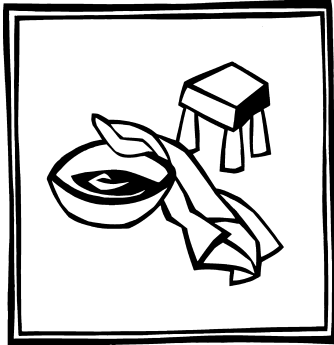


Session 3

Passion for the Mind of Christ



The vision challenges us to move toward a future where every Faith Community is in fact a Spiritual Transformation Center.

Prayer for the week

Each day you are invited to use this prayer to begin your study. As you read, study and pray, let the challenge of the vision work its way into your heart, your habits and your hopes for the future.

Great Creator

Great Creator, from the beginning when there was but Word we were drawn to your word, with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds and all our strength.

Spur us to open our hearts and our minds to share our souls and our strength with a passion that will draw others into your arms.

Session author – Lin Goodyear

Lin is currently the Senior Pastor at Visalia United Methodist Church. Lin and his wife Nanci have been married for 35 years. They have two children and four grandchildren. In July Bishop Shamana will be appointing Lin to serve at the United Methodist Church in Antioch. He has always had a passion for writing and has concentrated mostly in the non fiction genres. Lin's current project is titled "Living for Christ In A Throttle Up World."

**Session 3:
Passion for the Mind of Christ**

Introduction — God is on a quest

Isn't it true one of the persistent images of God we often hear passed around is one where God is sitting comfortably on some distant palatial throne? God is remote, aloof, disinterested and indifferent to the pain and suffering, to the "fiery furnace" moments people endure. This image of God is totally false.

Like a shade raised to let in the brightness of the morning sun, the Bible reveals a God who, long before people realized their need and while they struggled with the terrible nature of sin, took the initiative, laid aside God's glory and began a quest to seek out you and me.

As we dig into the Scriptures, as we mine and process the rich word of God, it is revealed that God chose to be made known through and in the person of Jesus Christ. This book is like no other. "O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*" (*A man of one book: John Wesley*). It is through the Bible the mind of God is revealed and as United Methodists we affirm in *The Book of Discipline* it is "through Scripture the living Christ meets us in the experience of redeeming grace. We are convinced Jesus Christ is the living Word of God." (p. 104)

As we sift through the pages of that book, can we discover the mind of Christ? Can we actually get into the head of Jesus? Not too surprisingly, as we read what Jesus said and taught, we can learn a great deal. What will we discover? A lot depends on you and your particular needs. Will we become transformed by what we discover? Will a fresh excitement about Jesus fill our souls?

Here it is friends: the One who created the universe and who breathed life into every individual has visited our planet in person. Jesus lived an unparalleled life. He died a disgraceful death and then rose triumphantly from the grave. This means Christianity is not just pious talk about an unfounded hope but is, in fact, a practical reality. As we read the testimony of the Scriptures, as we reach into the mind of Christ, we learn of a God whose ultimate quest is for you and me. Some of the best theology you will ever discover is found in the popular hymn verse. "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." This God will not rest until we discover a new and abundant life that comes through faith.

Come along with me. In these next few pages we will dig a little bit into the mind of Jesus.

Day One — Opening thoughts

As we begin our study together it is crucial we understand the reality that we cannot learn much about the mind of Jesus on our own. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that our minds are enlightened as we are transformed from within by the power of God. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12 "*Do not conform...but be transformed by the renewing of your*

Day Five – What did Jesus think about wealth and possessions?

Read Matthew 6:19-21 and Luke 12:15-21

It has been said the Bible talks more about money and possessions than almost any other topic. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:10 *“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.”* John Wesley wrote, “When I have any money I get rid of it as quickly as possible, lest it find a way into my heart.” “Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.”

When Jesus walked the earth, money and possessions were a big deal. The vast majority of people living then, especially in the areas in and around Jerusalem, were incredibly poor. Each day was a struggle even for the basic necessities of life. In Jerusalem most of the wealth was cradled in the arms of a few businessmen, sheep ranchers and farmers of the day, tax collectors and many of the religious and

political leaders.

The same was true in larger Roman towns. In cities like Corinth and even Rome itself a huge percentage of the population sold themselves into slavery and were, for the most part, well cared for by their owners. Many slaves were permitted to own property and even their own slaves. But that wasn't an appealing option to the Jews. Because of their history as slaves in Egypt centuries before and later as captives to various conquering nations the Jews were not too keen on being sold into slavery for any reason. So Jerusalem and much of the surrounding area (Palestine) suffered greatly during the economic struggles of that part of the Roman Empire. It is in that economic culture Jesus and the disciples lived and worked.

Pause to Reflect

- What does the phrase “do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth” say about what Jesus is thinking?
- We live in a culture that seems to encourage us to consume, “to eat, drink and be merry.” In the Luke 12:16 parable what does Jesus seem to be encouraging us to consider?
- In Luke 12:15 Jesus is saying the “good life” has nothing to do with being wealthy. How does what we see in life and on TV and in the movies shape our views about money and possessions?
- How do you respond to the constant pressure?

Day Six – What does Jesus think about anxiety and worry?

Read Matthew 6:25-34

Worrying and anxiety are facts of life, are they not? We are constantly told not to worry, not to be anxious but it is largely a part of the people we are. Someone once said, “worry is a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.” Isn’t that a great mental picture? Worry sucks the energy out of your body and it is hard to think about anything else. Just recently my father had triple bypass heart surgery. As you may know, this surgery is quite serious and is reserved for situations where there is no other option in order to preserve life. While it was easy to put my dad in God’s and the surgeon’s hands, the worry factor was still there. I like what Billy Graham said in a sermon years ago. “Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere.”

In Matthew 6:25 Jesus adamantly declares, “Do not worry about your life...” and goes on to describe exactly why people should not worry or be anxious about anything. God knows our absolute needs and those needs will be met. The very God who gave you life can be trusted with the details of that life. Being consumed about what might or might not happen tomorrow makes it difficult to accomplish anything today. There are some really important matters that God is eager for us to pursue. Worrying prevents us from tackling a life that is full of purpose and challenge. Jesus promised in John 10:10b (NRSV), “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.” Worrying has a tendency to draw us away from the abundant life Jesus is talking about. Trusting in God seems to draw us closer.

Pause to Reflect

- Identify those things you worry the most about. Make a list.
- How do your views regarding money and possessions influence your tendency to worry?
- To what degree is your health being affected by worry?
- What does God need to do in your heart to enable you to trust more and to worry less?
- In Matthew 6:33 Jesus encourages us to focus on doing the things of God, then everything else will come as needed. What steps can you take this week to become more focused on God’s purposes in your life?
