

“Passion and encouragement”

September 2012

Hymn “How clear is our vocation, Lord” VU 504

How clear is our vocation, Lord, when once we heed your call;
to live according to your word, and daily learn, refreshed, restored,
that you are over all and will not let us fall.

Scripture *Romans 15: 1-6* (*The Message*)

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the needs of the people around us, asking ourselves, “How can I help?”

That’s exactly what Jesus did. He didn’t make it easy for himself by avoiding people’s troubles, but waded right in and helped out. “I took on the troubles of the troubled,” is the way the scripture puts it. Even if it was written in scripture long ago, you can be sure it’s written for us. God wants the combination of his steady constant calling and warm personal counsel in scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we’ll be a choir – not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus!

Prayer Let us pray – Jesus Christ, our Saviour, alive and at large in the world, help us to follow and find you today in the places where we work and meet people, spend leisure time and make plans. Teach us to see through your eyes and to hear the questions you ask, by the power of the Cross, and in the freedom of your Spirit, we pray. Amen.
(from VU 564)

Lesson *You deserve the best. Look out for number one. Pamper yourself.* These are the watchwords of our age. But in this chapter Paul urges us to stop gazing at our own reflection. For the first time in Romans he holds up the example of Christ, the one who embodies all the qualities God desires in us.

“How can I help?” We need to consider what personal attitudes might hinder or help us to bear with those who falter. We need to use our strength in our faith to lend a hand, to serve, to look after the needs of others.

If we follow Christ’s example in this and other areas of our lives we will need to use our endurance, we will need encouragement from one another, and we will need the hope that comes from serving together.

Several years ago a man decided to lead his group into “fantasy baseball”. They were passionate about baseball and decided to adopt a local little league baseball field, part of a school property. Every Saturday morning they groomed the field, cutting the grass, chalking the lines and raking the sand. They wanted to impact the kids who came to practice or to play.

Then their care of the field drew the attention of neighbours and the school administration, but the most lasting impact was on the commissioner of the baseball league who was amazed that a group of men would consistently show up to work for free, without asking for anything in return.

Using the passion of the group for baseball, they were able to show Christ's love for a part of the community that wouldn't be reached through most of the regular serving opportunities. When we engage the passions of our group members, there is more enjoyment in serving and there is more likelihood that the work will have a positive impact and will continue. We are more likely to be "singing in harmony" when we engage our passion.

Remember, it's not how many members you have; it's the difference you make in the lives of the members you have, in your congregation, and in your community.

Discussion - What are the people in your group passionate about?
- How can your group use its passion to demonstrate the love of Christ to your community in a tangible way?

Prayer Let us pray – May we love and care for one another in Christ's name. May our God of grace shine upon each of us and cause us to grow. May God's living word give us the energy and nourishment that we need. And may the Holy Spirit produce in us the fruit that it seeks, both now and forevermore. Amen.

George Bishop – Spiritual Life Chair