doing..."

Pray together that the Lord would give us the patience and humility to assess each situation and do our best to get others to fix their eyes on Jesus and His ways, not ourselves and our ways. Confess your sins and ask forgiveness for those times where you have been judgmental of someone who has a different belief than yours over a disputable matter.

Day 3:

Read Romans 14 AGAIN. In order for us to keep from judging and despising, we must be fully convinced as to what we believe. Are you fully convinced as to what you believe? Do you believe what you believe because you have a Biblical reason that you are standing upon? Discuss as a family the importance of not fighting over doctrine, but by no means abandoning doctrine. You do what you do because you believe what you believe. Hold your convictions **BOLDY yet **HUMBLY**.**

Pray that the Lord would help you to take seriously the call to be fully convinced as to what we believe. Ask the Lord to show you those things which you have an opinion about where your opinion is lacking the Biblical explanation. Confess your sins that are made evident by the reality that anything that does not proceed from faith is a sin. Pray that the Lord would help us to proceed in faith in everything that

we say, do, and think...the places we go...the conversations we have...the jokes we choose not to repeat... the way we spend our money... the people we hang out with... the people we choose not to hang out with... the shows that we watch OR choose not to watch... the music we listen to or DON'T listen to... etc, etc...

Day 4:

Read Romans 14:13-23. Consider those Christian liberties, those things that you can do faithfully because of the finished work of Christ in reconciling you to God. Now ask the question, "Am I willing to abandon this right and liberty, if it means the opportunity to pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding?"

Discuss Luther's statement: "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone."

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. Knowing that all things are lawful but not helpful, permissible but not beneficial, discuss those areas where you should be ready and willing to abandon your liberty, because it may not be beneficial to a weaker brother or sister. Discuss also how we will be affected in our actions if we truly care about the salvation of others!

Spend some time praying that God would give you a real sense of your obligation to bear with the failings of the weak. Pray that he would grow you to such a point in your walk that you could echo the words of Paul... "Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

Sometimes we are too busy saying, "It is impossible for me to please everyone in everything".... While Paul is saying, "At the very least, I will try to please everyone in everything... I care more about others than I care about my liberty..."

- 1.) Am I despising?**
- 2.) Am I judging?**
- 3.) Am I fully convinced as to what I believe?**
- 4.) Am I willing to abandon all Christian liberties for the sake of the weaker brother or sister; for the opportunity to pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding?**