

Keep the Faith: Lessons from Africa (Week 1)

July 7th, 2024

“MATERIALISM VS. FAITH”

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT)

⁸God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

JESUS CAME TO SAVE US, TO ILLUMINATE THE WORLD, AND TO MOVE US FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT (JOHN 6:25-33 ESV).

- The story of Hosea and Gomer is a parallel to God's pursuit of us and the transformation of our identity in Christ.
- Christ paid our price, not because we are deserving or earning, but out of God's love and grace.
- God pursues us and gives us grace despite our unworthiness.

1st Jesus wanted the people to understand the meaning of the miracles:

- God set His seal upon Jesus (vs. 27).
- Jesus confirmed who He was with His miracles.
- The testimony of the prophets—Jesus fulfilled prophecy.
- The testimony of John the Baptist.

2nd Jesus wanted them to see the truth: Spiritual vs. Physical.

- Two kinds of thinking—two kinds of food.
- We are spiritual and physical beings; the spiritual takes precedence.
- Spiritual things are eternal things. The here and now is not all that there is.

MATERIAL LIFE VS. SPIRITUAL LIFE:

Spiritual:

- ⇒ They live for eternity (**Mark 8:34-36; Matthew 6:19-21 ESV**).
- ⇒ They value God's approval and opinion (**John 12:42-43 NLT**).
- ⇒ They seek Gods' blessings (**Psalms 20:6-8 NLT**).

1 John 2:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁵Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

THE KEY TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE:

The Answer:

Jesus is the Bread of Life. He is our spiritual food!

- **John 6:35 (ESV)** – He is the bread of life.
- **John 6:27 (ESV)** – Put your faith in Him.
- **John 6:63 (ESV)** – His words are life.

We receive Jesus by faith.

- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)**

Faith is not just thinking, but walking. What does our walk tell us about our beliefs?

- **2 Corinthians 5:6-10 (ESV)**

Faith is the antidote to materialism. MATERIALISM LEADS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR SOULS!

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. What stood out to you the most in the passage from **John 6** and why?
2. Why do you think Jesus did not come to take away all the physical needs of human beings during His time on Earth?
3. How does the analogy of physical food versus spiritual food presented in **John 6:32-35** challenge our understanding of fulfillment and joy in life? How have you experienced the difference between physical satisfaction and spiritual nourishment in your own life?
4. Jesus highlighted various forms of materialism in the passage (e.g., preoccupation with physical well-being, prioritizing emotions over truth, seeking approval from others). How do these forms of materialism manifest in our lives today, and how can we guard against them?
5. Reflect on the idea that material possessions and achievements can lead to emptiness if they become our primary focus. How can we cultivate a healthy balance between worldly responsibilities and spiritual priorities?
6. How does seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first impact our daily decisions, relationships, and overall sense of fulfillment?
7. Jude encourages believers to "*contend for the faith*" and to build themselves up in their faith. What are some practical ways we can actively engage in strengthening our faith and standing firm in our beliefs in today's world?
8. Materialism and faith are presented as opposing forces in the passage. How can we discern if materialism is leading us away from God's will and how can we realign our priorities to walk by faith rather than by sight?
9. How can obedience, hope, and faith in Jesus Christ shape our decisions and actions in a world focused on material gain and instant gratification? Share examples of how stepping out in faith has led to growth and transformation in your own life.