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Encouragement for Today

“The Pull of ‘Home’”

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Key Verse:

Mark 6:3, “He’s just the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” (NLT)

Devotion:

My brother and his family live in Nazareth, PA, a town named after one of the most famous places on earth: the hometown of Jesus Christ. While Nazareth, PA, is rather quaint, Nazareth of Galilee in Jesus’ day was nothing much to see. In fact, it was a place generally despised and avoided by the Jews.

Early in the gospel of John, Jesus calls Phillip to be one of His disciples. Phillip then goes to tell Nathanael, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.” “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from there?” (John 1:46, NLT). Nazareth was a town many Jews considered a God-forsaken place, but nothing was farther from the truth.

It was the God-chosen spot for the Son of Man to grow up, study the Scriptures and prepare for His world-changing ministry. After being baptized in the Jordan River, then tempted and tested by Satan in the desert, Jesus returned to his home region of Galilee where he set up His “base camp” for ministry.

Many of the people of Jesus’ home region had a hard time accepting Him as the Messiah. In Mark 3:20-25, He heals a man on the Sabbath and the religious leaders there accuse Jesus of working for the devil. Not long after, Jesus leaves the region and goes from place to place preaching, performing jaw-dropping miracles and being mobbed by crowds.

After raising a girl from the dead in Mark chapter 5, Jesus returned home to Nazareth with his disciples. Still the people there were “deeply offended and refused to believe in him.” (Mark 6:3b, NLT) Though he taught them with uncommon wisdom, they replied, “He’s just the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” (Mark 6:3a, NLT) Jesus replied, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family.” (Mark 6:4, NLT) The Scriptures say Jesus was taken aback by their degree of unbelief in Him and, because of it, His ministry there was limited.

Do you come from a small, “could-anything-good-possibly-come-from-there” kind of town? Have you ever felt that your own family or friends couldn’t see past your “humanness” to recognize your God-given potential? Has your parents’ or peers’ unbelief in you limited your ministry or life in any way? Then Jesus can surely relate to your frustrated feelings.

After more on-the-road ministry, Jesus returned to Galilee once again in Mark 9:30-32. This time, however, He avoided towns-folk and instead focused His time on teaching His disciples. From there, He made His way to Jerusalem where He would be killed.

After His death and resurrection, where do you think Jesus went? In addition to His disciples and closest friends, who do you think He purposed to appear before Him in the Truth of His resurrected glory? Was it the heathens who did not know Him? Was it the Jews of Jerusalem who had condemned Him to death? Was it the Roman centurions who had beaten and crucified Him? Was it the Pharisees who had opposed Him at every move? No. It was the people of his

hometown... the people who in many ways knew Him best, yet still did not believe. The risen Lord headed straight for Galilee, going to His earthly home before ascending to His heavenly one.

The pull of home and family is strong – even for the Lord. Whether “home” is a mostly positive experience, or a mostly negative one, it undeniably shapes us. Few things have more ability to give us the wings to soar than our experience of a loving, supportive home. Likewise, few things can break our heart and cause us to limit ourselves more than not receiving the love and validation of those who know us best.

Jesus was no doubt disappointed that the people of his home region rejected Him, as did the leaders in the synagogues whose job it was to recognize the Messiah when He came. Ultimately, however, Jesus’ identity, worth and power came from the Heavenly Father and not from the validation of any earthly being. The same is true for us.

If you did not receive needed love and support from the people important in your life, take those disappointed feelings to the Lord, who understands completely. He has the power to exchange your pain for peace, and your sorrow for strength.

If you are raising children, I urge you to go out of your way to ensure they know they possess precious God-given potential. Impart to them the truth that it matters not where you came from, but Who you know.

May God bless your home, and may the people there recognize that Jesus of Nazareth is so much more than “just the carpenter” (Mark 6:3).

My Prayer for Today:

My Lord, how frustrating it must have been to have those who supposedly knew You best, not see You for Who You really are and believe in You. At times, I can relate to that. Help me Lord, to always look to my Creator – my Heavenly Father – for my identity, purpose and strength. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

On paper or in your journal, copy the first chapter of the book of Ephesians. As you do, insert your own name, or the pronoun “me,” as the person to whom these words were written. Then read it aloud each day for a week. For example:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed me in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose me in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (based on Ephesians 1:3-4 from the NIV).

This is a terrific way to help you internalize the truth of your identity as a child of God.

Reflection Points:

From whom do you draw your identity and strength?

Do you love your family more than Christ? Read Matthew 10:35-40 below.

Are you encouraging the God-given potential in those around you? Your husband? Your children? Your parents? Your friends?

Power Verses:

Galatians 3:26-28, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (NIV)

Ephesians 2:19-22, "That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all--irrespective of how we got here--in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day--a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home." (MSG)

Matthew 10:35-40, "I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household! If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it. Anyone who welcomes you is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me." (NLT)

Additional Resources:

Living Life on Purpose, by Lysa TerKeurst

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

Who Holds the Key to Your Heart, by Lysa TerKeurst

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

Message of the Month Club

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