August 27, 2017

Series: Asking for Directions

Growth Track Step 4 - Making a Difference

Give a result of generosity …

21 Days - 9 a.m. on Saturday will continue

Pray

**Our Traveling Partner**

John 16:5-15

**Intro:** We have been talking about direction -

We have found in this series that we have been given clear directions to our ultimate destination.

- Jesus gives us a guide who shows us the steps we need to take - The Holy Spirit is the Guide.

- Incentives for Staying in a relationship with Jesus - Lots of Life, Answered Prayer, God being Honored, Real Love, and Overwhelming Joy!

Last week - Headwinds: We can expect Hatred - but also the Holy Spirit - and we talked about how we should hold onto our faith in spite of the Headwinds of opposition.

Today - more about the Holy Spirit - When you go on a long journey, it’s good to have a traveling buddy!

Trips to and from Florida in college …

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to be with us every mile of the way on this journey! We need Him for direction!

Partnership is extremely important! We have been placed in relationships - we want to be in life-giving relationships -

Today in Growth Track - we will begin to talk about partnership in ministry - connections we make in ministry - how we receive life & give life when we are involved in ministry - God purposefully partners us together with one another in ministry and gives us the Holy Spirit as our powerful partner because no matter who we are partnered with here, we can accomplish nothing without the Holy Spirit.

* Alexander Graham Bell had Watson
* Sherlock Holmes - Watson
* Batman - Robin
* Presidents have Vice-presidents
* Behind every great man is a great woman!
* Paul had Barnabas
* David - Jonathan
* Charlie Brown - Linus & Snoopy
* Tweedle Dee - Tweedle Dum
* Dean Martin - Jerry Lewis
* Lucy & Ricky - Fred & Ethel
* Andy - Barney

That’s the most obvious illustration of all - what happened to Andy when Barney left - NO ONE wants to watch those shows!

Partnership!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 - Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

A bricklayer tried to move 500 pounds of bricks from the top of a four-story building to the sidewalk below.  His problem was that he tried to do it alone.  On an insurance claim form, he explained what happened:  “It would have taken too long to carry the bricks down by hand, so I decided to put them in a barrel and lower them by a pulley which I had fastened to the top of the building.  After tying the rope securely at the ground level, I then went up to the top of the building.  I fastened the rope around the barrel, loaded it with the bricks, and swung it out over the sidewalk for the descent.

 “Then I went down to the sidewalk and untied the rope, holding it securely to guide the barrel down slowly.  But, since I weigh only 140 pounds, the 500 pound load jerked me from the ground so fast that I didn’t have time to think of letting go of the rope.  And as I passed between the second and third floors, I met the barrel coming down.  This accounts for the bruises and lacerations on my upper body.

 “I held tightly to the rope until I reached the top, where my hand became jammed in the pulley.  This accounts for my broken thumb.  At the same time, however, the barrel hit the sidewalk with a bang and the bottom fell out.  With the weight of the bricks gone, the barrel weighed only about 40 pounds.  Thus, my 140 pound body began a swift descent, and I met the empty barrel coming up.  This accounts for my broken ankle.

 “Slowed only slightly, I continued to descend and landed on the pile of bricks.  This accounts for my sprained back and broken collarbone.

 “At this point, I lost my presence of mind completely and let go of the rope.  And the empty barrel came crashing down on me.  This accounts for my head injuries.

 “As for the last question on the form, ‘What would you do if the same situation arose again?’  please be advised that I am finished trying to do the job alone.”

**Big Idea:  The Holy Spirit is our traveling partner!**

**T.S.:**  In John 16:5-15 – as Jesus continues His final teaching before being crucified, he tells His followers three powerful advantages of partnership - I’m going to take them in reverse order from what they are listed here -

**> The Holy Spirit reveals the course.**

John 16:12-15 - “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’

There is a lot the followers of Jesus don’t know!  There is a lot they don’t want to know or hear!

This is why they need the PARTNERSHIP of the Holy Spirit!

WE need the partnership of the Holy Spirit!  The Holy Spirit is our GPS!

He helps us understand the Bible –

He helps us plan our futures –

He guides us in the will of God for our lives –

He causes Christ to shine through us by teaching us more about Christ –

He is Christ’s messenger to us –

If you need guidance – YOU NEED THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

The Holy Spirit is your PARTNER – He can give you wisdom in making huge decisions – if you ask Him … sense of peace …

**> The Holy Spirit brings light.**

When you’re on a long journey, and our spiritual journey is a long journey, sometimes you’re driving at night. Sometimes you’re in the dark! You need to turn the headlights on - This is what conviction is.

John 16:8-11 - And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

The Holy Spirit sheds light on our sin – We may not like this, but we need this!

Conviction vs. Condemnation …

The Holy Spirit sheds light, then we have to drive right! We have to make the decision to walk in the path He leads! We don’t have to - it’s our choice, but it’s the right choice! Listen to His leading!

The Holy Spirit convinces people that Jesus is the righteous Son of God, resurrected, vindicated, now Lord of all – and His standard of righteousness is the only standard of righteousness!

Satan is the ruler of the current system that most of the world follows. But this says that Satan has already been judged!  The sentence is not fully carried out yet … but his judgment is certain!  Follow the Holy Spirit - don’t side with one who fate is already sealed!

Here’s what’s awesome and what happens when we receive the light of the Holy Spirit -

Romans 3:23-24 – For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

If you know people who need to be convinced … sin … righteousness … judgment … You want to see them convinced - you can’t do it alone - YOU NEED A PARTNER!

As you give out Random Acts of Kindness Cards and invite people to church - ask the Holy Spirit to be your partner!!

**> The Holy Spirit is right beside us.**

John 16:5-7 - “But now I am going away to the One who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you.

This is what it means that He is our Advocate. He is right beside us all along the way.

It’s not like he’s in the car up front … recently we went to Chicago - Mom & Dad in another car … We had the IPass … they did not … we tried to stay together … couldn’t get it done.

Would have been a whole lot easier if we were in the same car.

When you put your faith in Jesus, you receive the Holy Spirit, He is right beside you every step of the way.

He’s with some of you and you don’t know it yet! He is right there!

Some of you know it, but forget it - don’t forget it! Jesus sent Him to help us!

Three and a half years – they’ve been together almost day and night … Heard Him teach … seen His miracles … seen His love and compassion … He’s been in their homes … He’s met their families … He’s given them power … He’s allowed them ministry … They’ve had fun together … eating a lot … getting into scrapes … kicked out of towns …

Now – He’s leaving!  They don’t get it!  They don’t want it!  What’s going to happen? He’s going to send the Holy Spirit so they can have the same direction and partnership from Him that they received from Jesus.

He’s given to us as well!

Most have lost someone near to them – Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter!

The Smell of Rain

There was a cold March wind in the dead of night in Dallas as the Doctor walked into the small hospital room of Diana Blessing. She was still groggy from surgery, her husband David held her hand as they braced themselves for the latest news. That afternoon - it was March 10, 1991, complications had forced Diana, who was only 24 weeks pregnant, to undergo an emergency cesarean to deliver the couple’s new daughter, Danae Lu Blessing.

Danae was 12 inches long and weighed only one pound and nine ounces. Terribly and dangerously premature. Still, the doctor's words dropped like bombs. He said it as kindly as he could, but the message was, “I don't think she's going to make it. There's only a 10 percent chance she will live through the night, and even then, if by some slim chance she does make it, her future could be a very cruel one."

The couldn’t believe it. David and Diana listened as the doctor described the devastating problems Danae would likely face if she survived. She would never walk, she would never talk, she would probably be blind, and she would certainly be prone to other catastrophic conditions from cerebral palsy to complete mental disability, and on and on. All Diana could say was, ”No! No!" She and David, with their 5-year-old son Dustin, had long dreamed of the day they would have a daughter to become a family of four. Now, within a matter of hours, that dream was slipping away.

Through the dark hours of morning as Danae held onto life by the thinnest thread, Diana slipped in and out of sleep. She grew more and more determined that their tiny daughter would live, and live to be a healthy, happy young girl. But David, he was fully awake and listening to even more horrible details of their daughter's chances of ever leaving the hospital alive, much less healthy - he knew he must confront his wife with the inevitable. David walked in and said that we needed to talk about making funeral arrangements. Diana remembers, 'I felt so bad for him because he was doing everything, trying to include me in what was going on, but I just wouldn't listen, I couldn't listen. I said, "No, that is not going to happen, no way! I don't care what the doctors say; Danae is not going to die! One day she will be just fine, and she will be coming home with us!"

As if willed to live by Diana's determination, Danae clung to life hour after hour, with the help of every medical machine and marvel her miniature body could endure. But as those first days passed, a new agony set in for David and Diana. Because Danae's under-developed nervous system was essentially raw, the lightest kiss or tender touch only intensified her discomfort, so they couldn't even cradle their tiny baby girl against their chests to offer the strength of their love. All they could do, as Danae struggled alone beneath the ultraviolet light in the tangle of tubes and wires, was to pray that God would stay close to their precious little girl. There was never a moment when Danae suddenly grew stronger.

 But as the weeks went by, she did slowly gain an ounce of weight here and an ounce of strength there. At last, when Danae turned two months old, her parents were able to hold her in their arms for the very first time. And two months later - though doctors continued to gently but grimly warn that her chances of surviving, much less living any kind of normal life, were next to zero. Danae went home from the hospital, just as her mother had predicted.

At last report, Danae is a petite but feisty young girl with glittering gray eyes and a tremendous zest for life. She shows no signs, whatsoever, of any mental or physical impairment. Simply put, she is everything a little girl can be and more - but that’s not the end of her story.

One blistering afternoon in the summer of 1996 near her home in Irving, Texas, Danae was sitting in her mother's lap in the bleachers of a local ballpark where her brother Dustin's baseball team was practicing. As always, Danae was chattering non-stop with her mother and several other adults sitting nearby when she suddenly fell silent. Hugging her arms across her chest, Danae asked, "Do you smell that?" Smelling the air and detecting the approach of a thunderstorm, Diana replied, "Yes, it smells like rain." Danae closed her eyes and again asked, "Do you smell that?" Once again, her mother replied, "Yes, I think we're about to get wet, it smells like rain.”  Still caught in the moment, Danae - this little girl, just 5 years old - and living because of a miracle - shook her head, patted her thin shoulders with her small hands and loudly announced, "No, it smells like Him. It smells like God when you lay your head on His chest." Tears blurred Diana's eyes as Danae then happily hopped down to play with the other children.

 Before the rains came, her daughter's words confirmed what Diana and all the members of the extended Blessing family had known, at least in their hearts, all along. During those long days and nights of her first two months of her life, when her nerves were too sensitive for them to touch her, God was holding Danae on His chest and it is His loving scent that she remembers so well.

(adapted from Susan Thomas – recorded in Miracles In Our Midst & Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul – verified)

Our traveling partner never leaves us - even in the most difficult of times -

* He reveals our course.
* He brings light.
* He is right beside us.