

Living the Dream

Loving with All Our Hearts in 2023

February 5, 2023

Overarching Theme: 2023 – Living the Dream

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a step forward in following Jesus Christ.

Reflect on this Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NRSV

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Commentary:

The passage is laced with irony. In ironic contrast, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the gospel focuses on Christ the crucified one, that the one who brought the gospel to them was identified not by the trappings of power and prestige but by frailty, fright, and trembling - and, at the end of these nouns, as if to emphasize his unprepossessing presence, he adds "much", which in Greek can be understood to modify each of the preceding. Paul was then and is at the time of his writing the example of the one who, though he could have vaunted himself and called attention to himself, stood aside and pointed ever so clearly at Christ crucified. And the result the Corinthians know full well: The power of God produced faith among the Corinthians. It wasn't not human wisdom, cultured speech, nor impressive, polished rhetoric. True wisdom, he suggests there, lies in knowing that God's ways in the world are centered on God's work to save that world through the cross of Jesus Christ. God's ways, in other words, center on the ironic, but very apparent weakness of God's Son's willing submission to Roman humiliation and torture.

- Adapted from the New Interpreters Bible Commentary, Vol X, p. 818

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Why do you think the Corinthians began quarrelling over who had the best house church? Why were they boasting about which 'wise' and impressive spiritual leader they identified with most (1 Corinthians 1:11-12)? Did this argumentative boasting come from a place of being secure in God's love or a place of insecurity (feeling like they had something to prove)?
2. Why do you think Paul responded in the way he did, reminding the Corinthians of his own unimpressive oratory and emphasizing Jesus' willingness to model the vulnerability of humble, authentic, sacrificial love (Jesus Christ and him crucified)? What impact would Paul's message have had on you if you were in the place of the Corinthians?
3. Are 'trying to impress others' and 'preoccupation with one's image' obstacles to authentic Christian community and loving with all our heart? Why or why not?
4. If Jesus and Paul modeled vulnerability and authenticity as the path to real life (God's dream), why do you think that the Corinthians struggled with this? Do we struggle with this today? Why or why not?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: 1 Cor 2:1-2 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.