

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2009

What is your greatest need?

We have considered quite a few things this advent season - indeed this year!

This week we paused to consider the fact that the gift of Christmas is the real gift we need. Need is a very funny word. It carries meanings that are really not all that true. How many times have you thought about the things that you need? How many of those things were real needs? How many different places did you look to get those self-prescribed needs met?

God has promised to meet all of your needs. Everyone of them.

As I type that statement I am forced to ask myself a question, "Do I believe that?" "Do I live as though I believe that?"

Please look with me at a couple of passages.

Psalm 23:1

I shall not be in want. How many of my moments are filled with want? Satisfaction seems to be so elusive. We search for significance and meaning in so many different places—wandering around the field as the Shepherd sits watching, smiling.

2 Corinthians 9:8

If you write in your Bible, underline each time you see the words all and every in this verse. Are you hearing something? . . . all things at all times, having all that you need. . . so that I can abound! God wants me to have all that I need; He told David that if there was anything more he needed than he had been given that God would have provided it! (2 Samuel 12:8) God is able to meet every one of your needs, but will He?

Philippians 4:19

God will meet your needs—all of them. But quick—don't miss how He meets those needs. Be careful when you read this next phrase. Read it with the awe it deserves. Do not take it for granted and gloss over the phrase—according to His glorious riches *in Christ Jesus*. Do you see the incredible value of this gift, my dear friend? What makes Christmas such a big deal is the Star of the show. It is only through our sweet, loving Jesus that we are able to have our needs met by God. And may I suggest that it is only the needs that are met by God that are met at all?

So, what is your greatest need? Do you believe that God is able and willing to meet that need as you allow Him to? That is the gift of Christmas. Your greatest need is to be in an unblemished relationship with your Creator—the Lover of your soul; only through Jesus does that happen.

Family Discussion Question: Are we allowing God to meet our needs?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2009

"All you need is love" John Lennon

"God is love" John - the disciple Jesus loved

In July of 1967, John Lennon penned the words of the song quoted above for a world-wide broadcast. When recounting why he chose to build the song around the word love, Lennon commented that love is the word that is understood in every language.

Just a year earlier, America was shocked by a report that in an interview in England, John Lennon said that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. Radios banned their music and records were destroyed. A careful review of the statements and comments that followed indicates that what Lennon actually meant was that the Beatles had more influence on the teenagers of the world at that time than Jesus did.

But is that true? The very fact that John Lennon understood that love is a universally understood word and that love is all that is needed reveals that Jesus had a big influence on him—even without his knowing it. And so, the statement Lennon made is true—all we need is love. God used the influence He allowed the Beatles to have to reveal a statement of great truth.

Isn't that God? He demonstrates His love to us in so many different ways. Can the words of a rock and roll song, written by a person denying the Kingship of Christ lead us to a better understanding of God?

Yes, when it is put together with the Word of God as above. The beauty of the gift of God, which is represented in the Gift of Christmas (Jesus), is that it meets our most basic need—the need to be in a love relationship with our Creator. It is a desire that burns deeply within each of us (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

We each feel the void and try desperately to fill the void. We need to feel loved for who we are. Most people spend all of their lives in a hopeless search for what they most need, never finding it. And so they fill their lives with smaller loves and desires. That is what Solomon writes about in Ecclesiastes. In a way, it is what Lennon writes as well: "Nothing you can know that isn't known. Nothing you can see that isn't shown. Nowhere you can be that isn't *where you're meant to be*. It's easy. All you need is love".

See what God says about the futility Lennon reports: God makes himself known through Jesus (John 17:2-4). God is shown through Jesus (John 14:8-11). God reveals *where we are meant to be*—in Jesus (John 15:5).

Without God's gift of Jesus, there is no hope of getting what you need most. It is true that all you need is love—that is why God sent love to us.

Family Discussion Question: How does my need for love and the way that I try to fill that need affect my life?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2009

Christmas was five days ago. What has happened in your life since then? Life takes over. The world we live in tends to lead us into living lives with very short-term forward vision. Probably, at this point, you are thinking more about the New Year than you are about Christmas, because Christmas is in the past. Or is it?

I think Mary had an advantage we don't often consider. We were each designed to be in a love relationship with God that grows deeper and more intimate each day. The birth of a baby means a lot to us. But it means a lot more if you are the parent. The other day I had a chance to see one of the babies in the church that I had not seen for about a month. Wow! Talk about growing! The baby was a lot bigger and so was the love the mother had for her. She was beginning to know her better each day. She was discovering her personality and her heart. Sadly, that is what most will miss about Jesus. They will stop and see Him in the manger and then move on—just as I had done with that little baby girl. But, what if we stay in touch?

What if, like that new mom, our love for Jesus grows deeper each day as we get to know Him. We can know His personality. We can even get a glimpse into His heart. It is the heart that literally broke for you. As we come to the close of 2009, can I remind you gently that Jesus is more interested in you than He is in what you do? Dear one, please resist the temptation to get so busy that you miss the romance for which you were made. Every relationship that you have is affected by the relationship you have with Jesus. Everything in this world and the enemy who prowls tries to keep you from spending time with the only One who truly loves you unconditionally.

You miss the best if you do not spend time getting to know Him and His passionate pursuit of you (Jeremiah 31:3; Malachi 1:2; John 13:34, 15:12). He is able to touch you anywhere, but He is longing to touch you in soft ways. If you allow this to happen your life will change. Your prayers will change. Your desire will change. You will change and you will be overwhelmed by His love for you and your growing love for Him. It will change how you love others.

Please read Luke 10:38-42 and Matthew 11:28-30. Notice that Jesus loves both Mary and Martha just for who they are. I have come to find that if I do not sit at the feet of Jesus (spend time focused on Him) that I lose His perspective on everything else and I begin to have very unrealistic expectations of everything and everyone around me especially those I love the most. Away from the feet of Jesus, I care only about me. At the feet of Jesus, somehow "me" gets better care without me being concerned about it at all. Fall more deeply in love with Jesus. Don't just leave Him in the manger.

Family Discussion Question: Have I already forgotten about Christmas?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2009

The last day of the year. Remember that we will have a potluck tonight at 5:00 p.m., followed by a communion and worship service at 6:30 p.m.

Can you remember the last day of last year? I find that isn't always that easy to do. I have a slight advantage because I was able to look back at the Digging Deeper I wrote for last December 31st and it reminded me of where I was and what I was thinking. As a matter of fact this is it for this day. It is the same as last year with the same questions. Are you a person who journals?

Do you take the time to record your thoughts each day or each week? It will help you to see those areas that God has worked in your life. Do you recall our verses from this year? Take a moment to look them up in your Bible.

Exodus 9:16; Isaiah 40:28, 31

In what ways do you know God better today than you did one year ago? If we are on a journey in our relationship with Him then we should have experienced His presence in new ways in our lives and we should have come to new realizations of Who He is as He has revealed Himself to us. It is good to take a moment and think that through. Write some things down. Perhaps take the time to answer these questions:

- 1) What were some specific needs in my life that God met this year? (How did God show you His power?)
- 2) What were some hard things that God helped me through?
- 3) What new things did I learn about God's character?
- 4) How did I find myself closer to God by serving Him?
- 5) What things did I ask God to help me decide? How did He answer?
- 6) In what ways did God use me to help someone get closer to Him this year?
- 7) In what ways am I more of a worshipper of God now than I was at the beginning of the year?
- 8) What were some specific ways that God proved Himself worthy of my praise and trust?

No one knows what 2010 holds for us, but we know that God is faithful and that He will be with us (Matthew 28:20, Deuteronomy 31:6). Reviewing how God has been faithful in the past will allow you to stand strong in faith in the future. God is reliable.

Thank you Father for your steadfast hand in our lives this year!

Family Discussion Question: How do we know God better?

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2010

First day of a new year. Have any resolutions?
If yesterday was a day of review, today is a day of goals.
What will you do with this year?
What does God have in mind for you? Can you hear His voice?
He has promised several things that we should consider before setting goals or listing resolutions.

Jeremiah 29:11-13, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 1:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 127:1, Psalm 145:17-19, 2 Corinthians 9:8, 1 Peter 5:7

As you look over these verses and as you pray over them what do you hear God saying?

Let's take the time to answer a few questions today. If you have never done this before, if you add it with yesterday's observations you will have the beginning of a journal!

- 1) What can I do this year with what I learned about God last year?
- 2) What new steps do I need to take to know God even more?
- 3) What specific steps can I take to bring honor and glory to God in my home, work or school?
- 4) Is there a habit that I have that keeps me from experiencing God's best? What steps do I need to take to allow Him to change that in my life?
- 5) Is there an area of service that God is leading me to get involved in? What steps do I need to take to get started in that service?
- 6) Is there a person or persons that God is leading me to tell about Him?
- 7) How can we as a family draw closer to God and each other this year?


Perhaps there are other things that God is saying to you. Know that God has marvelous plans for you for 2010! He has gone ahead and prepared incredible things for you to do, no matter what your circumstance. More than anything else be sure that God is much more concerned about why you are doing what you are doing than He is with what you are doing (Psalm 51:16-17). God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). His eyes are searching over the whole earth to strengthen those who are fully committed to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9). So what is your desire for this New Year? Set your heart on things above (Matthew 6:19-21) and set your goals with an eternal mindset and get ready to see how God works through you!

Family Discussion Question: What does God have for us this year?



Pastor Chuck Cervenka

DECEMBER 28, 2009 - JANUARY 1, 2010



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&
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-- Unfeared LIGHT



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