

“Holding On To God’s Word”

Luke 8:11-15 * June 6, 2010

“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

I. What we said last week about ‘hearing’ God’s Word

II. “Retaining” God’s Word

A. What does the Greek word mean here?

B. Why do I need to learn how to “retain” God’s Word?

III. So how do I “retain” God’s Word in my heart?

First, make sure my heart is not like the soil of the path.

Matthew 13:19 – “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”

A. So the first thing that can steal God’s Word from my heart is if I fail to _____ it. Therefore, retaining God’s Word means I will learn the _____ and _____ related to following Christ.

B. To experience “rest” in my life, what must I do?

C. Can ignorance hurt me?

D. How are we at Grace addressing this concern?

E. What is the first truth we’ll be focusing on? Why?

F. What is the first thing we’re going to ask of participants in “The Journey”?

Second, make sure my heart is not like the rocky path.

A. The second thing that can steal God’s Word from my heart is if I fail to _____ God’s Word to the _____ living of my life. Therefore, retaining God’s Word means I will learn to grow in _____.

B. What is ‘perspective’?

C. How do we gain perspective?

D. Are ‘times of testing’ coming? And how will we get through them?

E. What is the second thing we’re asking of participants in the Journey?

Third, make sure my heart is not like the thorny soil.

A. A third thing that can steal God’s Word from my heart is not _____ God enough to put him _____ in my life. Therefore, retaining God’s Word means I will grow in my _____ that Jesus is my Lord.

B. What’s wrong with those who have thorny hearts?

C. What can inspire conviction in a person’s heart?
You must start spending _____ time with Jesus
_____ his word and talking to him in _____.

D. Why this?

E. What’s the third things we’re asking of participants in the Journey?

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“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

I. What we said last week about ‘hearing’ God’s Word

Just being exposed to God’s word has tremendous power to affect our lives. We talked about the way the average person a generation or two ago knew many of the Bible’s stories and teachings because they heard it talked about in public school, they heard it at home, they heard it in movies and on TV. And just that simple exposure to some of what the Bible says brought richness and stability to people and to society. Today, the hearing of God’s Word is being systematically silenced, people are not growing up with knowledge of Scripture, and that ignorance is hurting us. Morally speaking, people don’t know their right hand from their left, we said. Look around, and we see so many, they’re *inwardly confused* about why they exist, and how they should live. And consequently, their lives disintegrate into *outward chaos*.

II. “Retaining” God’s Word

A. What does the Greek word mean here?

To hold down fast; to seize.

B. Why do I need to learn how to “retain” God’s Word?

Because if we’re reading this parable correctly, there are things out there in this world and in life that are going to do their very best to steal God’s word from you.

III. So how do I “retain” God’s Word in my heart?

First, make sure my heart is not like the soil of the path.

Matthew 13:19 – “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.

This is the seed sown along the path.”

- A. So the first thing that can steal God’s Word from my heart is if I fail to **understand** it. Therefore, retaining God’s Word means I will learn the **knowledge** and **skills** related to following Christ.*

B. To experience “rest” in my life, what must I do?
“Learn” from Jesus. I must be taught.

C. Can ignorance hurt me?

Absolutely. My wife and I didn’t handle finances the way God says in his Word, and placed ourselves under a mountain of debt which took years of sacrifice to get out from under.

D. How are we at Grace addressing this concern?

We at Grace are launching a new ministry, called “The Journey” ministry, which provides specific and strategic teaching to anyone who desires it. 12 months of targeted teaching, learning, Bible reading, and study so that if you bring just a little commitment and discipline to the table, we’ll give you the knowledge and skill you need to grow in your faith, and get closer to God.

E. What is the first truth we’ll be focusing on? Why?

The first truths you must learn is: who is God? Because you’re not taking one step forward in this journey without him. If you think Christianity is all about just learning principles for better living, forget it. This isn’t Dr. Phil. Christianity is not about principles, it’s about a person. The person, the one who created you, the one who loves you, the one who longs to be in a relationship with you and walk beside you in your life, the one who saw you living in confusion and chaos and so came to rescue you from that hell, by dying for you on a bloody, Roman cross 2,000 years ago. He’ll give you those life-giving principles. But you can’t have the principles without the person. So the first thing we want to teach you is who is this God who made you and loves and died for you.

F. What is the first thing we’re going to ask of participants in “The Journey”?

That you work through a series of self-study books, called “Design For Discipleship” which are organized in such a way to teach you the basic, foundational truths and doctrines that any believer must learn to have a strong, spiritual life. Each book has four or five self-study lessons. Book 1 is all about the doctrine of God. It will teach you about a God who has revealed himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We ask that you work through just one lesson

a month. So in other words, you are going to spend the rest of the summer, for those of you who begin this now, learning about God. And that way you can learn to trust him, to love him, to walk with him. Everything else will flow out from this.

Second, make sure my heart is not like the rocky path.

A. The second thing that can steal God's Word from my heart is if I fail to connect God's Word to the everyday living of my life. Therefore, retaining God's Word means I will learn to grow in perspective.

B. What is 'perspective'?

We can pump you full of data and doctrines and facts and knowledge, but what good will all that do you in the end if you don't begin to allow these truths to really soak down deep into your life, so that it becomes your life, it becomes a part of you. And that's what perspective is. Perspective is wisdom that comes from applying knowledge to life. It's what happens when that knowledge goes past your brain and into your heart.

C. How do we gain perspective?

You acquire perspective by following Jesus day by day alongside of fellow-travelers. By sharing with others who are on the journey with you. Especially with others who are further down the road than you in their journey with Jesus. If you watched the show "Lost", one of the key truths taught by that show, was the truth of being in community. "We will either live together or die alone," was really at its heart what "Lost" was all about. We are lost without each other.

D. Are 'times of testing' coming? And how will we get through them?

Every child of God will face the time of testing. And not just once. Life itself is one test after another. This is not heaven, and so life will keep on reminding us that this life is not heaven. Your world will get rocked, and your faith will be pushed. What will save you in such moments? Only having acquired the proper perspective of suffering. You can know all the verses that tell us we will suffer.

But it's only after you've come through the crucible, the white hot furnace of suffering and come out on the other side that you experience a deepening of your faith and love for Jesus. The perspective starts to grow in you of how life is on this side of heaven is. But getting to this place is quickened by meeting someone on your journey who has gone through the crucible of suffering and has emerged on the other side more in love with Jesus than ever before, someone who has acquired that perspective, their example, their support will inspire you and encourage you to not let go of Jesus.

E. What is the second thing we're asking of participants in the Journey?

The second thing we are going to ask of those who join us in the Journey ministry, is that you will share the journey with a small group of fellow travelers. Find a small group of a half-dozen or so people and meet together once a month, have coffee, pull out your discipleship books and talk about what you are learning. Just talk. Share. And then leave time at the end of your meeting to share your lives with each other. What blessings are you experiencing? What hardships are you facing? And then pray for one another, commit each other into God's care. And as you do this, you will find yourself growing in perspective.

Third, make sure my heart is not like the thorny soil.

A. A third thing that can steal God's Word from my heart is not loving God enough to put him first in my life. Therefore, retaining God's Word means I will grow in my conviction that Jesus is my Lord.

B. What's wrong with those who have thorny hearts?

See, these people with thorny hearts are stuck on the fence. They can't decide if they should make Jesus #1 or the world around them #1. They're like that proverbial person whose got their feet in two boats.

C. What can inspire conviction in a person's heart?

You must start spending daily time with Jesus reading his word and talking to him in prayer.

D. Why this?

Because these are the disciplines that strengthen the relationship. You say, “But he’s invisible.” Yup. “And he’s silent, too.” “Well, audibly, he is. But he does speak. In the pages of the Bible first, and in the pages of your heart, second.” And see, once you begin to experience that, you’ll go, “Whoa. I just tugged on this rope, and someone tugged back.” John 14:21 – “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” And as you do this, over time, you will grow in you the awareness that God is real. And he will begin to speak to you things about the living of your day to day life. He will pour into you a strength you didn’t have before. Give you direction you didn’t have before. And as you realize that God is real, your conviction will grow, God will become #1 in your life, and the day will come when nothing, but nothing will be able to stand between you and your Savior. God will not only become your Lord, but the Lover or your soul. Your very best friend.

E. What’s the third things we’re asking of participants in the Journey?

You must begin to read God’s Word for yourself daily. For this is the conduit, the channel, the pathway for hearing God speak to you. It’s not enough to just do the self-study books, for you’re reading someone else’s thoughts and words. Now that’s important. They’ve organized God’s Word for you in such a way so you can learn the knowledge and doctrines necessary for you to grow. But you also need to directly connect with God’s thoughts and words for yourself. And you need to make it your goal to do this daily. And writing down in a notebook that things you sense that God is speaking to you.