

Luke's Portrait of Jesus

We just finished reading the Gospel of Luke in Disciple 1 class. Luke shows us, perhaps more than any other Gospel writer, Jesus' concern for the least, the last, and the lost - those whom the society of his time tended to cast aside as less important. Jesus speaks with women and children, touches lepers, raises a widow's only son, casts demons out of children and adults alike, and teaches and heals the multitudes. Why? As his disciples in this day and age, we can do no less.

If we would be true followers of Jesus Christ, then we must be in service to others in the midst of our own dirty, violent world of hunger, disease, prejudice and oppression. Some days it will seem to require more energy and strength than we can muster and we may need to disengage and take a break. That's o.k. On such days, the Holy Spirit will remind us that it isn't on our own strength alone that we rely; our deepest strength comes from the LORD. And after a little refreshing of our spirits, we will re-engage in the battle to share the love of God with others in our broken world.

Standing Up to Bullies

In a book called *The Organic God*, by Margaret Feinberg, she writes about learning to stand up for others:

Like most kids, I also had a handful of good moments - those God-infused times that I can still look back and smile on. I remember one school year when the mean kids were really getting to me. They weren't bothering me personally, but I remember standing by silently and watching two seventh-grade girls get picked on unmercifully. I couldn't figure out why. Now it didn't help that one of the girl's last names rhymed with nasty, but other than that unavoidable and rather unlucky junior high faux pas, there was no reason to taunt them (as if there ever is). Yet the bullies verbally tore the girls to pieces. Other kids wouldn't talk to them for fear of the same treatment. At lunch, they were guaranteed their own table, because no one dared sit by them.. I was new to the school but made friends quickly. Across the lunchroom, I watched the two girls, who were obviously best friends, eat their lunches - as well as watched the verbal haranguing and social ostracizing they endured. I thought, What if that was me? For weeks I watched from a safe distance, and with each bullying incident, I grew more and more angry. I knew what the kids were doing was wrong, but I didn't know how to fix the situation. One day, I made a conscious decision to try to change things. I picked up my lunchroom tray and made a beeline for their table. I introduced myself and asked if I could sit with them. They looked at me surprised. "You don't want to sit with us," one of the girls said hesitantly. "Yeah, I do."

I could feel the eyes of the other kids in the lunchroom on me—but I didn't care. Looking back, I think that was one of the scariest, yet most liberating moments of my childhood. I had made an active decision, an incarnational effort, to enter someone else's world. I sat at their table every day from then on. We became friends - complete with slumber parties, shared snacks, and all the awkwardness that accompanies being in junior high. Several well-meaning classmates pulled me aside and warned me that I was making a bad decision, but it's one that I've never regretted.

Not long after, some of the kids began targeting some of their comments and aggression toward me when I was hanging with the two gals, but somehow, knowing that you're enduring some sort of hardship because you care about someone else makes it hurt just a little bit less...

Discipleship is not just about inward purity; it is also about compassionate intervention on behalf of the poor, the hungry, the homeless, and the rejected. What form might that discipleship take in *your* life?