

St Paul's Dorking Small Group Notes w/c 23rd October 2016

Luke 10 1-20 Growing in Confidence in Success

Today's reading is about a group of people who do exactly what Jesus tells them to –they go out without any significant provisions, they heal the sick and preach the fact that the kingdom of God is near. They have great success; even the demons submitted to them in Jesus name! What can we learn from their experience?

Firstly, they **obeyed Jesus instructions**- completely, and immediately. Jesus is quite prescriptive- he gives them detail such as to travel light, move on where you are not welcomed, eat first, then heal and then give the message. We also have a very clear directive in what has become known as the Great Commission in Matt 28 18- 20. It is in fact fundamental to our faith to have confidence that Jesus is calling us to act for him.

Secondly the 72 had **no specific gifting or training**. We are probably just as well equipped, if not better; we have the whole gospels to guide us, and 2000 years of Christian activity! Jesus calls us to go out and minister for him whoever we are; the very word disciple means apprentice, not master craftsman. Being a new Christian, feeling we are not as well trained as others, does not preclude us from acting for Jesus. Thirdly, in the **midst of success there was still failure**. Our concern that we will fail can be paralysing. Jesus actually tips them off that they will fail; he says I send you out as sheep among wolves! He gives a specific instruction of what to do when they get rejected. Fear of failure can stop us serving God. Failure is a part of life, and if our fear of failure is gripping us, we need to acknowledge it, and pray deeply into it; and take steps to overcome it.

The success of the 72 comes down to their confidence in following Jesus instructions. They simply trusted Jesus so much that they could do nothing other than do his will. Confidence is a belief that if we step out for Jesus, because of His outrageous grace He will honour our attempts and help us build on them. Confidence teaches us that we will be happier in having tried than in not having tried. Do we really believe that?

Sarah Lloyd gave details of her summer, when she went to Denmark to pray for people on the streets. Since she has been home she has trained people from other churches in this, prayed for healing for her neighbours (with success!) and helped start our **Just Try** series (last session Monday 31st October, everyone welcome).

Sarah listened to God and accepted a very different plan from the one she was writing for her summer. She took practical, active steps- went out with street evangelists, found a course to go on and the funding for it, is helping people from other churches and also taking her learning to new areas with us including Just Try. She has had some success and some failure, and is still making mistakes but is enjoying learning from them, and is growing in faith. Finally, Sarah is really rather ordinary, in the nicest sense of the word ☺

It is vital that we share stories and encourage each other to take **small steps forward**. We don't necessarily need to know the full road map ahead; we just need the confidence to step out into it. Nike says Just Do it, but we say **Just Try it**. And if you succeed– that's great, build on it, and if you fail, that's also great, try again. This is what God calls us to do; the bar is set low; everyone gets to play. The most important word is Try and the second most important is try again. Confidence is like a muscle; the more you use it, the stronger it gets. Confidence is like Blue-Tack: left unused it goes cold, hard and useless, kept warm and 'kneaded' it becomes soft and pliable and useful for all sorts of things. How pliable are we? How willing to try something new? The 72 were nameless, untrained apprentices. They had a lot of success and a bit of failure. On returning **Jesus says don't be confident in what you did, in what you achieved but in your salvation, because your names are written in heaven** ... In success we see God at work; not our own achievements. St Theresa said; '*Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours*': this is our calling. All He asks is that we try and try again. Encourage your heart, and the heart of those around you. What can you try this week?

Questions for your group to consider:

1. Read Matthew 28 18-20. To what ways do you see this as applying to you?
2. We are called to be apprentices to furthering God's kingdom. What are we doing to 'learn on the job' like an apprentice? Could it even be an advantage to be without experience/expertise?
3. Is fear of failure stopping you from stepping out? How can we overcome this? (2 Tim. 1: 7; 2 Corinthians 12: 9)
4. What struck you about Sarah's story? What encouraged you? What did you find hard?
5. What does a step out in confidence for Jesus look like for you? For example in prayer? In talking about Jesus? Start from what you do now, and try to imagine one very tiny step forward from this. Vocalise it!
6. God's desire for us to serve him is less about getting his work done than it is about growing our confidence and our understanding of his transformational grace in our lives. Do you agree? If so, what are the implications?
7. Pray that we will all learn to be pliable for Jesus. Pray we will be willing to Just Try, and then to Try Again. Be specific about what you can do, and encourage each other.