



# THE JOURNEY

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*Dayspring Discipleship Institute*

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Teaching – Equipping – Training – Ministering

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“...the Dayspring from on high has come to give light to those that sit in darkness...” --Luke 1:78-79

Newsletter

*“The disciples are the highest good, the supreme value which the earth possesses, for without them it cannot live.”*

Dearhearts,

What a startling statement from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. At a time when the church was blending into the fabric of its culture, and Christians were being drawn into Hitler’s spirit with a harshness and hatred of their own, he called German Christians to understand who they were. He called them to the meekness and humility that Christ spoke of in the Beatitudes...a people who would not vilify and label those the political machinery sought to savage. He called to them as the only ones who had within them a Love that could defy the hate and a Truth that could counter the lies; they were the only ones who carried a Light that could repel the darkness.

Bonhoeffer seemed to catch something of the critical nature of our role most of us have missed. It is we, alone, of all people on earth who represent God in the world. Of all people on earth we, alone, maintain the divine footing here. If we don’t rise up to who we are, the world has no light; it has no softness...no seasoning. There is no one else on earth who can illumine the darkness with their lives, who can love beyond themselves; who can be merciful and kind despite how we’re wired. We are the only ones on earth who are in direct contact with the Creator. We are the only ones who carry a light that is not human.

The disciples, Bonhoeffer continues, “are the salt that sustains the earth, for their sake the world exists...” The world cannot survive without God’s people *being* who they are: speaking His heart and shining His light through their lives.

I’ve long felt that Satan thought he had his anti-Christ in Hitler. Whether or not that is the case, the extreme is always instructive and shows us where the dangers lie. With the calamitous extreme of Hitler, we are faced with the role the church played. We see a duplicitous community of both passion and lethargy. Hitler used them both. A vast body of church leaders placed their placed zeal in him. Taking their eyes off Christ, but in the name of Christ, they led many church members (both

passionate and lukewarm) into Hitler’s camp as God’s man for their beleaguered nation. On the other side, an equal number of pastors under Bonhoeffer’s leadership, countered the “Reich Church.” It was the vast majority of German Christians who formed a tepid, silent culture that, like a petri dish, allowed the poison to grow. Both passionate and casual Germans were manipulated and deceived because their focus was lured from Christ.

The culture in which we live is becoming increasingly brittle and harsh. We are unique in human history in the ways in which the world can find its way into our homes and into our psyche. With television and talk radio, the internet, ipods and email, we are saturated with endless babble and racket from the world that can snare us for hours in its spell. Even that which appears good can leave a residue in us of anxiety and fear, disquieted spirits, a focus on the negatives and an agitation that lodges as a persistent white noise in the backdrop of our souls. As concerned Christians we are often cynical, sometimes paranoid, and easily obsessed with the issues of this world. We are losing the tools we must have to confront whatever darkness and deception comes our way. We are becoming a people who carry the problem in us rather than the answer.

I will forever remember Joanne. Homebound because of the ravages of cancer on her face, her nose had been amputated and one eye removed. Reconstructive procedures held few answers for her 30 years ago, yet her spirit was amazing...her joy inspiring. I asked what her secret was. “I meditate the Word,” she said. “If I dwell on the problems... I’m defeated. But I don’t pray the problem, I pray the answer by meditating on the Word. If I pray the answer my mind is where it should be, and I have the Lord’s spirit and His joy.”

Of all people on earth, we have the answer. As we meditate on it we carry into the world the anti-dote for its venom. But we must focus on Christ and His spirit more than we focus on the world and its spirit if we are to offer it to the world as a kind and gracious people.

I love you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda".

## ***An Evening of Conversation on Prayer*** **7:30 Tuesday, January 26**

Brenda's series of conversations on prayer resumes for the new year a little later in the month than originally announced. Due to a scheduling conflict the original date of the 19<sup>th</sup> has been changed to the fourth Tuesday evening.

Brenda will talk on "**Hearing God.**" Succeeding conversations in March and May will address "**Stilling our Voices**" and "**Prevailing Prayer.**"

"*Conversations on Mysteries from a Sacred Hand*" will alternate monthly on Tuesdays with talks on prayer. The "Mysteries" conversations are tentatively scheduled for 7:30 Tuesday, February 9, with *The Human Mystery* and April 13 with *The Mystery of Longing*.

### **Classics Book Club January 5, 7:00 p.m.**

Discussion of *The Cost of Discipleship* remains open and picks up with the second chapter of the second section.

**Sunday Morning Chapel Study:** New series begins January 10: *Great Themes of the Bible*

## **Christmas Caroling** **"A Joyful Time"**

Caroling this Christmas seemed an especially joyous time for the almost 25 people who gathered at the Dayspring office Thursday evening the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks to your generosity and that of Emmaus Church, we were able to provide 20 Christmas gift bags that included a Christmas ham certificate at Brookshires to the families in the Dayspring neighborhood. These bags cost approximately \$30.00 each and the greater than



Stuffing Buckner Children's bags  
after caroling

normal donations that came in this year for the bags not only covered our traditional expenses but allowed us to purchase and fill another 50 bags for the children in foster care at Buckner Children's home. Around 50 stuffed

animals remained from the 75 that were donated to us for our caroling. Patty Stefani and Misti Gil, her 4 year old son and two other young women, delivered them along with the Christmas bags to Buckner's on Friday before Christmas. At first they were concerned that our

specially prepared bags were going to be lost in the mounds of clothing and other items already there when they arrived. (D'Ann Bohrnstedt had spent hours finding crayons and coloring books, cards and puzzles and other items for the bags). It turned out that the donations that greeted them when they arrived were to be shipped elsewhere and that the children in their care had received little if anything for Christmas. When Patty asked how many children they had in residence, the answer was "about 50." Fifty stuffed animals left from caroling... fifty gift bags... fifty children.



God had prepared the way. None of the hospitals we had envisioned taking these items to had worked out. God had another place in mind and, as is so often the case, He doesn't let us know about it until we get there. . . Until the star stops over Bethlehem.

**Thanks to all who gave so generously that this blessing could extend to so many. We are deeply grateful to you all.**

*"It was a new experience for me! I thought this was going to be an offering of service to the underprivileged. What a mistake that was! I received the best blessing. It was a cool crisp evening and the moon was on display. Children quickly learned that the gifts were coming and they frequently were waiting in the doorways. Everyone was so grateful for their gifts. It was a joy to sing to the people. I sang to the people and to my heavenly father. I looked to the skies and hoped that Jesus (and Rick)\* were with me and sang my loudest notes to them. I so wished we had more bags to deliver despite my frozen toes! I hope to include this in my new Christmas traditions for years to come!"*

**-- Claudia Shugart**

\*Claudia's husband, Rick, passed away in October.

### ***Our Deep Gratitude...***

To The Bandera Club and its employees for the 75 stuffed animals including 10 teddy bears holding luxuriously soft bright blue blankets! What a treat some of the smaller children were in for. We are humbled by the generosity of this company and its people.

To all who continue their faithful giving and to those who donate above and beyond their normal giving for this ministry's support. We are indebted and blessed.

### *Of that day...Only the Father Knows*

It is God's call. He, alone, knows when the Son will return to earth to re-claim it fully into His realm. In the book of Daniel, the angel tells Daniel to shut up the words of his book and seal them till the end times. *It is only as events unfold that ancient words long sealed will be unbound in the heart of those who know Christ.*

Even the disciples were unaware, believing that Christ would soon return...in their life-times. With that said, there are some signs Christ, and Scripture, give to us that will be as trees putting forth leaves in the spring telling us summer is at hand (Matthew 24: 32-33); signs that will prepare His people as these things begin to converge upon the last generations.

#### *In Daniel 12 --*

- the angel Gabriel declares that in the end times knowledge will be increased and people will travel greatly "back and forth," everywhere.

#### *In II Timothy 3 --*

- the end-times will be "perilous" and are characterized by proud and boastful people, fierce, even savage, unethical and immoral...treacherous...not true to their word; loving pleasure and riches more than God. Having unnatural affections, they will have a form of godliness but with no knowledge of its power; they will be ever increasing in knowledge but never coming to the knowledge of truth.

#### *In Revelation 3 --*

- the Laodicean church, perhaps the last church of the age of man, will be without commitment or passion for God. "Having a form of godliness," it will be lured away from such devotion by its own wealth and needlessness.

#### *In Malachi 4 --*

- before the return of the Lord, the hearts of fathers are turned from their children and the children's hearts are estranged from their fathers.

#### *In Ezekiel 37, Jeremiah 16 and 23 --*

- the divided children of Israel (Judah and Israel) that have been scattered throughout the nations for generations will be brought together from all the nations of the earth into a single nation in the land that was given to their father Jacob.

#### *In Matthew 24 --*

- Christ states that when the gospel is preached throughout the world, *then* the end will come.

The most telling of these in terms of time frame is the last two. The return of the Jews after two thousand years to the land of their fathers occurred when Israel became a unified nation in 1948. This suggests we are in the last generation or two of life as mankind has known it since Adam and Eve. The gospel has been preached "in all the world," though un-reached pockets and individuals remain, especially in the Islamic world. While God is the only one who knows when the last witness to the gospel has been established throughout the world, we clearly stand on the brink.

So why is this important and what does it mean for us? It means we must be prepared. To be unprepared is to be foolish, Christ warns in the parable of the 10 virgins. We must be prepared not only in our mind but in our heart. In the end times there will be much religious deception by many false teachers and prophets. We are told to be wise as serpents, filtering through the Holy Spirit what religious leaders say, not automatically believing whatever we hear because it comes from a source we tend to agree with. We must be prepared in how we live. We must not fall into the harshness of our times, either as a community or as individuals. Christ warned in Matthew 24: "Many...shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity abounds, the love of many shall grow cold." We must not let our hearts grow cold or unfeeling toward human need or toward those with whom we disagree. We are to be gentle as doves.

Page 4 offers thoughts on ways in which we can, in everyday life, protect our hearts from the contaminants of the harsh culture in which we live. We don't realize we have grown cold until we look at what we invite into our minds and hearts and what we dwell on there.

Brenda Cox

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### *Update on Potential Israel Trip*

We continue to explore options with several tour companies for a probable November date with the flexibility we need at the best rates possible. Several people have tentatively "signed up" and though we did not request it last month, *if you have interest in the possibility* you may contact our office at 972-722-1905.

**In practical, real-life terms, how are we to rise above the character of our times?**

- **Don't forward emails that carry negative or derogatory statements or accusations without checking their veracity...and their tenor.** As messengers of truth we must not unwittingly traffic in deception – or mean spiritedness. Neither is of God. Deception breeds confusion because truth is always lost in its murky waters. Confusion is Satan's most effective ploy in concealing his activity. (Titus 3: 1-2)
- **Check your primary focus and what it is feeding into your mind.** Are you listening to those things that point you to Christ...or to the problem? Are you listening to people who reflect the character of Christ or the feeding frenzy of the world? Are you feeding into your mind obsessions and fears, or the mind of Christ and His ways? **Where your focus is, is where your heart is. And where your heart is, there is where your treasure, your priority, is. If you fear what is coming, what is being lost or stolen in this land, if your mind rests on those things, your spirit will ever be unsettled. Christ tells us: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal." What is of God cannot be stolen...we should not fear what men may do to us.**
- **Think on those things that are good and pure, lovely...honest, just and true.** (Phil. 4:8). Let the mind of Christ be in you and govern your thoughts and words and attitudes. (Phil. 2: 5; I Cor. 2:16).
- **Hold political candidates who run in the name of God, who solicit votes from the Christian community, to a higher standard.** Once God's name is used by a candidate in this way, how that person behaves represents God to the world. God's name must not be sullied in the political arena with our muted consent. Nathan confronted David's sin for that very reason. We must be Nathan or we will be susceptible to ulterior motives and manipulations in the name of God, and we will be ill-prepared to recognize the anti-Christ, should he arise in our time, with his religious rhetoric in full regalia.
- **Don't scurrilize political figures you oppose, especially the President.** We are told by Paul to pray for the king. The king at the time of Paul was Herod, a tyrant and murderer; the emperor was Nero, a mass murderer, especially of Christians. When we "resist evil" – we tend to resist it with more subtle forms of "evil." When we do that, whether we realize it or not, evil wins. This is the reason for Matthew 5:39.
- **Reject politicizing God.** It will blind us both to truth and lies when they come clothed differently than we expect. Germany politicized God and thousands of pastors were persuaded that Hitler was Germany's messiah...God's man for the times. Catholics and Protestants both politicized God in the Spanish Inquisition and holy wars and brutalized and murdered millions who disagreed with them because "they" were God's enemies. Hannah Whithall Smith's husband, a pastor, left her and their many children, moving to London for several months because she disagreed with him on who should be king. Great damage is justified in the name of God when we equate Him with a certain political posture or person.
- **Be mindful of your own words and how true you are to what you say.** Authenticity is one of the casualties of the end times. How true does your life measure to your words? How true does it measure to His word?
- **Be ever ready to speak of the hope that is in you in Christ.** (I Peter 3: 15)
- **Regularly check your "form of godliness."** What of its power is lacking in your life? What do you need to do about it?
- **Check your heart.** Where are the callous places? Where are the cold or unresponsive zones? The negative? What is God saying to you about your heart?
- **Check your faith.** It is not enough to be people of God. It is not enough to have generic faith in Christ as Savior only; such is a "form of godliness" devoid of its power." We must be people who live and breathe, who think and walk by faith. **Christ's sole question about the end times was, "When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"**