

Let's Talk: Day 344

Today's Reading: Matthew 14 / Family Focus: verses 22-33

Have you ever thought about how a storm coming into someone's life often provides a choice to step out in faith? In today's story, twelve men were in a boat and all of them were scared. Only Peter stepped out in faith and asked for the additional challenge to walk on water. Discuss with your family a time when you chose to step out in faith. Did you stay courageous or begin to doubt? What happened?

Questions:

1. What did Jesus do when He went up to the mountain after He sent the crowds away? If the God of the universe needs time alone, how important is it for us?
2. No matter how bad the storms of our life are, if Jesus is there what would He say should be our attitude?
3. So long as Peter was focused on Jesus, what was he able to do? What happened when Peter focused on the wind instead? What does that teach us?
4. If you had been on the boat, which of the disciples do you think you would have been most like, Peter or the others? Why?

Let's Talk: Day 345

Today's Reading: Matthew 15 / Family Focus: verses 1-10

Jesus talks to the scribes and Pharisees about being a hypocrite. What do you think the word hypocrite means? Look in a dictionary for the definition of hypocrite and read today's passage with this in mind.

Questions:

1. What did the scribes and Pharisees say that the disciples did not do, therefore breaking the law?
2. What law did Jesus say the Pharisees broke by their created tradition?

3. What prophet did Jesus quote, illustrating their hypocrisy?
4. How can you draw near to God with your mouth and your heart? How does this prevent hypocrisy? Can you think of any traditions we have at church which may not be wrong, but aren't commanded by God? How tightly should we hold on to them?

Let's Talk: Day 346

Today's Reading: Matthew 16 / Family Focus: verses 13-20

Parents, gather paper and crayons and ask your children to draw a picture of the church. This may be a bit tricky for some kids. Jesus tells us He will build His church. The church isn't a building but rather is a collection of His followers. Did the kids draw pictures of people or a building? Use their pictures as a teachable moment to affirm what the church really is.

Questions:

1. Who did some people think Jesus was? Who did Simon say Jesus was? What was Jesus' reaction?
2. What promise and name change was given to Simon?
3. From the reading over the last few days, what do we see that is unique to Simon's character? How will this make him a good leader of the church?
4. At that time, why do you think Jesus didn't want any of His disciples to tell others that He was the Christ? Do you know when that changed?

Let's Talk: Day 347

Today's Reading: Matthew 17 / Family Focus: verses 24-27

Gather a variety of coins (1, 5, 10, 25 cents). Compare these different coins: their size, their thicknesses, what is inscribed, their color, their value, etc. If you want, you can do some coin rubbings. Share that today we are going to talk about the temple tax which was something every Old Testament Jewish man paid for his atonement.

Questions:

1. When the disciples came to Capernaum, what were they asked to pay?
2. Only those that needed their sins forgiven needed to pay the temple tax. Did Jesus need to pay that tax? Why did He say they should both pay it? Is there ever a time God might want you to do something to not offend someone, even though you know you don't have to do it?
3. Where did Peter get the money to pay their taxes?
4. Why do you think Jesus didn't just make the money appear but made Peter work for it? How might the money in a fish's mouth be significant to Peter?

Let's Talk: Day 348

Today's Reading: Matthew 18 / Family Focus: verses 10-14

Take turns making your best sheep impersonations. We will read about the parable of the lost sheep today. If you are adventurous, play "Hide and Seek" in your house but keep your eyes closed. Follow the sounds of the "hidden sheep."

Questions:

1. Who do you think are the "little ones" in verse 10? Where are their angels? What do you think that means?
2. What has the Son of Man come to do? How does that affect us?
3. How many sheep did the man in today's passage have? What was his attitude about the one that was lost? What does that tell us about God?
4. What should our attitude be towards God's lost sheep? What can we do to help those sheep find their Shepherd?

Let's Talk: Day 349

Today's Reading: Isaiah 29 / Family Focus: verses 13-16

Today's reading was quoted on Day 346 in Matthew 15. Our passage today reminds us that we are just the clay. God is the potter. He is in control, not us. Watch this video called "The Potter's Hands" by Hillsong: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDAITgJXO1I>.

Questions:

1. What did the people do with their lips but not with their hearts?
Why is this wrong?
2. Can you think of a time you gave “lip service” to your parents or another person in authority over you but your heart wasn’t in it?
Why is God so concerned with our heart, or attitude?
3. What will happen to the wisdom given to men? What is the wisdom of men compared to the wisdom of God?
4. Can you imagine something manufactured (like a doll or a Lego or an I-phone) questioning its creator or denying its existence? Do we have days when we don’t acknowledge God for all He has done in our lives? How could we change?

Let’s Talk: Day 350

Today’s Reading: Today is the weekly OFF day

Mystery Question for the upcoming week: What is the “second greatest commandment?” Matthew 22

To continue yesterday’s discussion, go to a pottery store and paint a piece of pottery or use modeling clay to make your own creation. Discuss the similarities between a ‘potter and a lump of clay’ to ‘God and us’.