

Centered & Grounded

1. Warm up: The famous “I Love Lucy” episode where Lucy and Ethel take a job in a chocolate factory gives us a vivid picture of what it feels like when life is coming at us too fast and pulling us in a million different directions. What the biggest time stressor in your life right now?
2. This week’s scripture passage offers us two key insights for how we can stay centered and grounded when life is moving too fast and threatens to rip us apart. These two insights are absolutely critical to living well. Read Colossians 2:1-7, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. In verse 3, Paul declares, “In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Jesus himself compared his teachings to “a treasure hidden in a field” worth giving up everything to get. Matthew 13:44. Think about a time in your life when you received an amazing unexpected gift of some sort. What did you receive and how did it make you feel?
 - b. Given the incredible gift that Jesus’ teachings are to us, Paul exhorts us in verse 6 to “continue to live your lives in Jesus, rooted and built up in him.” Jesus himself said that building our life on his words is like building a house on a rock that’s able to withstand the greatest storms. Matthew 7:24. Jeff reminded us of a song we sometimes sing that says, “My life is better, I like it better, when I am following you.” Think of the person you’ve known whose life was most rooted and grounded in Jesus. Did that make their life better? In what kind of ways?
3. By way of example, on Sunday Jeff reminded us of two core teachings of Jesus that can make our lives much better. One of those teachings is about forgiveness. Read the words of Jesus from Matthew 5, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Jeff said, “I’ve never met an enemy who could make my life better, so why would I ever allow anyone to become my enemy?” What do you think he meant? Do you agree or disagree?
 - b. Think about somebody you know who held a grudge. Did that make their life better? Tell us about them.
 - c. In your life right now, who’s the person your find hardest to forgive? Have you forgiven them? If so, how’s that affecting your life? If you haven’t forgiven them, how’s that affecting your life?
4. Another example of a core teaching of Jesus is found in Luke 6:38 where he says, “Give and it will be given unto you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

- a. Tell us about a time in your life when it feels like you gave sacrificially in some way, but ended up receiving far more back from God?
 - b. Why do you think life works that way? In other words, why is “living to give” the formula for true abundance in life?
5. Living a life grounded in the treasure trove of Jesus’ teachings in one key anchor for living well amidst life’s storms. But Paul also identifies a second anchor in this week’s scripture passage. In Colossians 2:1, Paul says, “I want you to know how much I am struggling for you. . . . I want [your] hearts to be encouraged and united in love. . . .” Then in verse 5, he adds, “I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.” These words reveal how deeply emotionally invested Paul was in the people of the Church in Colosse.
- a. Jesus also modeled how important it is to be deeply committed to spiritual community. He formed a *yeshiva*, i.e., a group of disciples who regularly come together (sit together) to intensely dialogued over aspects of life and how to apply the scriptures, with the guidance of their Rabbi. Why is deep involvement in a *yeshiva* so critical to living well?
 - b. Investing ourselves in *yeshiva* means regularly spending quality time together. What are some things that tend to keep us from making time for spiritual community? What are some things that can help us become more regular in our participation in spiritual community?
 - c. Investing ourselves in *yeshiva* also means “provoking one another to good works.” Hebrews 10:24. That means encouraging one another (by word and example), challenging one another, and holding each other accountable. We like the encouraging part, but sometimes resist the idea of challenging one another or holding one another accountable. Can you think of a time when you challenged someone in spiritual community or held them accountable or they did that for you? How did it feel? Was it a good thing? Why or why not?
 - d. Investing ourselves in spiritual community also means making a long-haul commitment to each other by working through the inevitable conflicts that will arise in community. Read John Weborg’s quote on p. 3. What do you think of what he says?
 - e. Jeff compared conflict in community to floaters in our eyes. To avoid going crazy, we have to learn not to obsess over them and instead focus on the bigger picture. Have you ever been tempted to leave LifeJourney? If so, without getting to far into the gory details, what happened? Why did you decide to stay? Was it worth it?

Colossians 2:1-7

For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face. ²I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments. ⁵For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Matthew 5:21-24 (Message Bible)

"You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. . . . So if you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to that friend and make things right."

Matthew 5:43-44

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

John Weborg

"The search for the perfect church is an illusion. . . . Some form of satisfaction doesn't even stand a chance unless one settles down at a place and serves. The church is a feast, not a taste – a meal, not a nibble. One sits and serves with the same people week after week, receiving and being received, disappointing and being disappointed, hurting and being hurt, caring and being cared for. Church people are in it for the long haul, not the short term. The ordinary is more crucial than the extraordinary. The glory of church is the routine, not the exceptional."