

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



The short grass prairie and the forested hills of central Montana

Aloneness

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We have all heard the saying, “Better alone than in bad company.”

Alone is a choice, but many times the choice is made to entertain bad company, because at the time the company did not appear all that bad. The choice is between two evils, alone with yourself, or together with someone you do not know that much about. The problem is that we really never get to know someone most of the time, until it is too late. The remedy to this aloneness problem and the company that we keep relates to good, only if God is ultimately responsible for the union.

As I have thought about this solitude - isolation paradigm over the last few weeks I am convinced that much of our personality and our abilities in live are developed either in isolation or in solitude. Isolation produces bad things that need to be overcome. Solitude produces good things that need to be developed.

In response to last week’s article I received a quotation attributed to Michael Card “Sometimes the wilderness is a more blessed place than the promised land.”

If you look at the Bible much of the character development of the characters, takes place either in solitude or isolation. In fact, it is much more difficult to find people who were not shaped by aloneness and those who were successful in living in the promised land. And we also see that these times of opportunity produced the fruit of faith as in Hebrews Chapter 11.

Now take out a piece of paper and number it from 1- 40. After each verse in the Chapter put a + (plus) for faith developed in solitude. Place a - (minus) for faith developed in isolation, and a 0 (zero) if you can not tell the faith developing environment.

By Faith We Understand

The Honor Roll of the Faithful

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Jerry Bannon

Wonder Springs

7950 Seward Park Avenue South

Seattle, Washington USA 98118

phone: 206.723.7433

eFax: 425.675.8022

email: bannon@createleaders.org or chronicles@createleaders.org

Please forward prayer requests to: prayer@createleaders.org

Washington State Charity Number: 7529

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1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Faith at the Dawn of History

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Faithful Abraham

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

The Heavenly Hope

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

The Faith of the Patriarchs

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

The Faith of Moses

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

By Faith They Overcame

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Now tally up your scores. I got 16 + pluses, 15 - minuses, and 9 0 zeros. A ratio of about 3 to 1 aloneness to culture. What were your responses?

From prison's solitary confinement, to medical isolation, to secular apostles of wilderness, to the Bible, if aloneness is such a powerful tool to shape and reshape the personality of man, why is wilderness not promoted as the positive means to change?

Probably because it is scary in the least, extremely terrifying to many.

Last week during my wandering time in Eastern Washington, (by the way the house in Reardan which I need to fix, may be purchased, as is, by the son of the man who owns the house across the alley and knew my grandparents when he was growing up), I had the opportunity to visit a place that would be a perfect Wonder Springs Solitude Center. Actually, the name on the real estate brochure for the property was Artesian Meadows Ranch. The place would be a perfect fit for the facility I have been looking for probably twenty years. Only about thirty five minutes to Spokane. More about this next week.

But as I began to think about what it would entail to develop this wonderful piece a property, the major thought that kept coming into my mind is this property has the potential, to be the real thing, real solitude. Properly developed, this is not a cruise ship. There would be room for real solitude and silence, either alone or with one other person. Human interactions with others on the ranch could be designed to provide the proper contrast to the wilderness. In short, it could be a real powerful experience, but that would include even running the place.

This is the problem of writing this Christian message, many times you have to come face to face, with the situations you are writing about. Once you work out a deal on the property, you are there. From day one, the solitude and the silence, at least in the lower 48 states, will have to be dealt with. All within a quarter mile of a secondary state highway.

I suppose that should bring you back to Hebrews chapter 11. But the faith here is not so much individual faith but community faith. If solitude and silence are the most limited commodities in the modern world, how do you value the priceless?

As I have ruminated on this concept, what is important in this, from the prescription that the Christian church should be offering to the world, is the fear of the Lord. That is really our fear of the wilderness, of aloneness. In that solitude we must confront ourselves, our strengths and inadequacies, and know that there is a God, and we are not Deity.

The Jesus of the church is not given that type of respect. We dilute the living water of God, and God's Word, with what we have collected in our own cisterns. We call it the body of Christ, but it is

really the body of the comfortable, the insecure, the tepid. No wonder most of the world wants nothing to do with it, for all the right reasons.

The true gospel of Jesus Christ is scary, fearful, powerful, but at the same time expresses the essence of pure love. Without that contrast, and understanding of the isolation and the solitude the son of God endured to become God's holy redeeming sacrifice, the only source of our justification, then we suffer from the deadly disease of our created culture. More importantly, we continue to promote isolation within our communities, that will eventually lead to social collapse, unless the power of the true gospel is again heard in the land.

Seeds for prayer

This morning I am preparing to go in and have my little pinkie finger fixed. With that gift, a new heart valve and ascending aorta, I have finished my midlife overhaul. A new world of opportunity exists, that few my age have been given.

The procedure itself is supposed to take about a half an hour. Therefore, it is similar to flying from Seattle to Portland. More time is spent in the getting to, and the going from, than in the actual time in the air.

The major issue is just what I can do, and when, as I recover. As the nurse in my pre operation appointment said Monday, "This is really nothing compared to what you have undergone this year."

Once I get to that recovered point, I suppose my writing these last few years indicates that I will probably see if I can change the name of Artesian Meadows Ranch to Wonder Springs (Solitude) Center. Please pray for this time and the opportunity that this time affords.