

**Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**  
**Sunday August 5, 2018. Back to School.**

**A. Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message on Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still go thru it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

**B. Sunday's Message.**

For those of you who missed Pastor Lamar's message Sunday you missed an inspirational word that spoke to each of us personally, in our daily walk, AND spoke to us as a church community...a family. So...if you have time listen to the message and then read this and work thru it.

The basic message and premise of Sunday's message was doing the work to trust God even when it seems everything around points to God not being faithful. We have to be very careful of thinking what we're seeing, what we're feeling, what we're experiencing in those difficult moments in our life, is God abandoning us. We have expectations about what we think a relationship with God brings.

And we ALL experience that drop in faith, those moments of doubt, the '*dark night of the soul*', wondering where God is in those difficult moments of our life.

So...let's begin to drill down into why our faith falters in those difficult times.

**What are those things in your life that can shake your faith?** (And just know we all experience crisis of faith so we begin with that confession).

**How does this affect you and your faith? What happens to you inside when you go thru difficult times and can't feel God?**

The passage Sunday was the story of the death of Lazarus found in John 11. If you're not familiar with the story, go to the beginning of chapter 11 and familiarize yourself. If you are, then just read verses 38-44, and we'll unpack them as we go.

In this story, Martha and Mary, (Mary always gets top billing so I thought I'd switch it up a bit), are not only grieving because of the death of their brother, but there is also some anger because their expectations of Jesus told them that if Jesus had been there Lazarus wouldn't have died.

It doesn't take any real work to surface the underlying issue here. Martha and Mary's relationship with Jesus came with certain expectations of what that relationship means, and since those expectations weren't fulfilled then they were disappointed, hurt, and angry. And this is ok.

**When was a time you felt God was absent at a tough time in your life?**

**What was your reaction?**

The primary problem here was Martha and Mary based their faith and relationship with Jesus on what they could see...sense. And their belief grew out of that rather than having a grounded belief in Jesus, and then seeing what Jesus could do because of their belief.

We always hear “*seeing is believing*”. It’s the truth we pull from the story of Thomas, who couldn’t believe Jesus is alive until he sees his hands and feet. And the truth in this story of Lazarus seems to be that “*believing is seeing*”. The message seems to be; if we can so ground our belief in the nature of God, that our ‘seeing’ will be different. We won’t just ‘see’ the things around us, but **we will ‘see’ God working thru those things around us.**

**Lamar went on to say that there are three types of ‘seeing’.**

**1. The first is ‘hindsight’-** our ability to look back after we’ve been thru something and to see God in it. To reevaluate that experience and see what we may have missed. We’ve heard the saying “*experience is the best teacher*”. This is only partially true. The more accurate saying should be: “***evaluated experience is the best teacher***”. Only when we go back thru that event and ask ourselves what we could have done better, can we develop a strong healthy working hindsight.

**What have you learned, how have you grown, from some specific event or situation in your past?**

**Do you live differently, believe differently, because of it, and how so?**

**2. The second type of ‘seeing’ is ‘insight’-** or to see into a situation, to practice wise discernment. Or the ability in the middle of a situation to see the wiser, better, path and to make adjustments towards that better decision. It’s taking that feeling you have and doing some **investigation** to make sure that what you’re feeling, ‘seeing’, is accurate and dependable.

To do ‘insight’ well, we have to fight the urge to think what we’re feeling, or just what we’re seeing on the surface, is all there is. And this is so difficult because we are feeling, what are my senses telling us, are so overwhelming that it’s difficult to recognizing and trust there is something bigger going on.

**So...what affects or hurts your ability to practice wise, better, discernment?**

**What clouds or misdirects your ability to practice better insight?**

Just like Martha and Mary who let their feelings, expectations, what they were ‘seeing’ affect their faith and understanding of who God is, we have to constantly check ourselves to see if we’re doing the very same thing and allowing what we see to control our belief rather than letting our belief control what we see.

**What are one or two things you could believe, hold onto, practice that would help you maintain your belief even in difficult times?**

Work to develop and grow your hindsight and your insight. Next week we get the third type of sight.