

Small Group Session 2.1

Love, Joy, Peace



Isaiah's prophesied about Jesus that "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (53:2b). And yet many people were attracted to Jesus during His earthly ministry. If it was not His good looks, what was it? Some were drawn by His miracles. But many were drawn by something much deeper: the goodness and beauty of His character.



Let God Speak First

Take a moment to settle down and get comfortable. Close your eyes. If you are able, imagine that you are standing at the foot of the cross. Jesus has just died. All is calm, all is still. The atmosphere is heavy with the presence of God. As you gaze up at Jesus, ask the Father why He allowed Jesus to die like this. Then just listen.

Share anything that comes to mind during this with the others in your Triad.

Fruit of the Spirit

Our purpose in this second stage of Mathetes is to begin to develop a strong and clear vision of the Character of Jesus. Galatians 5:22 describes the fruit of the Spirit, which is supremely demonstrated in the Character of Jesus. Read Galatians 5:22 together. Over the next three small group#]

sessions we will look at how each of the nine facets of the fruit of the Spirit were found in the Character of Jesus.

Love, Joy, Peace

In *Renovation of the Heart* Dallas

Willard provides a useful guide to the first three facets of the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy and peace, he says, are primarily not feelings, though they often have feelings associated with them. They are fundamental aspects of character that emerge naturally from the "with God life", and they are inseparable from each other.

Willard's definition of Love is that it is essentially a "will-to-good" of the thing or person so loved (p98).

What is the difference between love and desire or lust?

Can you think of any instances where Jesus' actions or words demonstrate his "will-to-good" of the people He is with?

Read 1 John 3:16. Is this definition of love compatible with Willard's?

"Joy is a pervasive sense of well being. ... It is primarily a delight in an encompassing good" (p100).

What is the difference between joy and pleasure or happiness?

Jesus spoke about His joy on several occasions.

Read John 15:9-11. What is the connection between love and joy here?

Read John 17:13.

Why was Jesus joyful?

"Peace is the rest of will that results from assurance about how things will turn out" (p101). A person who is filled with peace is not striving for some outcome that he/she wants, or wants to

avoid. Peace comes from the total acceptance that we are not in charge of outcomes.

If we are not in charge of outcomes, then who is?

"The secret to this peace is being abandoned to God" (p102). Peace comes from the assurance that all shall be well because God is in charge of my life. "Our peace is in the greatness of God" (p102).

John 14:27 Why doesn't Jesus' give His peace as the world gives? Why should we not let our hearts be troubled and not be afraid?

Can you think of instances where Jesus demonstrated his inner peace through his words or actions?

Love, joy and peace are fundamental facets of Jesus' character. They pervade everything he does and says. As we progress on our discipleship journey with Him, we should find that they become increasingly fundamental to our character too.

Do you want love, joy and peace to become fundamental aspects of your character? Do you think that God can change you in this way?

Before you go ...

Don't forget to read through The Daily Disciple together and discuss the tasks.

Take a few moments to pray for each other. Check that you are all able to come to the next meeting.

The Daily Disciple

Holy Habits



In this second Stage of Mathetes, we will focus on developing the habit of memorizing long passages from the Bible. Why should we do this? Dallas Willard's comments as follows: "Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to

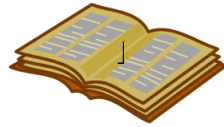
choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization" ("Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person" in Vocatio, Vol. 12, no. 2, Spring, 2001, p. 7).

The following is an extract from an article written by Willard entitled "Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation and the Restoration of the Soul" (Journal of Psychology and Theology, Spring 1998, Vol. 26, #1, pp. 101-109).¹

Scripture memorization is the final specific discipline we will mention here. It is, in fact, a subdivision of the discipline of study. Study as a spiritual discipline is, in general, the focussing of the mind upon God's works and words. In study our mind takes on the order in the object studied, and that order invariably forms the mind itself and thereby the soul and the life arising out of it. Thus the law of God kept before the mind brings the order of God into our mind and soul. The soul is "restored" as the law becomes the routine pattern of inward life and outward action. We are integrated into the movements of the eternal kingdom.

The primary freedom we have is always the choice of where we will place our minds. That freedom is enhanced by the practice of solitude, silence and fasting. We can then effectively fill our minds with the word of God, preserved in the scriptures. To that end memorization is vital. It is astonishing how little of the

Bible is known "by heart" by people who profess to honor it. If we do not know it how can it help us? It cannot. Memorization, by contrast, enables us to keep it constantly before our minds. And that makes it possible to consciously hold ourselves within the flow of God's life which is Torah and Logos.



There is no greater disciplinary verse in the entire Bible than Josh. 1:8 (mirrored and expanded in Psalm 1), and none more instructive on the restoration of the soul. There we read: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Memorization enables us to mumble and meditate, which enables us to do, which enables us to "have good success" (and He will define "success" for us) because we are walking in God's ways with an interior character like His.



We will start our habit of memorising scripture by learning Psalm 23. There are many good reasons for starting with Psalm 23, not least because it expresses our complete trust in the goodness and greatness of God. As we memorise these words, we will take into the depths of our being the fact that God provides for all our needs, that He restores our broken souls, that He guides and protects us, that **He is with us** and so there is nothing to fear, and that He gives us the resources we need for dealing with our enemies.

Here is the NIV translation of Psalm 23:

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
- 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

A good way to memorise long passages of scripture is to learn one or two verses a day making sure that you link them in your memory to the verses you have previously memorised. Each day begin by revising previously learned verses, then memorise the new verse(s), then recite all the verses of the passage you have learned from memory so far. Here is a suggested plan for you to try this week:

- Day 1: memorise verses 1 & 2;
- Day2: revise verses 1 & 2, memorise verse 3, recite 1, 2 and 3;
- Day 3: revise verses 2 & 3, memorise verse 4, recite 1 to 4.
- Day 4: revise verses 3 & 4, memorise verse 5, recite 1 to 5.
- Day 5: revise verses 4 & 5, memorise verse 6, recite 1 to 6.

Week 1	Week 2
Mark 11:20-33	Mark 13:32-14:11
Mark 12:1-17	Mark 14:12-31
Mark 12:18-34	Mark 14:32-52
Mark 12:35-44	Mark 14:53-72
Mark 13:1-31	Mark 15:1-20

¹ Available from <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?>