

RECEPTIVITY

Luke 8:1-15

8:1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

4 While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5 "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10 He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

"though seeing, they may not see;
though hearing, they may not understand."

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. NIV

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

- 1) What makes a man unreceptive to truth?
- 2) Give an example of a time when you were unreceptive to truth.
- 3) What makes you more receptive to truth?

FURTHER STUDY

- 4) Describe the different soils
- 5) What real life examples does each soil type represent?
- 6) What things can men do to make our lives more receptive to the truth of God's word?

ACTION

Gen 3:1-13

3:1 NOW THE serpent was more subtle and crafty than any living creature of the field which the Lord God had made. And he [Satan] said to the woman, Can it really be that God has said, You shall not eat from every tree of the garden? [Rev 12:9-11.]

2 And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit from the trees of the garden,

3 Except the fruit from the tree which is in the middle of the garden. God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

4 But the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, [2 Cor 11:3.]

5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil and blessing and calamity.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good (suitable, pleasant) for food and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired in order to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave some also to her husband, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves apron-like girdles.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you?

10 He said, I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.

11 And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?

12 And the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me — she gave me [fruit] from the tree, and I ate.

13 And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled (cheated, outwitted, and deceived) me, and I ate. AMP

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

An apathetic man shows no feeling, interest, enthusiasm or concern.

- 1) What would make a man “apathetic” about dealing with important issues: In the home, on the job, in the community or in the church?
- 2) In what ways was Adam “apathetic?” regarding what happened with the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

FURTHER STUDY

- 3) How would you describe Satan’s method of temptation?
- 4) How did Adam and Eve respond after being confronted by God?
- 5) Where do you as a man need to take action in your life?

PRAYER

Matt 6:5-15

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

KJV

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

There is nothing as powerful as when a man of God prays.

1. What motivates most men to pray? Do you think men tend to pray about different things than women? Why?
2. Why was Jesus critical of some of the “praying” men of his day? What is the right attitude towards God when we pray?
3. What is your prayer pattern? For instance, how often do you pray?, what do you typically pray about? What time of day do you pray? If you could change anything about your prayer pattern what would you change? Why?

FURTHER STUDY

1. How might you praying with family members, co-workers and friends be beneficial to you and others?
2. What matters might hinder you from praying openly with others in your church, job or home?
3. The “Lord’s Prayer” recorded here has at least four important features; they spell out A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) identify which verse(s) demonstrates each of the four components of A.C.T.S.
4. What would you pray about today?

PERSEVERANCE

Luke 5:1-11

5:1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him. KJV

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

Discouragement is like a cancer that eats away at a man's spirit.

1. What kinds of things discourage men? What can discouragement do to a man?
2. How can you minister to your own discouragement
3. What discouraged Peter? How might Peter initially feel about Jesus' advice?
4. What role does perseverance play in the life of a Christian man?

FURTHER STUDY

1. Simon Peter was about to clean his boat and go home after a long night of fishing and catching nothing; how might he felt about Jesus asking to use his boat? Had Simon Peter denied Jesus' request to use his boat, what would he have missed?
2. What do you think Simon Peter meant when he told Jesus "nevertheless at your word?"
3. Was Simon Peter the only fishermen that benefited from the huge catch of fishes?
4. According to Luke 5:11; how does Simon Peter's life's priorities appear to change? How has life's circumstances cause you to have to change your life's priorities?

FAITH

Matt 14:22-33

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. KJV

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

Do you think that most fear is generated from a sense of us no longer being in control?

1. Why are some fears considered irrational? – Does fear serve a purpose in our lives?
2. If a person believes that something is dangerous; does that make that “something” dangerous for that person?
3. Do you think Peter was afraid just like the other disciples?
4. Has fear of the unknown ever caused you not to trust God?
5. Were the other disciples safer by staying in the boat than stepping onto the water?

FURTHER STUDY

1. Has God ever challenged you to “step out” on faith? How did you respond?
2. How might have the other disciples felt about Peter stepping out of the boat? What would you have said to Peter when he began to step out of the boat on to the water? What things have you said to yourself when a faith step presented itself in your life?
3. In verse 28, the word “bid” means to command. Why would Peter require Jesus to command him to come to him walking on the water?
4. What caused Peter to begin to sink? – Do you think that the fact that Peter sunk, made his entire experience of walking on the water a failure? How might this experience be viewed as a major success in Peter’s life?

REPENTANCE

Matthew 4:17 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

2 Chronicles 7:14 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁴If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Luke 15:17-19 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁷And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

¹⁹And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

How does sinning make people feel?

1. Why is it the men respond differently to sin in their life?
2. Should the Christian man take responsibility for his sins? How is this done?
3. How has the sins of others impacted your life?
4. How have you tried to address sin in your own life?
5. What are some of the dangers of unaddressed sins?

FURTHER STUDY

6. Why was repentance the first issue Jesus addressed in his preaching?
7. How would you describe repentance and its function in the Christian's spiritual life?
8. What "steps" or factors lead to the repentance of the young man in Luke chapter 15?
9. What factors were necessary for you to repent of your sins? Are you willing to share them with a brother in need of that same deliverance? Why or why not?

BELIEF

Rom 8:5-9

5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. NIV

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

How can you know what a man really believes in?

1. How might a man's belief concerning the existence of Jesus Christ as the son of God shape his behavior?
2. Is it possible for a man to "believe" one thing while his actions display the opposite of what he proposes to believe in? Give an example. How could such a contradiction exist?
3. What might need to occur so that a man's beliefs and his actions are congruent?

FURTHER STUDY

4. In the verses above the Apostle Paul talks about our two natures; one carnal and one spiritual. How would you define each?
5. One nature lives for the things of God and the other nature lives for that which brings pleasure and satisfaction to his sinful disposition. Is it possible for a man to have both of these natures struggling inside him?
6. Read Romans 8:7. Is it possible for a man to negotiate with his sinful mind and get it to accept the will and way of God? Why would it be impossible for a man to convince his sinful nature to accept God's will and God's way?
7. How does a man recognize the "spirit of Christ" living inside of him? How might a man nurture and encourage the spirit of Christ to be the controlling factor in his life?

Author's Comments: To believe in God is to exercise real confidence in God. Believing in the true and living God is the essential element of our faith. Believing in God is not the enough to save us. The bible says demons believe. Only when our belief results in our godly behavior are we truly believing in God.

IDENTITY

Gen 1:27-28

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, ¹Be fruitful, and ²multiply, and ³replenish the earth, and ⁴subdue it: and have ⁵dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

According to this scripture text, what 5 blessing did God give to his man Adam? We have likewise inherited those same five-fold blessings.

Why is it important to know your life's purpose?

1. How can we as men be "be fruitful?" – We must "produce" healthy results.
2. How can we as men "multiply" – We must understand how to increase our "productivity"
3. How can we as men "replenish" - We must never allow ourselves to deplete our source.
4. How does this blessing of "subdue" apply? – We as men are hardwired to chase and catch. The desire to run after things is part of what God has put in every man.
5. What is the blessing of "dominion" – here God has placed us in a position of authority. It is not in our nature to be controlled or to live in bondage.

FURTHER STUDY

6. How might sin cause men to use these same 5 fold blessings in ungodly ways?
7. How is the drive that makes one man sell drugs and another man go to work at a 9 to 5 the same?
8. How could the knowledge of the 5 fold blessings help to encourage men to embrace these qualities?
9. What might cause a man to lose the "drives" behind manifesting these 5 fold blessings?

RENEWING

Rom 12:1-2

12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. KJV

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS

1. What is harder to control your body or your mind?
2. How does society try to “conform” us as men?
3. What makes a “changed” mind so powerful?
4. How often should we as Christian men renew our minds?

FURTHER STUDY

1. Why is it important that how we use our bodies reflect our commitment to Jesus Christ?
2. How would a change in our mind, bring about a change in our lives?
3. The renewing of our minds is a work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of every believer. How would you describe that here the man of God transformation begins with “good” then his transformation becomes “acceptable” and finally it becomes “perfect?” HINT: As we as men strive daily to walk upright before God- want happens day by day?
4. How might a man begin this transformation of his spirit and the renewing of his mind?

SUBMISSION

Rom 13:1-7

13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. NIV

Thoughts and Questions:

Although there are certainly times when those in control of governing do so in an unjust manner, the Apostle Paul here teaches that the origin or "concept" of government is a divine invention.

1. Is the existence of "authority" something that is needed? Why or why not?
2. What role does authority serve in the lives of people?
3. Why are some many resistant to authority?
4. What tends to corrupt God's divine system of authority?

Further Study:

1. 1 Cor 11:1 The Apostle Paul instructs us in I Cor. 11:1 to: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." NIV – can we deduce from this scripture that we as Christians can refuse to obey any such authority that is not in line with the doctrines of Jesus Christ?
2. There are at least 3 areas of authority (A) civil government, (B) the church (C) Parental. How are we as Christian men to respond to each of these areas of authority? Do we respond differently depending on the area of authority.. if so how?

CONFESSION

1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. NIV

Thoughts and Questions:

One of the concepts that come from this passage is the contrast between God's holy light and man's dismal darkness. God is the source of all wisdom, knowledge, holiness and happiness; and in God there is no darkness at all. Men who walk in the darkness of ignorance, imperfection and sinfulness do not have fellowship with Christ though they may make great effort to prove to others that they do. Our remedy for a dark existence is to walk in the light where the blood of Christ may cleanse us from our sin affording us fellowship with him and with each other.

1. In John 3:19, Jesus tells us that men love darkness rather than light; what draws men to the darkness of ungodliness? And what keeps them there?
2. What makes denying our sinful nature a dangerous practice?
3. Can a man be walking in darkness and not know it?
4. What is necessary for a man to realize he is walking in darkness?

Further Study:

In 1 John 5:9, the Apostle writes: "If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." The word "confess" in the original language of the New Testament is "homologeo" and it means to say the same word or to agree with what has been said. So for confession to result in the forgiveness of our sins and the purifying from all our unrighteousness, we must say the same things about our sin that God says about it. We cannot call it "safe-sex" when God calls it fornication. We can't call it not giving in the offering, when God calls it robbing God!

1. Why would men be reluctant to speak of his sins in the same manner God speaks of them?
2. Why is confession such an important part of our coming to Christ for salvation?
3. When we do confess our sins – to whom should we confess them? And why?

STRENGTH

Eph 6:10-14

10 “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle (wrestle kjv) is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then...” NIV

In this passage the Apostle Paul reminds us of our true opposition and of the strategy that must be employed to defeat our opposition. To win this fight we must be strong, but not strong within our own capacities but we must be strong in God. Satan has many schemes and plans that he can successfully deploy upon unsuspecting men who because of their spiritual ignorance are taken to hell unaware that they have paid their own fare there!

Thoughts and Questions:

1. What qualities or behaviors would make a man be considered a “strong man?”
2. What qualities or behaviors would make a man be considered a “weak man?”
3. Can a man be both strong and weak?
4. How can a man become strong “in the Lord?”
5. Can we ever be without some weakness in our life?
6. 2 Cor. 12:9 tells us the God’s “strength is made perfect” in our “weakness.” How can such weakness be a foundation of strength for the Christian?

Further Study:

Some bible scholars teach that Satan has assigned specific demons (fallen angels) to reign over specific geographical areas of the earth; and those areas reflect that demon’s specific sinful nature. This is what the KJV calls “*principalities*”; Eph. 6:12. This would mean that certain geographical areas are more prone to certain types of sinful behaviors and activities. What do you think about this theory?

1. Does Satan cause people to sin?
2. Why do you think the author describes his experience with Satan as wrestling?
3. Why do you think it was necessary for the Apostle to inform us that we are not really struggling with other people but with spiritual powers who scheme to influence people and manipulate situations?

PATIENCE

Heb 10:35-38

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense (*capacity*) of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. KJV

As God's sons we have inherited certain privileges that afford us the ability to come before our heavenly father's throne with holy boldness given to us through the finished work of his Son Jesus Christ. This is where our spiritual "confidence" is derived. According to the passage, this confidence in God has within it its own reward. Knowing we are prone to collapse beneath the weightiness while we are awaiting relief; the writer exhorts us to hold fast to the virtue of patience. He reminds of that once we have done the will of God we can rest assure that God will keep his promises towards us.

Thoughts and Questions

1. Why would it be important for Christian men to have confidence in God?
2. What matters might cause us to lose our confidence in God.
3. Do we always feel as if God is "for us?"
4. What does patience look like in your life?
5. How are faith and patience necessary factors of a victorious life?

Further Study:

1. The passage says we need patience "after we have done the will of God" - how can we know we have done God's will? (I John 5:14) how does this scripture address this matter?
2. How can we help other men build their confidence in God?
3. What factors might hinder men in our fellowship from growing in their faith towards God?