

Explore: Our Messiah: Abused!

January 11, 2014

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Jan. 26 focuses on John 18:1-6,17-24.*

The Bible's honesty is fascinating. No matter which biblical character you think about, the Bible shares not only their good times, but also their dark ones.

Think about King David. We have great stories of courage and character, such as his willingness to take on the giant Goliath and his unwillingness to destroy King Saul when he had the chance. However, the Bible also gives the sordid details of his affair with Bathsheba.

David is just one example of how the Bible lays bare these people's lives for us all to see. We get to see the good, the bad and the ugly of their lives and how God turned them around for his glory. We should be glad the stories of our lives are not written down for the world to see.

Reminded of our weaknesses

But, we also are reminded in Scripture of our weaknesses: "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:26-27).

If we are going to let God take control of our lives and make something significant of us, we are going to have to be willing to be honest about our faults and failures. Only then can God change us from the inside out for his glory and purpose!

This week's Scripture shows us a snapshot of one of Christ's followers and, more specifically, his failure. In this week's lesson, we see the tale of two men. One of these men followed the instruction of the Father and did so with courage. The other man was overcome by fear and anger—both of which eventually lead to his failure. We will examine both of their stories in order to gain perspective of what God wants from our lives.

Drink the cup

The scene surrounding Jesus' arrest in the Bible is interesting. These men came to Jesus, along with Judas, to arrest him. They do so under the cover of darkness. When they reached him, Jesus asked them who they were coming to arrest. They said they were coming for Jesus and then he answered, "I am he." At this, the men fell down.

We all have been in situations where we let our emotions get the better of us. However, the reaction of these men still is very confusing. They fell down as Jesus said this phrase, and yet they still were willing to arrest him.

The encounter also shows us Jesus allowed himself to be taken. He could have stopped them at any time, but chose to go with them willingly. It was Jesus' words in verse 11 that stood out to me. After Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the men who had come to arrest Jesus, Jesus healed that man and then said: "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Jesus was determined to "drink the cup" of God's will for his life. Drinking that cup would mean enduring trials, heartache, beatings, betrayal, and ultimately even death of a cruel cross. Back in the garden, Peter was trying to stop any of this from ever happening. But Jesus would have no part in halting these events. This was the Father's purpose for Jesus' life, and he willingly followed that plan.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us why: "For the joy set before him he endured the

cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Jesus carried out the plan because he wanted to please his Heavenly Father and he knew his death and resurrection were required to secure eternal life for all who choose to follow him. That joy was enough for Him to endure the cross.

Emotional wreck

The other tale we need to see here is that of Simon Peter, one of Jesus’ closest disciples. Peter is seen as a bevy of emotion throughout Scripture. Here in this particular story, we first see Peter’s anger. In the garden he gets so mad at those who have come to arrest Jesus, he draws his sword and cuts off the ear of one of the servants. I assure you, he was not aiming for the ear.

In the next scene, we see Peter’s emotions of both fear and anger. Again, these are snapshots of his life. Can you imagine Peter showing pictures of his life to his family and friends? He would have wonderful photos of Jesus calling him from his fishing job and being with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. But he would also have this snapshot. Friends would ask, “Peter why do you look so fearful in this one photo and so angry in the other.” Peter was full of fear when he began to deny being a follower of Christ. He moved into anger as he adamantly refused to admit he ever even knew Jesus. Again, aren’t you glad our moments of failure aren’t written down for the whole world to see?

Jesus knew what Peter had inside of him when he called him to be a follower. He even changed his name to “Peter” or “rock” to signify the type of change he was going to make in his life. On the night Jesus was arrested, we see Peter was not living up to all he was created by Christ to be. However, as we see in the book of Acts, Peter eventually goes on to live out

his life with incredible courage and character.

Our choice

So, here we see the tale of two men. Certainly, these two men and their stories can serve as a model for our lives and the decisions we make. Will we chose to follow God's plan for our lives regardless of the personal cost to us? Or, will we chose to let ourselves be a servant to our emotions—like fear and anger—and fail to reach our full potential.