



Experience 07: Focus

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Matthew 7:24-27

"These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."

MSG

"Words to build a life on". Man, we need some of those today, don't we. There used to be words and voices that could be trusted in our society. Used to be.

Jesus presents a pretty clear message: 1. Hear his Words (teachings) 2. Put them into practice 3. Survive the storms of life.

How?

S.O.A.P. is an acronym that has been used by Followers of Jesus for quite some time as a simple system to do exactly what Jesus challenged us to do in today's reading. Here is what each letter stands for and how S.O.A.P. works:

Scripture- This is pretty straight over the plate- to begin you need to read or listen to a portion of the Bible. If you need a suggestion,

start with the Gospel of Mark, it is one of the biographies of Jesus. Most scholars think Mark was a teenager during the life of Jesus and later in his life was very connected to Peter who was one of Mark's main sources for his writing about Jesus. If you're more comfortable starting in other places of the story of God and Jesus- go right ahead!

Observation- Write down in your journal what you "see" or notice in what you've read. You could consider questions like: *What does this passage tell me about God? What does it tell me about people?* Don't worry about getting these right- they are simply your observations. Things I've written about lately is how I notice a certain word repeated often in a chapter or section of the Bible. Or maybe you'll notice in the biographies of Jesus, He often answers questions with short stories or parables.

Application- *If this is really God's word, what changes would I have to make in my life?* This portion of S.O.A.P. is the most significant in my opinion. It's where the rubber meets the road so to speak. It's the step I often try to step- but I'm reminded of Jesus' very clear words in our reading from today- "*Put My Words Into Practice*". Friends if you aren't striving to Apply God's Word into your life, then that decision says, you actually don't believe them to be God's Word. Or at the very least, that you know how to make your life work better than He does.

Sorry, if those last two lines stepped on any toes- I was writing myself a reminder of what happens in my own heart!

Prayer- Ok this last step is way easier than the previous one! Whew! Simply ask God to be involved in the things that became obvious during your Observations and Applications. I often write things in my journal like, "God it's obvious you want me to forgive _____ can you help me remember that when I see them today, or when they email me later?" Maybe it's even a prayer asking God to give you opportunity to practice your application...be careful with this prayer- he might just answer it.

It's the Presence of God that sustains us in both our Highs and Lows.

Actions to take

Ok let's get some S.O.A.P. going today!

- Find your journal and bible. Read Mark 1:14-20
- In your journal write the passage you've read at the top of the page with a big S next to it.
- Write an O- and start to record your Observations. What does this passage tell me about God/Jesus? What does it tell me about people? What do you notice?
- Write an A- If this is really God's word, what changes would I have to make in my life? In just these few short verses you may sense God is directing you toward a change in your life- it could be very simple or quite grand. Don't worry about how you'll make this Application happen- just jot down what you sense it is.
- Now write a P in your journal, write a Prayer asking God to help you in putting this Application firmly into your life today. Ask Him to give you opportunity and courage!
- Tell yourself- Good Job! Send me an Email at PastorChris@ccof.church and let me know how this went for you today!