**Wednesday Night Bible Study**

**Wednesday 26 April 2023 – Spring Semester**

**Queens Chapel UMC \* 7410 Muirkirk Road \* Beltsville, MD 20705**

**Instructor: Rev. Dr. Will Butler**

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**Making Decisions According to God’s**

**Direction for Your Life**

**Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)**

“In their hearts, humans plan their course, but

the Lord establishes their steps.”

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**2. What Are the Facts
*“All who are prudent act with knowledge”***

**Proverbs 13:16 (NIV)**

**Week 1:** The Power of Prayer

**Week 2: What are the Facts?**

**Week 3:** If you don’t know ask Somebody.

**Week 4:** Count the Cost

**Week 5:** Expect Complications

**Week 6:** Facing the Giant of Fear

**Q = If someone were to ask you to give 2 interesting facts about**

 **Why you’re a Christian, what information would you give? Why**

 **would these facts be worth mentioning?**

People today who struggle with becoming a Christian struggle with the following questions:

* **Was Jesus really a real person that once lived on the earth?**
* **Is the Bible reliable?**

Most people who want to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ, want to know the facts.

* **Do you expect me to believe a manuscript [called the Bible] that was written centuries ago by men?**
* **What is it about this thing we call Christianity?**

Let’s investigate the Facts:

**Fact:**

* Christianity does not rise and fall on whether the 66 books in the Bible are correct or incorrect

**Fact:**

* Christianity rises and falls on one single person—Jesus Christ
* The question we should be asking is if Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John are reliable accounts of actual events that took place in the life of Jesus Christ.
* If they are reliable facts then Christianity is true and your faith is not in vain

Here are the Facts [or the true story] of how the Christian Faith began:

**Fact:**

* It began with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ
* After the resurrection, there was a new movement called “The Way”
* Saul [who later became the Apostle Paul] tried to kill everyone who followed Jesus Christ who claimed **“I am the way, truth, and the Life”** **(John 14:6)**

**Acts 22:3-4**

 **3 Then Paul said, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. 4 And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison**

* Many believers [Jesus-followers] became a community of faith called the Ecclesia—The church—*an assembly of baptized born-again believers of Jesus Christ*
* Believers started documenting the facts about what took place after the resurrection of Jesus Christ

**Fact:**

* One of the writers of the account of Jesus’ resurrection is Luke
* Luke was not a disciple
* Luke was able to compile **facts** from eyewitnesses that saw the resurrected Christ.
* Luke began his account this way—**1:1-4**

 **1 Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us.**

 **2 They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples.**

**3 Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus,**

 **4 so you can be certain of the truth *[or facts]* of everything you were taught.** *(Italics mine)*

* **Theophilus***—[could have been a friend of Luke*] was a Roman dignitary who may have been in the house of Caesar who secretly became a Christ-follower

**Fact:**

* There is nothing more closer to the accurate account of the life of Jesus than in the Gospel of Luke
* Luke stated in verse 1,

 **“Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us.”**

**Q = Why would many writers take the time to write about a man**

 **from Nazareth who was executed on a wooden cross?**

* **Because something extraordinary happened after he was crucified that changed the history of humanity for centuries, even up to 2023**

**Fact:**

* When Luke wrote his account of the Life of Jesus, he was not writing the Bible as we know it today. **Read Luke 1:3**

 **“Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus,”**

* He was writing an accurate account of what took place from reliable witnesses.
* Luke never would have imagined that his account of Jesus would one day become Sacred Scripture of the Bible and then it would still be read today 2,023 years later

**Fact:**

* Luke’s account of the Life of Christ was written 300 years before Christianity became legal and the Bible was assembled

For example:

 When we place what we own in a safe, do we place it there ***for it to become valuable*** or do we lock them in a safe ***because they are valuable***?

**Fact:**

* Luke’s account [the facts] of Jesus Christ’s life and resurrection from the dead *was considered valuable the moment it was written* because it was circulated among the believers who congregated in houses.
* It was eventually added and declared sacred Scripture not to make it valuable but because it was valuable and factually true and it was proven and the facts established by eyewitnesses.

**1 Corinthians 15**

 **3 I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. 4 He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. 5 He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. 6 After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.**

Therefore, based on these facts, answers to these questions

**Q = Was Jesus really a real person that once lived on the earth?**

**Q= Is the Bible reliable?**

**Q= Do you expect me to believe a manuscript [called the Bible] that was written over 100 years ago by men?**

**Yes!!!!**

* **It should not be difficult for one to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ because the Bible is reliable and Christianity is not a religion but a powerful movement based on the person of Jesus Christ and that person is still alive today because he has risen from the dead**

***Luke wrote so that our faith can be confirmed by true facts***

Before we make a decision, **prayer** is the first thing we should do.

Once we pray and hear from the Lord, we’re responsible

for moving forward by **faith** and **gathering the facts**.

**Q =Why should we gather all the facts?**

* Facts give us a **clear picture** of what is happening within the area we’re venturing into.
* Facts are knowledge, therefore, **knowledge is power!**
* Factual knowledge increases our mental ability to deal with unforeseen as well as anticipated problems
* Factual Knowledge enhances our power of reasoning.

***“All who are prudent act with knowledge”***

**Proverbs 13:16 (NIV)**

* *Prudent:* wise, being careful, vigilant, or cautious
* Example: God promised Israel a Land flowing with Milk and Honey—**Exodus 3:7-8**

 **7 Then the Lord told him, “I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering.**

 **8 So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the** **Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.**

* The Israelites prayed for deliverance and God answered their prayer
* God provided a land flowing with *“milk and honey”*
* However, **God made them responsible** for obtaining the facts about the occupants of the land **“Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites”**

**Q =Why did God make them responsible for obtaining the facts**

* So, when Moses and the Israelites arrived at the land, he sent out spies to explore and bring back the facts about the land and the people who occupied it

 **Numbers 13:17-20, 25-33**

 **17 Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land: “Go north through the Negev into the hill country. 18 See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. 19 See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps? 20 Is the soil fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see.” (It happened to be the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes.)**

**Facts**

 **25 After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned 26 to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported to the whole community what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land. 27 This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. 28 But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev, and the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan Valley.”**

 **30 But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”**

 **31 But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” 32 So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. 33 We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them, we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”**

**Numbers 14:17**

 **17 “Please, Lord, prove that your power is as great as you have claimed. For you said, 18 ‘The Lord is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. But he does not excuse the guilty. He lays the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.’ 19 In keeping with your magnificent, unfailing love, please pardon the sins of this people, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt.”**

 **20 Then the Lord said, “I will pardon them as you have requested. 21 But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the Lord’s glory, 22 not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice. 23 They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it.**

**Q =Why did God make them responsible for obtaining the facts**

Before we make a decision, **prayer** is the first thing we should do.

Once we pray and hear from the Lord, we’re responsible

for **moving forward by faith and gathering the facts**.

 **24 But my servant Caleb has a different attitude than the others have. He has remained loyal to me, so I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will possess their full share of that land.**

***“All who are prudent act with knowledge”***

**Proverbs 13:16 (NIV)**

**“Only simpletons believe everything they’re told!
    The prudent carefully consider their steps.”**

**Proverbs 14:15 (NLT)**

**“For we live by faith, not by sight.”**

**2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)**

**“And without faith, it is impossible to please him,**

**for whoever would draw near to God must believe**

**that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”**

**Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

  **“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry”
 James 1:19 (NIV)**

 **In our desire to discover the truth, we should strive to get all the facts (be quick to listen), listen more than we speak (since we have two ears and one mouth), and reach conclusions only when the facts are in (slow to become angry).**

**Week 3:** If you don’t know ask Somebody.