

A Deeper Journey



A Deeper Journey is designed for those who would like a guide that supports self-study and self-reflection related to a teaching topic.

Message Date: June 9, 2013 Message Title: *I Gotta Get Some Rest!*

We are continuing in our summer series today: ***Back to the Beach***. Today we are heading to Psalms. Take time to read Psalm chapter 23. Focus especially on looking closely at the first 3 verses. Record your observations and thoughts here:

Anyone stressed today? Our destination in this Back the Beach moment is a nice, quiet body of water – put on your sunscreen, get on your raft with a cup holder for your favorite beverage, put on a little jazz and chillax. My generation and those following have often become separated from our agricultural roots. For most of us and our kids, Grandma lives in a condo, not on a farm, eggs are found under the cheese at Price Cutter rather than under a hen in a chicken coop, and milk comes from a container in a fridge. Oh, they might know in theory that milk comes from a cow, but they have no idea how such a thing could actually happen. And, if they taste milk straight from a cow, they swear it's not "milk." We know even less about sheep, and we spend precious little time in green pastures and beside still waters. More time is spent on freeways than in green spaces, around water coolers than in cool waters, at the computer than in contemplation, picking up messages on BlackBerries than in picking blackberries.

Let's name our stress. What is it that stresses you out?

Life in general can be stress-filled. Life is full of disappointments, and I'm full of life. An Army chaplain had a sign on his door that said, "If you're going to scream every time a kid yells 'cannonball,' you're not coming with me anymore." The picture is of a couple sitting in lawn chairs with their backs to the local public swimming pool. We all have things that stress us out and cause anxiety. Much of it is related to past experiences that we have had. And, often, the biggest source of stress for a lot of people is.....people.

I want to tell you about a guy named Bram Stoker. He was a prominent theater manager during the Victorian era. Bram Stoker was a genuinely gentle man. His employees described him as one of the most kind and tenderhearted man. Everywhere he went, Bram Stoker drew that sort of reaction. He was a nice guy. As is often the case with nice fellows, he had a problem he never ever talked about...a family problem, one of those touchy things. Bram had married a woman named Florence Balcombe, one of the great beauties of her time. She was courted by everyone who was anyone...even Oscar Wilde, another Victorian big shot. But in the end, Florence wound up with Bram Stoker. Good old, easy going Bram. This marriage of theirs couldn't have looked better. The handsome young theater manager and his beautiful young wife were the hot couple of their time. Then came the birth of their only child Noel, and the fairy-tale quality of their romance seemed to continue. We don't know why this happened, but biographers tell us that after the birth of Noel, Florence lost her love for Bram. Affection between them stopped. Now, remember, this is good old, under-demanding, easy-going Bram. This is the Bram Stoker who was known for his honesty, the Bram Stoker who gave to his friends without asking in return. So you know why he would never demand affection from his wife...why he would not complain to her...or to anyone, for that matter. And that's why, from all outward appearances, Bram's marriage remained intact. But it was not intact. The truth would come out one day in a very sad way. And the latent hostility of a nice guy who felt himself finishing last...his submerged feelings...would surface too. Bram and Florence would continue to live their celebrated life. With friends like Walt Whitman and Mark Twain and Teddy Roosevelt, they could expect the paparazzi to always be there. But at night...At night, Bram

Stoker became someone else. For the problems he could not or would not work out at home, he sought to solve otherwise. Bram died, in his sixties, of syphilis. He left the world a shattered illusion of a one-time fairy-tale romance...and he also left a book. For Bram Stoker was an author too. Most of us didn't know much about his married life, but we did know the monster that grew out of his hurt, disappointment, and inability to deal with it. Dracula. The tenderhearted Bram Stoker exhumed that buried resentment in a book about it. The book was an allegorical autobiography featuring the character, Dracula. When we don't deal with our hurts, our hurts will deal with us.

Do you have past hurts or hang-ups that are festering deep inside? If so, link arms with a trusted friend and commit to begin addressing those hurts and hang-ups...starting today.

Change our focus, change our emotions. David starts out Psalm 23 with this line: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. (Psalm 23:1) "Yahweh" The word "Lord" in Hebrew is Yahweh. In English, we always put the word "the" in front of "Lord" so it is "The Lord." Like a title. In Hebrew, it simply reads, "Yahweh is my shepherd." So what? David is calling God by His personal name. You're in the hospital. I come and see you. "The Pastor came to see me" or "Phillip came to see me." Which one is more personal? I have to decide on which people to focus. People who hurt, or people who heal and help. David said, "I'm going to focus on God."

A guy like myself was watching his weight. His wife was kind of like mine – attractive, nice shape. One night he tip-toed into the kitchen, quietly opened the fridge door to sneak something to eat. He opened the door to find a picture of his wife in a bikini with this note: "Grab me instead." Change your focus.

Do you have some supports in your wife, a significant other or something/ someone who can help you change your focus? If so, list your supports and healthy focuses here:

Act your way into feeling. Re-read Psalm 23:2-3. Notice that David said that God "makes" him lie down. Did you know it is a sign of immaturity to refuse to get enough rest? So, both our parents and God sometimes have to make us lie down and rest. Sometimes we have to act even though we don't "feel it." It's a principle upon which Niese and I have built our marriage. We were smart enough to know that we wouldn't always feel in love so from the moment of our engagement, we promised that we'd work hard to act in love no matter how we felt. She's doing real good at that.

To snap out of your depression, the therapist told his patient, put enthusiasm into your daily activities. Get out of bed with enthusiasm. Go to work with enthusiasm. Do everything with enthusiasm. A week later the patient was back, more depressed than ever. The therapist asked him if he had followed his instructions. "That's the problem," the man replied, "I got out of bed with enthusiasm. And, I ate my breakfast with enthusiasm. I kissed my wife good-bye with enthusiasm. I was two hours late to work and got fired."

What can you DO that will help you act your way into feeling positive about your specific situation?

Get some rhythm. We are often frantic – so busy – going crazy in our day-to-day lives. We need "water of quietness." We have lost the rhythm of life – rhythm between activity and rest, work and play, action and reflection. In fact, in our culture, we're proud of not sleeping very much, "Yeah, I only slept 4 hours last night. Sleeping's a waste of time." That was said by Thomas Edison, and his light bulb has been keeping people up ever since.

Look at a glass of water. How heavy do you think the glass of water is? Bottom line: it doesn't matter how heavy it is – doesn't matter how much it weighs. What matters is how long I need to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, everything is fine. No problems. If I hold it for an hour, I will have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. It's the exact same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes. What I have to do is put the glass down, rest for a while before picking it up again. We've got good stuff going on in our lives, but even if it's good, you have to put it down. Work? Put it down. Whatever burdens you have, give it a break. Pick them up again after you've rested.

Take your attention away from the source of your stress and focus on God. See God putting you down for a nap. You are choosing to release your anger, bitterness. Lord, restore our souls.

Spend some time in prayer alone or with your small group focusing on asking God to restore you individually and as a group. Turn your attention toward the goodness of God and how He loves you and rest temporarily from the stress that you carry each day. When you pick it back up, you may be surprised that your focus is different enough that it doesn't weigh the same as when you put it down.

Lord, restore our souls. Let us find rest in You.

Prayer Focus

God, you are the restorer of souls. You bring LIFE and give LIFE abundantly. Teach us to put down our stress and purposefully refocus our attention on you. Teach us to release anger, bitterness, disappointment, and defeat, and teach us to refocus on the goodness of life that you set in front of us. Help us open our eyes to see what you are teaching us and how you are providing for us and leading us through this life on earth. Help us keep our emotions in perspective by keeping our eyes fixed on you. Teach us the rhythm of your grace and lead us into fruitful living. Help us to live this life to the fullest and rest to reflect on where we are heading. Thank you for who You are to us and the place that You hold in our lives. Give us perspective on all the rest. We love you, Lord, and in your name we pray. Amen.

Family Focus

Today, the children continued to focus on the characteristics that they are learning about Jesus and who He is. They discussed that He is full of love and truth today. They continued to study what it means to have a heart of service and a how they can reach out and pray for others and help others in need alongside their parents. The children's staff is so inspired to see the children growing in relationship with each other and growing closer to Christ. If you haven't had a chance to come up and check out what's going on, make plans to come up and visit soon. You don't want to miss out on this fun!

The boys won the coin war! Wahoo! All of the children worked incredibly hard and the money that they collected will be used to help support the garden project at The Kitchen that our children and families started earlier this spring. We have excellent reports that the plants that we started in the garden are taking off and that the garden is getting ready to yield some spectacular food for people in the Springfield community. If you haven't taken your child by the garden plot or discussed the project with them, we encourage you to discuss it and go by and visit. Your child's prayers, support and hard work have gone into directly helping feed the people of Springfield and we are so proud of them!

The Children's Ministry continues to gear up for summer and wants to make sure that all those who volunteer are able to take all the family time and vacation that they need this summer – so that means we can use some extra volunteers! If you or someone you know is willing to give time this summer, please contact Holly Hime at HollyHime@hotmail.com or Cheyenne McLean at CheyenneH1982@sbcglobal.net. Thank you!