

August 22, 2006

Encouragement for Today

Deleted: Principle 1¶

“Commander or Cargo?”

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Key Verse:

Mark 4:36, “Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.” (NIV)

Devotion:

When my best friend won a weeklong, all expenses paid cruise, I wish I could tell you that I was a very spiritual, very godly, supportive friend about it. I wish I could tell you that I was super encouraging about this great opportunity. I wish I could tell you that I prayed for her to have a safe, fun-filled trip.

Instead my prayers sounded something like this:

“God, Here’s the thing. I’ve never been on a cruise or even a really good vacation. I have never won anything in my life. And the truth is, Lord, I should be on that cruise. I shouldn’t miss out on the fun and memories my best friend is making. We should be sharing that time together. Lord, you know how special it is when we get to spend time together.”

And in the silence that followed my grumbling, this is what I heard:

Don’t you think that is how I feel? I want to be included in your life. I want to share in your special times. Yet many times I am the last one you come to. I don’t like being left out of your life anymore than you like being left out of that cruise.

OK, so I admit that is not the answer I was looking for—but it was an answer that stayed with me for weeks. God got my attention that day as He adjusted my focus away from myself. Instead of spending that week complaining, I made an effort to use that time to re-evaluate my relationship with God, and where He fell in my priorities.

That week I learned a valuable lesson about God’s love for us. He is right there waiting for us to invite Him into our lives. He longs for a close relationship with us. Though His love for us is powerful, He will not force it upon us uninvited. He gave us the choice to either make Him the center of our lives, or merely take Him along.

In Mark 4:36, we read that the disciples set out on a cruise of their own and made the mistake of merely taking Jesus along with them. I don't think there is any mistake in the wording of this verse. We see that they did not allow Him His rightful place at the helm of the boat as their commander—instead they treated Him like cargo. Before we judge the disciples for this, we must examine how many of us do the very same thing. We stow Him away somewhere out of sight, yet accessible—just in case. If we get off course or hit rough waters, we can go get Him, otherwise we expect Him to stay out of sight. In the process, we lose sight of the blessings of daily, hourly fellowship with our Creator. And that is our loss.

I am grateful for God's reminder to me that He wants to join me as I cruise through life. How awesome to consider that the God of the universe would pause to remind me of His love for me, and for all of His dearly loved children. He longs for a relationship with you, too. Don't miss out on His invitation to you today.

My Prayer for Today:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for wanting to have a relationship with me, even though I don't deserve it. Help me not to take that for granted in my daily life and to never lose sight of You. I want You to be the Commander of my life. Help me not to treat You like cargo ever again. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

If there is someone you enjoy spending time with (a best friend, a spouse, a child), take some time to evaluate this week how much time you spend with that person versus how much time you spend with God.

Reflection Points:

Where is God in your life?

How do you treat Him?

Is He the first one you run to, or the last?

Power Verses:

Proverbs 18:24, "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (NIV)

Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (NIV)

Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (NIV)

Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (NIV)

Additional Resources:

Do you know Him?

<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/knowHim.htm>

A Busy Woman's Guide to Prayer by Cheri Fuller

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_busyWomansGuide.htm

Traveling Together: Thoughts on Women, Friendship and Journey of Faith by

Karla Worley

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_travelingTogether.htm