

QUESTIONS in Faith: What are the Words of Life?

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle within us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. May the words of my mouth, the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight O Lord, you who are rock, redeemer & Renewer of us all. Amen.

Grace and Peace be with you, dear Friends!

We are at the last of a series asking Questions in Faith. Today, the question is, ‘What are the Words of Life?’ Within our context and season of beginning a new year of school, Fall colors, and seeing pumpkins everywhere, it is only appropriate that we wrap up with the words of life planted deep within us.

Last week we focused on the tools God has provided to help us stand firm in faith. Remember them? Let’s sing’em: We’ve got ‘the sword of Spirit, the shield of Faith, helmet of Salvation, and the Breastplate of Justice, the belt of truth, and shoes of Peace to spread the good news!’

In addition, I offered three things to do: engage into prayer, engage into scriptures, and engage into faithful action. John Wesley incorporated these engagements into the means of grace so that we encounter, engage, & experience God’s Love. The means of Grace are five ‘instituted’ (in NT) spiritual practices. They are: prayer, searching scriptures, the Lord’s Supper, fasting, and Christian conferencing. These are spiritual practices that help us grow in faith as followers of Jesus. They also position us for a life engaged in faithful action - loving God, our neighbor as ourselves with acts of hospitality, mercy & justice.

The scripture readings from book of James and the gospel of Mark address the practical side of theology... walking the talk. There is much practical wisdom or words to live by offered here, especially in the book of James, as well as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

The definition of the phrase 'words to live by' is 'A motto, saying, or other piece of advice that will serve one well throughout one's life if upheld or adhered to.' (Sometimes used humorously or sarcastically. As I've gotten older, I've come to appreciate that "a dollar saved is a dollar earned" really are words to live by. A: "I've always maintained that one should not mix business with one's personal life.") www.thefreedictionary.com

Here are the words of life that stood out to me as I listened to the reading from James: 1) **welcome the word planted deep inside you** the very word that is able to save you; and 2) **be doers of the word** and not only hearers who mislead themselves.

First, Remember, there is a spark, a seed, a light inside of each of us that is of God (we are made in God's image). This word, spark, seed, light grows as we connect with God and with others in Christ.

To welcome the word... means to see it, to recognize its presence, to nurture it and encourage it to grow- Right there... in your heart!

Second, James says faithful followers act like Jesus in the world... with compassion, kindness, mercy & justice, caring for those in need... doers of the word. Jesus lived as 'do as I do'. He was not 'do as I say not as I do.'

In fact, Jesus (in Mark's passage) calls out the religious leaders for their judgement of his disciples around 'ritual' acts that are not of God's ways. Rather, the leaders have put laws in place that do not match God's will & ways...rooted in love and the common good for God's people. Instead, Jesus points out the what makes things 'unclean' is what comes OUT of a person's **heart**...in their words, in their actions, in the manner that they treat others, family, authorities, strangers.

This week I would offer four words ... that are important to take with us wherever we go in this new school year, this new season, this fresh start: JOY, Faith, Hope, and Love.

JOY is an acronym... **J**esus, **O**thers, **Y**ourself. It reminds me of the great command summarized by Jesus- love god and love your neighbor as yourself... J. O. Y.

Faith As we've discussed, have enough to believe and trust in Jesus, carpe diem-seize the day, as in Psalm 118:24.

Hope is so important, to realize that we are human and will make mistakes and we can't do anything without the grace of Jesus. With Christ, nothing is impossible.

Love is made known in Jesus ... God's love is complex. Have courage, know Christ is love and don't be afraid to share love, as in 1st John 4:18.

The four words of life to take with you...JOY, Faith, Hope, and Love.

The Words I Would Say

Music and Words by Ben McDonald, David Frey and Sam Mizell Sidewalk Prophets

<p>Three in the morning, And I'm still awake, So I picked up a pen and a page, And I started writing, Just what I'd say, If we were face to face, I'd tell you just what you mean to me, I'd tell you these simple truths,</p> <p>Be strong in the Lord and, Never give up hope, You're going to do great things, I already know, God's got His hand on you so, Don't live life in fear, Forgive and forget, But don't forget why you're here, Take your time and pray, These are the words I would say,</p> <p>Last time we spoke, You said you were hurting, And I felt your pain in my heart, I want to tell you, That I keep on praying, Love will find you where you are, I know cause I've already been there, So please hear these simple truths,</p>	<p>Be strong in the Lord and, Never give up hope, You're going to do great things, I already know, God's got His hand on you so, Don't live life in fear, Forgive and forget, But don't forget why you're here, Take your time and pray, These are the words I would say,</p> <p>From one simple life to another, I will say, Come find peace in the Father,</p> <p>Be strong in the Lord and, Never give up hope, You're going to do great things, I already know, God's got His hand on you so, Don't live life in fear, Forgive and forget, But don't forget why you're here, Take your time and pray, Thank God for each day, His love will find a way, These are the words I would say</p>
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The four words of life to take with you...JOY, Faith, Hope, and Love.

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May it be so, so that you believe and **pass it on** –faith, hope, love and JOY, wherever you go. Amen.