

What Course Shall We Take?

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a great hero renowned for his beauty. Falling in love with himself, he took to gazing at his own reflection, only to die in the process. A recent article in the Davis Enterprise unveiled a study that found today's college students to be among the most narcissistic, self-centered generation we have ever seen. More and more college students are engaging in collegiate studies for their own benefit. One could argue that this finding is reflective of our culture in general.

How does this relate to our Christian faith? Well, quite a bit really. There is a growing trend in the Church today that finds people coming to church to discover what they can find in the way of self-fulfillment. One common misconception in all this is the fact that many Christians believe that the sole purpose for which Christ saves us, is so that when we die, we can go to heaven. They may not voice that, but it is their belief nonetheless. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If heaven isn't the sole purpose of salvation, what is? Jesus didn't come so we could "save our own skin." He came so that we could join in his life. And his life is one of caring and is passionate to see the **whole** world reconciled to God. What course shall we take? The one that says, "It's all about me" – or the one that says, "It's all about Christ."

Monday – Saved for a Purpose

1. Please read Romans 5:9-11. How were we saved? From what were we saved?
2. What does it mean that we were "saved through his life?"
3. This passage tells us *how we were saved* and *from what we were saved*, but it does not really tell us *for what we were saved*. To answer that third question, we go to Psalm 96. Read Psalm 96:1-3. How does this Psalm answer the question, "For what purpose are we saved?"

Focus on Prayer: Have you ever privately sang a song to the Lord? Think of a song that speaks of his character or his salvation and sing it as a prayer of praise to God.

Tuesday – Declare His Glory!

"Having a clear faith, based on the creed of the church, is often labeled today as fundamentalism, whereas relativism, which is letting oneself be tossed and swept along by every wind of teaching, looks like the only attitude acceptable to today's standards." Pope Benedict XVI

Text insight: The writer of Psalm 96 lived in a culture where the people around him worshipped many different gods. The message that there is only one God who alone should be worshipped was probably as radical then as it would probably be today.

1. Relativism is the belief that truth is not absolute, but relative, varying between persons and groups. What are the gods of our day in which relativism is so prevalent?
2. With this backdrop, read Psalm 96. How does the cultural context impact the reading of this Psalm?
3. What is the writer of this Psalm inviting us to do? What might that look like in our culture?

Focus on Prayer: Pray for the Church in America. Pray that we would not be discouraged from sharing the gospel to a culture that seems bent on embracing all beliefs. Pray that the Lord would give us courage to "declare his glory."

Wednesday – Passionate to Proclaim

"The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become." Henry Martyn, missionary to India

1. Please read Psalm 96:1-6. To whom does the writer encourage us to declare God's glory?
2. Many people claim that religion is a private matter, and we shouldn't interfere with people's beliefs. What does Psalm 96 say about this notion? What reasons does he give (see verses 4-6)?
3. Why is the Psalmist so passionate to see God's glory proclaimed throughout the earth?

Focus on Prayer: Ask God to give you a passion to see his glory proclaimed throughout the earth.

Thursday – A Global Vision

1. Read through Psalm 96, paying close attention to the references to the "nations." What is the Psalmist saying about the nations?
2. Often we think of worship as something we do individually or corporately as a church. How does this Psalm broaden our understanding of worship?
3. The Great Commission reveals Jesus' heart for the nations (Matt. 28:19-20). How does it relate to this Psalm?

Focus on Prayer – As we did last week, choose a nation and pray for that nation in the spirit of Psalm 96.

Friday – A Final Vision

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus

1. Please read Psalm 96:10-13. One day Jesus will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. How do these verses help us to understand Jesus' vision for the new earth?
2. Usually we think of salvation pertaining only to people, but in fact, all of creation is waiting to be redeemed. What is the "creation" doing in these verses?
3. Read Revelation 7:9-10. How does it relate to Psalm 96?

Focus on Prayer – The first petition of the Lord's Prayer is a prayer that extends to all the earth. Pray this petition in your own words, asking the Lord to accomplish his will throughout his earth.

For the Weekend: Read Isaiah 49:1-7 and consider it's similarities to Psalm 96. Keep praying with Psalm 96 as your inspiration.