

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Preparation Without a To Do List

October 29, 2006

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Donation Drive for the Homeless** - We are collecting foot powder, lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and deodorant to be given to the homeless at the Thanksgiving Outreach hosted by the San Diego Rescue Mission. Bring your donated items to church October 21 - November 12 and look for the San Diego Rescue Mission bins throughout the Sanctuary and Lobby. Please note: We are only accepting the listed items at this time.
- **Volunteer at the Thanksgiving Outreach for the Homeless** held on Saturday, November 18. Volunteer needs include food servers and outreach teams. For more info, go to www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar/2274.
- **For all other Rock Announcements** please go to <http://www.therocksandiego.org/announcements/> or see the Rock Event Calendar at <http://www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar/>.

MEMORY VERSE: *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.* Revelation 19:11

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – PREPARATION WITHOUT A TO DO LIST

All right, I confess. I love Martha Stewart (this was not written by any of the small group pastors☺). Until a few months ago I owned every issue of her magazine from the last 6 years. Let's face it, she is the queen of domesticity – and her kingdom is defined by amazing style, classic architecture and vibrant art. What she does always looks great, and the secret behind the perfect dinner party or blooming garden? Preparation. The woman doesn't miss a beat. In September you think about Thanksgiving; in December, you organize and store your holiday things to get ready for spring. Follow her yearly calendar and your gutters will always be clean, the kitchen always degreased, and the garage a perfectly organized haven for house hold cleansers. Organize and prepare. That's all there is to it.

Martha's purpose for preparation tells us a lot about ourselves. She prepares to make things ready, comfortable, and convenient. Makes sense, right? Isn't that why we make preparations? We want things to run smoothly and avoid unnecessary conflict. Most of us want things to turn out well so we try to plan ahead.

The book of Deuteronomy is a book about two things: 1) Moses transferring his authority as "leader" to Joshua, and 2) **Preparation for entering the Promised Land**. But not the kind of preparation you might think. In a book focusing on preparation, you might expect to read about battle plans, strategies, and to do lists; but, surprisingly, that's not what we see. Rather, God offers us a different way to think about preparing – *and it is all about the state of our heart*. You see, while it's our nature to avoid conflict and obstacles, it's God's objective to make sure our eyes are always on Him. The preparation He requests from us is not about avoiding difficulties, it's about having the kind of relationship with Him that will allow us to move forward no matter what seems to be standing in our way.

In this four week series, we are going to learn about the commands Moses gives the Israelites as they prepare to claim the Promised Land. So if you were like me and wanted to read through this book with a day planner and a bulleted list, put it away. The preparation we are about to experience will not reduce or eliminate the possibility of challenges and difficulties. Instead, this kind of preparation will change our perspective on how to tackle it head on.

Getting Started (Let's look at the context of Deuteronomy.)

1. Take a few minutes to review Israel's history by reading Deuteronomy 1-3. (Note: there's a lot to sort through, you might want to break up your group into groups of 2 and 3 people – each smaller group taking a section of the text to read and summarize.)
2. Now, take a minute to refresh your memory – why were the Jews wandering in the desert (Deuteronomy 1:26-36)?
3. Think about this for a moment: everyone from the initial exodus from Egypt (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) has died. The audience for what Moses is about to say is comprised of an entirely new group of people than the people who crossed the Red Sea. What might Moses want this group of people to know before he hands over his job as leader to Joshua? Why would it be important for Moses to “set the stage” for the Israelites as they begin to secure the Promised Land?
4. What kind of wisdom and insight might Moses have to offer this new generation of Israelites?

Digging Deeper

5. In Deuteronomy 4:9-10 Moses has shifted from providing a historical context to giving the Israelites a strict command. What is this command? What are the different parts to this command? Why is remembering so important as the Israelites move forward? What did they do last time they were on the verge of entering, and taking, the promise land?
4. Remember, (no pun intended) the Promised Land was not uninhabited. It was full of mighty, powerful, and ruthless nations who were not about to roll over and let the Israelites take possession of their home. How would this impact Moses command to the Israelites to remember what God has done for them? Why is this a crucial time in Israel's history?
5. As the Israelites are again in a position to take the Promised Land, Moses' plea was for them to “remember” what God has done for them. Jesus asked the same things of His disciples as He prepared for His crucifixion. Read Luke 22:7-19. What did Jesus want His disciples to remember? Why?
6. We are still commanded to celebrate the sacrament of communion for the very purpose of remembering. And if Jesus wanted His disciples to remember what He had done – the very people who saw Him with their own eyes – why is it important for us to take this “remembering” command seriously?
7. Jesus knew the difficult road ahead for Him after the Last Supper; and that it would cause His disciples to waver in their faith. Moses likely had similar thoughts about what the Israelites were about to encounter. How does the command to “prepare for difficulties by remembering the past” change the way we approach God with our difficult circumstances and needs? How does looking back at God's faithfulness change our attitude toward current difficulties?

Bringing it Home

God has brought us to the border of the Promised Land – he has offered us freedom from bondage and sin. But we have to take it; we have to walk across our own personal “Jordan River” and receive what He has for us.

8. Remembering who God is (and what He’s done) makes a difference. It changes the picture of what’s ahead of us when we begin with Him as our starting point. He knows that the enemy is going to try to discourage us, distract us, and defeat us. What about the character and nature of God is easy for you to forget when things start looking bleak? What about the character and nature of God do you want to understand more completely to help you move forward in faith?

9. What are the big things in your life (maybe big things right now) that make you forget God? What are some of the things on the other side of the river for you?

10. Reflection and remembrance is usually something we do as we end a project or close a chapter, not something we do as we start a new one. But Moses and Jesus both commanded us to prepare by remembering. In essence, the message is “Don’t try to get everything perfect, don’t try to anticipate and avoid every difficult circumstance. And don’t just run forward without any game plan. The enemy will make you encounter difficulties and you will need to fight and work hard. Most things are out of your control. But one thing you can do is remember that He is the “I Am.” How can you begin to pray for strength in your life – not by starting with the challenge – but by starting by remembering the character of God?