

**God is Never Without a Witness**

**Monday, 11/16/09 – Read Genesis 12:1-3**

My Observations \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: How shall we relate to people who are different from ourselves? As people of faith, how shall we relate to people of other faiths, or people who claim no particular faith? Let's think about that this week. ... We begin at the beginning, with the call of Abram (later Abraham). Notice that God's purpose in calling Abram is finally that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Is your faith (and the way you live your faith) a blessing to others? Is it a blessing to those who do not share your Christian faith?

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**Tuesday, 11/17/09 – Read Leviticus 19:33-34**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: We often think of the ancient Hebrews as fiercely hostile to other peoples -- and on occasions certainly they were. And yet, embedded in their law, the instructions they believed God had given them about how to live -- embedded in the law are instructions like today's reading. God asked the Hebrew people to love the alien as they loved themselves! ... How would our relationships with people of other faiths be different if we loved people (people different from ourselves) -- if we loved them as we love ourselves?

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**Wednesday, 11/18/09 – Read Isaiah 44:28--45:3**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: The exile of the Jews in Babylon ended when the Persians conquered Babylon, and the Persian King Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem. The Jews saw Cyrus as serving God's purposes, and the prophet Isaiah thought of Cyrus as God's shepherd and God's anointed. ... Have you ever seen someone outside our faith serving God's purposes? Can people who are not Christians or Jews serve God's good purposes in the world? Jot down some examples that occur to you.

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**Thursday, 11/19/09 – Read Romans 2:12-16**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: The Apostle Paul thought that some of God's purposes were embedded in the fabric of the natural order -- and that people who did not accept the Jewish law sometimes did "instinctively what the law requires." ... What do you think? Do you see people who are not part of Jewish or Christian faith doing God's will as a matter of conscience? Can you think of an example, perhaps someone you know? ... How should we relate to such people and such behavior? How might we affirm and celebrate their "conscience"?

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**Friday, 11/20/09 – Read Mark 7:24-30**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: Today's reading is an encounter between Jesus and a woman whom today we would call "Palestinian." ... It may seem troubling that Jesus' response to her is at first so negative. But in the end Jesus applies to her the same criteria he applied to everyone else -- the presence of TRUST / FAITH. ... Do you apply the same conditions to people

outside the faith as to those on the inside? Or do we give preferential treatment to those who are more like us?

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**Saturday, 11/21/09 – Read John 10 11-18**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

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A Question to Answer: Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd, and in the middle of his description he makes this enigmatic statement: “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also ...” Jesus doesn’t really tell us whom he has in mind, who the “other sheep” are. What’s your guess? Gentiles (non-Jews) maybe? Or who? ... For you, are there “other sheep,” those who are not in the same fold or group as you, those whom you think are part of Jesus’ whole flock?

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**Sunday, 11/22/09 – Read Acts 14:16-18**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

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A Question to Answer: Read carefully verses 16-17. What an incredible statement! Among the nations and cultures of the world, God has never left himself without a witness! Who are these people who have been witnesses to the presence and activity of God? Write down your list. Some would include Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, or Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar (Burma). Whom would you list? In other nations, cultures, and traditions, who have been God’s witnesses?

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## *My Faith Journal*, November 15, 2009

You Asked for It, #10

### ***Dealing with Difference (2): Other Faiths***

#### **What do I hear God saying to me today?**

Genesis 12:1-3

Leviticus 19:33-34

John 10:11-18

Acts 14:16-18

#### **What action do I intend to take this week?**

*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. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.*