

Ladies Retreat 2013

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We live amidst situations. We each have only a few main items at the top of our mental list. Other, lesser things just, fall to later.

We roll through these big items like a small boat rolls over large underwater rock. These rocks can be anything we focus on:

- They can be major tasks that need to be done. It could be a scheduled event like putting together a ladies retreat. It could unscheduled like a sudden moral dilemma.
- These mental rocks can be choices other people make. Other people in our lives often make choices for which we must now address the consequences.
- Money can be a rock under our boat. Who doesn't think about money?

How do we respond to life? Well, we are Christians. God is woven into the fabric of our souls. He is present and powerful. How do we hold onto the peace that should come from that kind of Power and Presence?

Life is complicated.

For example, what do I tell myself about what I am going through? When I tell myself that no one around me can handle my trouble, that no one can relate, I have made myself *alone*. With this mindset, Scripture lists bitterness as a real threat. When I hear my own despair, am I also hearing that this is an opportunity for me to trust a friend and tell her what is going on in my head? For one person to really care about another is rare. For us in this room, it is also a real probability. God designed friendships. Friendships can be a powerful extension of God's grace.

Or maybe you can relate to this. Life can have a lot of stuff. Stuff is so often caused by others. Stuff can get tiring. We can be tempted to escape from stuff in ways that are outside of God's good boundaries. God has real power for us. We

need to see the Bible as a powerful tool for change. We need long-term peace. Long-term peace only comes from long-term measures. Here is a quote from one of my favorite authors, Sinclair Ferguson. He is a pastor in South Carolina. He says, It is going to take, ‘disciplined, thoughtful, prayerful study of God’s Word, undertaken with the Spirit’s help. [This] will change the way we think,... the way we live, and finally the way we feel. (*Deserted by God?* p 14). This weekend, we will look at ways to know God and grace through the Bible.

Here's my last example. Do I worry about my complicated life? Worry is the busy racing mind. The lie of worry is that it *feels* productive. It is of course, not productive. But, I do have the ability to be truly productive in a complicated life. To steer our thinking, let me ask you (OK, I'll ask myself), do I seek God the same way I check my email? Personally, email is not a friend. I run in, put out fires, and run away. When I seek God the way I check email, He answers because He is faithful. But, the God of heaven and earth has so much more for me and you. Prayer is a powerful way to connect with God.

I've just made quick mention of three means of grace: friendship, Scripture, and prayer. Our purpose this weekend is look at several ways God extends Himself to us. Our need is God, personally. We want to invest this weekend in living a bigger practice of His grace.

We all carry life in our heads. Life is complicated. Reality is what it is. Circumstances certainly change, but we often have so little control over how. God is the one who can help us face reality with courage, and find it good.

So like a small boat over underwater rocks, we roll over the cares of our lives. God may not remove the rocks (or, He may). Either way, He gives us real power and real comfort. Living with a bigger practice of grace is like adding deeper water under our boats so that we can steer well to the good purpose that God designed for us. Let's invest this weekend in learning a bigger practice of grace.