

Make the First Thing the First Thing (1)

Monday, 9/22/08 – Read Ephesians 2:8-9

My Observations _____

A Question to Answer: “Grace” is one of those difficult words -- difficult because we use it so many ways to mean very different things. One of the dictionary definitions is: “the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God.” Jesus himself does not use the word, but his stories illustrate grace profoundly. ... Write down your understanding, your definition of “grace.”

Tuesday, 9/23/08 – Read Luke 15:1-7

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Do you ever feel lost? Does it ever feel like everyone else is all together and you are the outsider? ... In today’s reading the shepherd eagerly seeks out the lone lost sheep. What does this tell you about grace?

Wednesday, 9/24/08 – Read Luke 15:8-10

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: What’s it like for you when you misplace something? When you cannot find your keys, for example? What’s it like when finally you find them? What’s the feeling? ... What does that tell you about grace?

Thursday, 9/25/08 – Read Luke 15:11-24

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Of all the stories that Jesus told, surely one of the greatest is this story that we sometimes call “the prodigal son.” (We’ll read the second part of the story tomorrow.) ... What’s your reaction to this story? ... Notice verse 20: the father is on the lookout for the son; the father runs to the son and embraces him. ... Have you ever been loved like that? What was that like for you? ... Some have thought that the compassion of the father in this story is Jesus’ definition of grace. Would you agree? ... What would it be like for you to love others as the father in this story loves?

Friday, 9/26/08 – Read Luke 15:25-32

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The older brother has a legitimate complaint, doesn’t he? The actions of the father are not really “fair” in the strictest sense of fair. And yet there is something about the attitude of the older brother that misses the point -- that is grudging and ungenerous. What do you think? Do you identify more with the prodigal son or with the older brother? ... What’s the relationship between “grace” and “fairness”? How do they fit together? Or do they?

Saturday, 9/27/08 – Read Matthew 20:1-16

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: In today’s reading, another of Jesus’ stories, the conflict between “grace” and “fairness” is even more intense. What’s your reaction to this story? ... Remember the definition of grace: “the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God.” Does this story illustrate grace? Do you think that’s the way God relates to people? To all people? ... Do you ever feel resentful of God’s generosity? What is it in us that resents grace?

Sunday, 9/2/08 – Read John 1:1-18

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: “... grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” He was “full of grace.” (verses 17, 14) ... Has your understanding of grace changed this week from the Bible passages we have read? How would you define grace now? Write your definition of “grace.” ... We started the week with Ephesians 2:8 -- “For by grace you have been saved through faith ...” What do you think of that statement now? Do you think it’s true? Is your relationship with God based on grace? Do you trust that? Write down your response.

My Faith Journal, September 21, 2008

Becoming Grownups #3:

Make the First Thing the First Thing (1)

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. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own 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.