

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (October 24, 2021)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

What we hold as our most important belief helps set the direction for our life and faith. It is the same for organizations too. If a particular baseball team believes that winning at all costs is most important, the direction that team takes will lead to moral compromise and relational failure. If a person believes that acquiring material possessions is most important, that trajectory will crush intimacy and extinguish compassion.

Churches are no different. What they hold as their most important belief about Jesus defines who they are and the direction they will go. Some churches believe that Jesus' top priority is caring for the poor. Others that His first priority is saving souls. When the most important belief held about Jesus is mistaken the entire direction of a church, and a life, heads off course.

In this morning's passage from First Corinthians 15, Paul (the writer) states without hesitation that the most important belief about Jesus for Christians is the death of Jesus FOR US, and Jesus' ultimate and final defeat of death. This is the central and first belief about Jesus, priority one, for all Christians. It sets our direction, it instructs what we believe about God, it helps us understand God's relationship with us, it informs us regarding God's power and love.

What belief about Jesus does Grace hold as most important? What belief about Jesus do we personally hold as most important? And, because of that belief, where are we headed?

Priority One (SERMON PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 15:3-11)

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What does Paul (the writer of these letters to the Corinthians) state is most important for Christians to believe?
2. What does Paul say (twice) is the source of these essential beliefs? (verses 3 and 4)
3. What is the evidence Paul gives as confirmation of the truth of these beliefs about Jesus? Who did Jesus appear to after defeating death and returning to life?
4. What does Paul say about himself as a Christian leader?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

5. Why does Paul, as this letter concludes, remind the Corinthians of what is most important to believe about Jesus?
6. What does it mean for Christians that Jesus died for our sins? Why is that so important?
7. What does it mean for Christians that Jesus rose from the dead? Why is that so important?
8. Why did Paul state that "Jesus appeared to more than five hundred at one time," as well as many others? This letter was written within 20 or 25 years of the death and resurrection of Jesus. What risk is there in writing about a significant event when there were many still living who could recall the event?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

9. What do you believe about the death & resurrection of Jesus?
10. What evidence is most compelling to you regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus? If you struggle with belief in Jesus' resurrection what kind of evidence would convince you?
11. Describe your personal relationship with God? How has God spoken to you? How has God revealed Himself to you?
12. What impact has God's grace had on your life? Define grace.
13. What is the most important belief you hold about Jesus? Why is it so important to you? How does this belief affect the direction, and decisions, of your life?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to help you know what is most important to believe and then to believe. Ask God to help you live humbly and serve boldly. Ask God for greater confidence that He loves you and that He will always be with you. God does love you and He will help you.