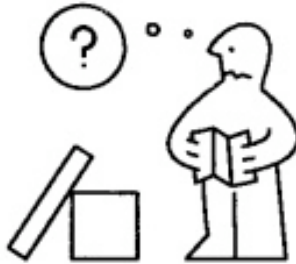
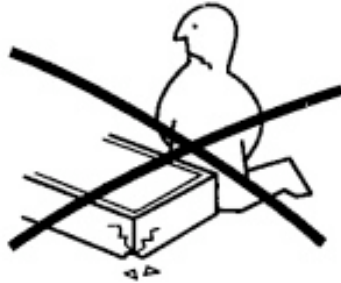
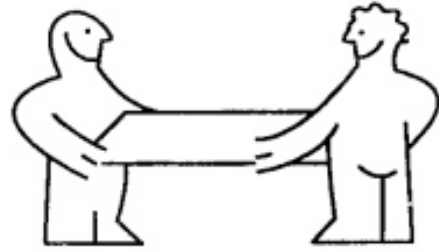


CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

April 11, 2010

It appears that in the middle diagram the assembler failed to cut the box when he tried a saw bar, Karate Kid ice-chop. The better way it appears is to turn your arm into a saw. This of course assumes that you are the T1000 cyborg unit from Terminator II.



Real Spirituality: Loving God's Word

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul"...

The Psalms remain perhaps the most popular portion of the Bible to many, in and out of the church. Popular culture has picked up on this by making every funeral service in a film use Psalm 23. If you read the New Testament, you'll see just how important the Psalms were to the ancients as well: in fact, 41% of all Old Testament quotes in the New Testament come from the Psalms. Martin Luther called the Psalms a "miniature Bible," a summary of everything it has to say.

Which all begs a question: why are the Psalms so impacting and influential, even today? And the answer is: "Because no other part of Scripture best captures the gamut of emotions and experiences better than the Psalms."

They are the words of poets and poets tap into a rich tapestry of metaphors and sometimes very raw emotions, capturing for us the reality of life. The Psalms are the alternative answer to our

penchant for easy answers to everything, to assume life is easily controllable.

Throughout this 10-week series we'll be following Walter Brueggemann's scheme whereby the Psalms are categorized as poems of orientation, disorientation, and re-orientation. These three categories adequately describe our life at any given moment, day, or season and thereby serve as appropriate labels for the Psalms. Psalm 19 serves as the doorway for this series, the first step in a direction of orientation. This poetic text acts as our foundation for the series because it points us to our overall foundation, the word of God. More succinctly Psalm 19 shows us that knowing the world of God leads to knowing the Word of God. The created world is constantly putting out information on God, evidencing that a designer must be behind all this. Romans 1:19 testifies to this fact. Here, Scripture tells us that to ignore the divine signposts of nature is to suppress the truth. While incredibly able, nature is not equipped to provide a robust

revelation about God and his kingdom.

To rely on nature alone is like assembly instructions for Ikea. We inevitably arrive at the final step of the diagram! This leads to a need for his special grace, which we receive through his word. Compared to other global faith systems, David makes the radical declaration that, instead of ultimate condemnation, the law of God actually revives or restores the soul. The original Hebrew of "God" used in Psalm 19 leads us to an understanding of the personal nature of God. Unlike other "faith-laws" the word of God comes to us as in personal, loving terms. The law of God was not intended to shackle us in prison, but the very opposite: to liberate us from being shackled in the prisons our idolatry builds. Such liberation reached its climax in the work of Christ as "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"(2 Cor 5:21). The law of God becomes our delight. It reveals God's love and ultimately his redemption.

Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

Application Questions: Psalm 19

1. Why do you feel that the Psalms are so impacting even in our broader culture?
2. Theologian Walter Brueggemann divides the Psalms into three categories. That is, Psalms of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. Which of these terms best describes your life at the moment and why?
3. Read Psalm 19 as a group. What relationship exists between the world of God and the Word of God?
4. Describe a personal experience in nature or in the world where you've felt compelled to believe in a creative God. How did this bolster your faith?
5. Many spiritualities place nature at the center of revelation. Can nature communicate all that we need to know about God? Why or why not?
6. In Psalm 19 David declares that the "Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." Why do we normally not think of laws this way? Moreover, how does this make Christianity different from other faith systems?
7. Share about your own experience with Scripture. What's been positive? What have you found to be challenging? How does Psalm 19 invite us to a potentially greater experience with God's word?
8. The joy that rises out of Scripture is ultimately rooted in the fact that all of God's word drives us to Christ. How could the image of "feasting" change your engagement to Scripture?

"By emptying Nature of divinity—or, let us say, of divinities—you may fill her with Deity, for she is now the bearer of messages. There is a sense in which Nature-worship silences her—as if a child or a savage were so impressed with the postman's uniform that he omitted to take in the letters."

C.S. Lewis
Reflections on the Psalms

The Word of God

Psalm 19 led us to consider the powerful and essential role that the word of God must play in our life. In developing spiritual rhythms many enjoy reflective walks, worshipping through music, and corporate prayer, but the word of God must play a significant role in and around such things. Many times God reveals himself through nature or even through our times in prayer and reflection, but God has promised to consistently reveal himself through His word (Heb 4:12). This is good news! Recently I came across two Scriptures that speak to this point.

- John 17:6-8 (Jesus High Priestly prayer before going to the cross) states, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and *they have obeyed your word*. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 *For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.*"
- Psalm 1 (The thesis statement for the whole book of Psalms) states "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers?*" (vs 1-3)

Both texts call us to see the word of God as essential to the very foundation of our life. We often view this as an intellectual pursuit (i.e. reading, thinking, meditating, etc), but consider this week what it means for the word of God, that great word of liberation, to be mended into your heart throughout your day. May it be our waking and our sleeping. Reflect on the following quote in regards to the Word's integrative capacity for our life.

- "The secret and reality of this blissful life in God cannot be understood without receiving, living, and experiencing it. If we try to understand it only with the intellect, we will find our effort useless. A scientist had a bird in his hand. He saw that it had life, and, wanting to find out in what part of the bird's body the life was, he began dissecting the bird. The result was that the very life of which he was in search disappeared mysteriously. Those who try to understand the inner life merely intellectually will meet with a similar feature. The life for which they are looking will vanish in the analysis" (Sadhu Sundar Singh (The St. Paul of India 1889-1933, *Sharing the Joy with Others.*)

May the Word of God come alive as we go beyond analyzing it to living in it!