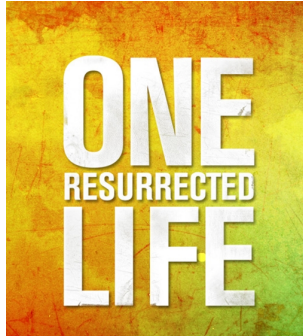


Small Group Discussion



ONE RESURRECTED LIFE: What is Worship?

The Hebrew & Greek words for worship mean 1) *to bow down* and 2) *to serve*.

Everyone worships in some way, we honor and place value on things and people. The purpose for purposeful worship is to insure that we are honoring and serving the right things. What are you bowing down to (honoring)? Are you serving the right people and things?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Today we're going to start with a story that unravels the idea of worship with an analogy.

This story is written by Robert Fulghum (*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*).

"The cardboard box," he writes, "is marked 'the good stuff.' As I write, I can see the box where it is stored on a high shelf in my studio. I like being able to see it when I look up.

"The box contains those odds and ends of personal treasures that have survived many bouts of clean-it-out-and-throw-it-away that seized me from time to time. The box has passed through the screening done as I've moved from house to house and hauled stuff from attic to attic.

"A thief looking into the box wouldn't take anything, couldn't get a dime for any of it, but if the house ever catches on fire, the box goes with me when I run. One of the keepsakes in the box is a small paper bag, lunch size. "Though the top is sealed with duct tape, staples and several paper clips, there's a ragged rip in one side through which the contents may be seen. This particular lunch sack has been in my care for many years, but it really belongs to my daughter, Molly.

"Soon after she came of school age, she became an enthusiastic participant in packing the morning lunches for herself, her brothers and me. Every bag got its share of sandwiches, apples, milk money and sometimes a note or treat. One morning Molly handed me two bags as I was about to leave, one regular lunch sack and the one with the duct tape and staples and paper clips. " 'Why two bags?' I asked. 'The other one has something else.' 'What's in it?' 'Just some stuff. Take it with you.' Not wanting to hold court over the matter, I stuffed both sacks into my briefcase, kissed the child and rushed off.

"At midday while hurriedly scarfing down my lunch, I tore open Molly's bag and shook out the contents: two hair ribbons, three small stones, a plastic dinosaur, a pencil stub, a tiny sea shell, two animal crackers, a marble, a used lipstick, a small doll, two chocolate kisses and thirteen pennies.

"I smiled, how charming. Rushing off to hustle to the important business of the afternoon, I swept the desk clean into the wastebasket, a

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leftover lunch, Molly's junk and everything. There wasn't anything in there I needed.

"That evening Molly came to stand beside me while I was reading the paper. 'Where's my bag?' she asked. 'What bag?' 'You know, the one I gave you this morning.' 'I left it at the office. Why?' 'I forgot to put this note in it.' She hands over the note. 'Besides, I want it back.' 'Why?' 'Those are *my* things in the sack, Daddy, the ones I really like. I thought you might want to play with them, but now I want them back. You didn't lose the bag, did you, Daddy?'

"Tears puddled in her eyes. 'No, I just forgot to bring it home,' I lied. 'Bring it tomorrow, okay?' 'Sure thing, don't worry.' As she hugged my neck with relief, I unfolded the note that had not gotten into the sack, it read: 'I love you, Daddy.' I looked long at the face of my child. She was right. What was in that sack was something else. Molly had given me her treasures. "When you deal with somebody's treasures, you're real close to their being.

All that a seven-year-old held dear, love in a paper sack, and I missed it, not only missed it but had thrown it into the wastebasket because there wasn't anything there I needed. It was not the first or last time I felt my daddy permit was about to run out.

"It was a long trip back to the office, but there was nothing else to be done, but I went. Just ahead of the janitor, I picked up the wastebasket, poured the contents out on my desk. I was sorting it all out when the janitor came in to do his chores. 'Lose something?' he asked. 'Yes, my mind,' I said. 'It's probably in there, all right. What's it look like? And I'll help you find it.'

"I couldn't feel any more of a fool than I already was, so I told him. He didn't laugh. He smiled. 'I got kids, too.' So the brotherhood of fools searched the trash and found the jewels, and he smiled at me, and I smiled at him. You're never alone in these things, never.

"After washing the mustard off the dinosaurs and spraying the whole thing with breath freshener to kill the smell of onions, I carefully smoothed out the wadded ball of brown paper bag into a semi-functional bag, put the treasures inside, carried the whole thing home gingerly, like an injured kitten.

"The next evening I returned it to Molly, no questions asked, no explanations given. The bag didn't look so good, but the stuff was all there, and that's what counted. After dinner I asked her to tell me about the stuff in the sack, so she took it all out a piece at a time, placed the objects in a row along our dining room table.

"It took a long time to tell. Every piece had a story. A memory was attached to dreams or imaginary friends. Fairies had brought some of the things, and I had given her the chocolate kisses, and she'd kept them for when she needed them. "I managed to say, 'I see' very wisely several times in the telling, and, as a matter of fact, I did see. To my surprise, Molly gave me the bag once

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again several days later, same ratty bag, same stuff inside. I felt forgiven and trusted and loved and a little more comfortable wearing the title of father.

"Over several months the bag went with me from time to time. It was never clear to me why I did or did not get it on a given day. I began to think of it as the 'daddy prize' and tried to be good the night before so I might be given it the next morning. In time, Molly turned her attention to other things, found other treasures, lost interest in the game, grew up, something.

"Me, I was left holding the bag. She gave it to me one morning and never asked for its return, and so I have it still. Sometimes I think of all the times in this sweet life when I have missed the treasure I was being given. A friend calls this 'standing knee-deep in the river and dying of thirst. "So the worn paper sack is there in the box, left over from a time when a child said, 'Here, this is the best I've got. Take it. It's yours. Such as I have, I give to thee.' I missed it the first time, but it's my bag now."

What made the author miss the treasure in this bag that his daughter gave him?

He was busy with the priorities of his day to stop to think about why his daughter chose to give him the bag. He took the ordinary contents of the bag at face-value rather than discovering what his daughter saw in them.

Why did the bag and its contents move from trash to a treasure? *He discovered the worth from one of his most valued relationships.*

Our treasures are those things to which we assign great value. We think about them a lot. We hold them dear. We guard them. We prize them. We arrange our lives around trying to obtain them and keep them.

If you could put your greatest treasures into a bag, what things, pursuits and people would you put in it? *My spouse, my kids, my biggest financial assets (house, cars), my vocation, friendships, my Creator, Designer & friend.*

Why do you think it helps to identify what things and people you value?

READ: Matthew 6:19-21

How do you define a treasure in your life?

What does Jesus say in 6:21 is the danger of treasuring the wrong thing? *What you treasure takes your heart and thoughts and energy. If they are the right treasures you invest your life, if they are the wrong things you waste your life.*

Everyone has a bag of treasures, and what you treasure shapes you!

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Vern and Todd talked about how we worship as an expression of what we treasure. Worship, then, can actually re-shape, or determine what you value. The problem with treasures is that we tend to worship things and demote the most valuable relationships and treasures. So, while we can have many treasures in our bag, not all of them are of equal value.

READ: Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.* (NLT)

How does Deuteronomy 6 define how to make God your most valued treasure?
Invest in your relationship with God with your heart, soul and strength.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... soul ... might: this is a way of commanding the people to love God completely, wholeheartedly, without any reservations; it is a love that includes emotion, intellect, will. So **love** here contains not only the elements of liking and affection but also devotion and commitment to God. For the Hebrews the **heart** generally refers to the activities of the mind rather than to emotions. The **soul** refers to the emotions.

Todd gave us four ways that we assign our greatest value to God in worship:

- 1) **COST** – *Does it stretch me or cost me?*
- 2) **QUALITY** – *I assign value when I invest my resources in something or someone*
- 3) **PRIORITY** – *Giving to the greatest treasures first in time, money & effort*
- 4) **INTEGRITY** – *When I decide that I will value God above all I follow through with my promise in consistent worship.*

Go through your bag of treasures again. What treasure tends to get assigned the above 4 ingredients at the cost of your treasure of God and His plan?

What are some measures you can take to ensure that the things you treasure most get the best? *Maybe its regular worship, regular growth time in God's Word, Service steps, giving of a tithe or talent..... Keep the conversation going here.*

READ: Isaiah 29:13 *“And so the Lord says, “These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote.”* (NLT)

How do you know what you really worship? *Let the group discuss this for awhile. The four points above should guide them. Ultimately the answer to discovering what you truly worship is **SACRIFICE** or **SERVICE**. Whatever we treasure we serve. You tell what somebody's devoted to by their actions, not their words. That's why we call our weekly gatherings “service.” But it isn't limited to that.*

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How can our group better express the value we place on God?

How can I adjust my life this week to better reflect the value I place on God?