

## Devotions for Nov. 14-20, 2011

### Monday, November 14, 2011: *Questions Daily reading: Hebrews 11:1-3*

Questions are essential for learning and faith. We might think that questions are not welcome in a church community. In fact, it would be easy to get the impression from most churches that questions are a sign of doubt or weakness. Faith is believing something you think is true, but can't know for sure. When we ask questions, we're actually exercising our faith, because we're giving serious consideration to those things which are not visible to us. Knowledge isn't faith. Even doubt is an essential ingredient to a rich faith life. So, ask away! Get into a conversation with others, and ask questions. It's the first step on a pathway to deeper understanding of the One to whom this Bible points. Ask God to give you good questions today.

### Tuesday, November 15, 2011: *Authority Daily reading: Romans 10:14-17*

Authority is not mainly concerned with influence. It is not simply about power. Authority is primarily concerned with legitimacy. What kinds of authority do we experience? Police officers, judges, teachers, governments, school boards. They command authority for many reasons. However, commands are not authoritative unless the person or society living under those commands has given those who command the authority to command: the consent of the governed. Here we see the legal system. This type of authority is concerned primarily with behavior. The Bible certainly has this type of authority. It's called the law, and it's legitimate because it is highly useful for keeping societies orderly, safe, and clean. Another type of authority is traditional. Long-standing traditions, rituals, and customs have authority. The Bible – the old, old story of God's love – has this type of authority. No other book reveals Jesus Christ to us. This is where the Bible's authority comes from; it delivers the Living Word to us. Ask God to help you more clearly see the source of the Bible's authority today.

### Wednesday, November 16, 2011: *Relational Daily reading: Matthew 7:24-29*

All authority is relational. It needs to be "authorized" by someone. Police and judges have entire enforcement systems to back up their authority, but it's the citizens who ultimately grant this authority in the first place. The Bible has authority only as it witnesses to the things of God, and delivers Jesus to us. The Bible has authority when, in our own faith communities, we read it and talk about it. Again, authority is relational. The Scriptures were intended to be read in community and discussed in community. Again, authority is relational. If your Bible sits on your bookshelf, it has absolutely no authority whatsoever. Ask God to put you into authentic relational community to move deeper into the authority of the Bible.

### Thursday, November 17, 2011: *Word Daily reading: John 6:53-69*

John, in the opening paragraphs of his Gospel, has already told us who Jesus is. Jesus is the Word. Jesus is not asking his disciples to eat his body and drink his blood as an act of cannibalism. What Jesus is telling his disciples is that he is the Word, and the only way to have eternal life is to "eat" the word. Peter realizes this, at least in some small way, when he tells Jesus that Jesus has the words of eternal life. However, John goes further. Jesus is not just telling them words; Jesus is the Word. This distinction can be made with the Bible. The Bible certainly contains words of eternal life, but the authority that the Bible holds that no other literary work has is this: the Bible actually cradles and delivers to us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the Word itself. What does the Word do? The Word forgives our sin, giving us new and eternal life. Ask God for the gift of discernment to understand the authority of the Bible.

### Friday, November 18, 2011: *Making Sense Daily reading: Colossians 1:3-8*

At a very elemental level, some of us read the Bible because it works. What do we mean by that? Sometimes we seek something, like good values or morals. There are times we read it to gain a stronger sense of who we are, and where we fit in. Sometimes we read it to discover how things work, what God intended, or how our lives can make sense. We might even read it in hopes of deepening our faith life or discovering more about Jesus and the radical love of God. Basically, we read the Bible because it helps us make sense of life. Ask God to help you make sense of your life today.

### Saturday, November 19, 2011: *Evidence Daily reading: Matthew 18:15-20*

Sometimes the Bible has authority for us because we see evidence that the story is true and transformative. When you read of Jesus teaching about forgiveness, you might be tempted to try this out, and find that what Jesus said actually works. You might hear Jesus teaching about injustice and poverty, and choose to give your time in mission, and discover that the "last" really will be "first." A passage from Scripture might bring you great comfort in a troubling time. It might shape you and transform your hopes, dreams, and desires. As this story becomes your story, your values and world view change. In your life, the story of God's radical love creates more evidence of its truth. Ask God for eyes to see this evidence each day.

### Sunday, November 20, 2011: *Ending Daily reading: Mark 16:1-8*

Talk about an abrupt ending to a Gospel. Everything after verse 8 was added by well-meaning monks later. This is the oldest and most original ending. But why this? We have a resurrection declaration, but no Jesus. We only have the fearful women and the message of promise. And they don't tell anyone?! They must eventually tell *someone*; this is a crazy way to end a Gospel. Mark understands that we won't get to see Jesus, either, just like the women. We need to trust in this word of promise of Jesus' resurrection. That's all they had, and that's all we get. This book is just the beginning of the good news, and it's our task to continue writing this Gospel without an ending. And maybe this Gospel never ends. Ask God to help you find your place in the verses following verse 8 of Mark's Gospel.