

The Heart of God

Monday, 8/25/08 – Read Isaiah 49:13-16

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Many people think of God as rule-maker and as an angry, tyrannical judge. But the Bible is clear that the central core of God's very being and the driving purpose of his interaction with us humans is a yearning for loving relationship. This is true in the Hebrew scriptures (the "old" testament) as well as in our Christian writings. ... Today's reading from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah compares God's love with that of a mom nursing her baby ... and claims that God's love is more intense and more enduring than a mother's love. ... Ponder the imagery of this passage for a moment; let the words touch your feelings. How does it feel when you realize that your name is inscribed in the palms of God's hands?

Tuesday, 8/26/08 – Read Hosea 11:3-9

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The Hebrew prophet Hosea pictures God's love like the love of a parent with a very young child -- teaching the little one to walk. Then the tenderness of God overflows in verse 4, where God is pictured as holding us up to the cheek. ... This tender relationship gets complicated when we humans "turn away" (verse 7). But God's compassion overcomes the complication; God's compassion "grows warm and tender" (verse 8). ... In your imagination picture yourself being held close by God, embraced cheek to cheek. ... As you picture God holding you this way, what feelings do you become aware of?

Wednesday, 8/27/08 – Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: "Covenant" is the Bible's word for relationship. Continually God is entering into covenant, into relationship, with the people. The prophet Jeremiah saw clearly that God's real goal is not a relationship of rules -- duty and obligation -- but a relationship of the heart. ... Make some notes for yourself: what do you see as the difference between a relationship of duty and a relationship of the heart? ... Have you ever had a sense that God's presence and God's purpose were in your heart? If so, describe what that was like.

Thursday, 8/28/08 – Read John 14:1-3, 8-12, 15-19

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: In Jesus God was inviting us (you, too!) into an intimate relationship of love. God wants us (you, too!) to share in the relationship that God had with Jesus. That's God's desire for you. And that can happen because of the Spirit of God (the Advocate -- verse 15), which is simply God present here and now, all the time, in every moment. Right this moment, God is with you, in relationship with you, loving you. What would it be like for you to live with that awareness?

Friday, 8/29/08 – Read Luke 15:11-32

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Today's reading is one of the great stories that Jesus told, and it emphasizes God's deep desire to be in relationship with us. But like the younger son, we have something that stands in the way. We have to turn around and re-turn to the open arms which stand ready to receive us.

What is it that stands in your way? What is it that you need to say to God when you re-turn?

Saturday, 8/30/08 – Read Matthew 11:25-30

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: In today's reading (verse 27) Jesus suggests the deep intimacy he and God shared. And then he invites us to quit working so hard, quit trying so hard, quit efforting to do it all ourselves -- and to relax into, find our rest in, relationship with him. ... Name one of the heavy burdens you are carrying these days. Write it down. ... In the book THE SHACK, God tells Mack that one of the reasons life is so hard for us humans is that we don't really trust God's goodness -- we don't really trust that God's goodness will function effectively in our difficulties. We act like it's only going to work out if we worry it to death. ... Would you today be willing to trust God's goodness -- just a little?

Sunday, 8/31/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: God's goal in Christ was healed relationships with us humans -- "reconciliation." What God is up to, what God wants, is a healed relationship with you. God just wants to be in your life -- every day, all the time. ... What do you want? Way deep down, in the quiet of your heart, what do you really want? ... Today in your prayer talk to God about your deepest yearnings, and talk with God about whether you are willing just to begin opening up to a healed relationship.

My Faith Journal, August 24, 2008

What God Wants

A book you might want to check out:

William P. Young's THE SHACK.

What do I want to remember out of today's message?

What action do I intend to take as a result of today's message?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE your thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life experience. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.