



GPS GUIDE: JANUARY 15, 2023 G r o w . P r a y . S t u d y .

Series: Back to Basics

Sermon: Rule #6

Monday: Read: Matthew 5:43-48

Sue Monk Kidd stood inside the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center in Atlanta waiting to interview Coretta Scott King gazing at an exhibit of the travel bag Dr. King had used on his fatal trip to Memphis. Inside the bag were two books. The one on top was entitled *Strength to Love*. It reminded her of his audacious belief that loving one's enemies holds the power to transform society. *Was he right? Could simply acting in love in the face of hostility really make a difference?*

Later Sue Monk Kidd asked Mrs. King.

"Let me tell you a story," she replied. "One January night in 1956 while Martin was away, I sat home with our baby. Suddenly there was a thunderous blast. A bomb had been tossed onto the front porch. The baby and I were unharmed, but an angry crowd of our friends, wanting revenge, had gathered around the house when Martin got home.

"It was the first test of his theory," she continued. "Martin hushed the crowd and said, 'I want you to go home and put down your weapons. We must meet violence with nonviolence. We must meet hate with love.'"

"What happened?" she asked.

"The anger melted, and the crowd faded into the night," she said with a smile. "You see, the power of love is a mighty force."

The title of the *other* book in Dr. King's bag?

Where Do We Go from Here?

That might be the most important question we ask ourselves today. Where do you face hostility, hatred, or violence? Where do you see injustice towards others in our community? What is your response? How will you act in love today?

Prayer: We thank you for your church that challenges us to do more than sing and pray but go out and work as though the very answer to our prayers depended on us and not upon you. Help us to realize that humanity was created to shine like the stars and live on through all eternity. Keep us, we pray, in perfect peace. Help us to walk together, pray together, sing together, and live together until that day when all God's children will rejoice in one common band of humanity. Amen. (MLK's prayer for the church)

Tuesday: Read Genesis 2:18-23

Genesis is an origin story: a prosaic telling of how things came to be the way they are. Genesis is poetry in prose, a theological accounting of how things that were seen, known, and imagined came to be. In Genesis, God is present, caring, attentive, thoughtful, actively nurturing. Assessing God's singular creation God sees its need for companionship and addresses it immediately, making a statement about what it is to be human. Humankind individually and collectively need others of our kind. This is not a story about marriage or finding a romantic partner as much as it is a story about God's recognition that we need one another - family, friends, co-workers, neighbors - we are meant to live and work together for the good and growth of God's creation. Who do you consider to be your partners in life? In what ways do you need them? How is your relationship one of working together for good?

Prayer: creating God, thank you for making us to need one another. Amen.

Wednesday : Read Mark 1:14-20

As far as we can tell, the 12 guys Jesus called to be his companions were ordinary people. Jesus didn't do background checks to determine IQ levels, financial acumen, professional skills, or temple education. He picked people probably much like you and me. Furthermore, his disciples were anything but perfect. Many times they misunderstood him. They often hesitated to follow him. Judas betrayed him and Peter denied him. But these would be the ones to continue Jesus' work on earth after he left - ordinary people, like you and me. They were called to be in ministry together.

We believe that God calls each one of us. God not only calls us to follow Jesus, but also calls us into the fields and careers of our lives. We often speak of "God's call" too narrowly, as if God "calls" people only into ordained ministry. God's call is not limited to clergy. God calls every single one of us. How do you think God's call has been acted out in your life? Who are the ministry partners you lean on as you live out God's calling?

Prayer: Calling Lord, I know I am not perfect. Thank you for calling me to be in ministry in your name. I am grateful for the many ministry partners who make your mission easier to bear and bring joy to this holy work. Amen.

Thursday: Read Acts 13: 1-5; Acts 16: 16-24

Paul had a lifechanging conversion on the road to Damascus and began working on behalf of the Lord, preaching Jesus to the Gentiles. That kind of work is hard, it is tiring, it is lonely if you are isolated in your efforts. In the 13th chapter in Acts the Holy Spirit called out Paul and Barnabas to travel together and preach the gospel of Jesus. They traveled many places doing God's work together. Throughout Acts Paul has several different missionary partners, Silas even went to prison with Paul for preaching the gospel. Even Paul, remembered to this day as a giant of the faith, knew the value of having others to partner with in his ministry. Do you have a partner who has shared in some really hard times with you? How did knowing you could count on another person, even in the hardest of times, help you get through those times?

Prayer: For partnerships that sustain my life and my faith, I give you thanks, O God. Amen.

Friday: Read Acts 1: 12-26

When I was a child and we picked sides for teams, we would often "draw straws." That's how the disciples "casting lots" first strikes me. What kind of a method is this? But casting lots was not viewed as a haphazard process in biblical times. The casting of lots was only part of the process. Even before they decided to select a new witness to the resurrection the gathered faithful were spending much time in prayer. Then they nominated two qualified believers to fill the position. And then they prayed for God's guidance on the process. The last thing they did was to cast lots. The first business of the early church was the election of a new twelfth disciple, which reminds us that even a small group of leaders must continue to raise up new leaders for God's continuing work. In June of each year FCC elects leaders among us to guide our mission and ministry together. We know that ministry isn't done in a vacuum. We have committees and ministry missions where the work of guiding our ministry is shared by trusted leaders whom we elect as a congregation. How often do you pray for the leadership of our church? How might this story from the early church inform your participation in the election of leaders when June rolls around?

Prayer: Guide our work, O God. May our process of electing leaders always be grounded in prayer and confidence that your Spirit is at work among us. Amen.

Saturday: Faithful Activity

Today, spend some quiet time in meditation. Think about those mentors in your life who modeled teamwork rather than trying to do it all alone. Who do you know that encourages wider participation in activities? Who has lived by Rule #6 - "Don't take yourself so seriously"? Who has helped you not take yourself so seriously?

Consider sending an email or writing a note of thanks to someone in your life who has invited you to share in leadership, ministry, and mission, or someone who models shared ministry and leadership as a way of life.

