

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: March 2, 2008

THE NEXT CHAPTER

STEVE SCHIBSTED

WEEK 6 OF THE SERIES

“CORE VALUE: AUTHENTICITY”

Scripture

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

John 15:9-17

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Core Value: Authenticity

Embraced by the love of God, we are free to be transparent before God and before others. We seek freedom from hypocrisy. Through Christ's transforming power, we are becoming authentic and genuine people, admitting fears and flaws. We want to be real people, encountering a real God, serving a real world.

Study Notes

We are hearing a lot about authenticity these days. We are told that Americans want a president who is "authentic." This week we explore what role authenticity plays in the lives of Christians and churches.

Questions For Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. Steve said in his sermon that some people spend their entire lives listening to the voices from the cellar while others listen to the voice from the balcony. The voices in the cellar are those that tell us that we never quite measure up, that regardless of what we do, it is never good enough. The voice from the balcony is the voice of God, the heavenly Father, who loves you unconditionally. Why is it so hard for us to listen to the voice of love instead of the voices from the cellar?
2. What happens in our lives when the voice of love becomes the dominant voice that we hear? In other words, what changes occur in our lives as we send our roots deeper into God's grace? What changes have you experienced in your life because of God's grace?
3. The word for remain in the John passage is a rich word in the Greek. It is the word *mello* which means dwell, or remain, abide. What commands does Jesus give us in verses 9-12? What are the results of obedience that Jesus gives us in verses 9-12? What is the relationship between remaining, obeying commands, and loving others? Is there a connection between remaining in Christ's love (in other words, listening to the voice from the balcony) and loving others?

4. How would you describe authenticity to a friend? How would you describe to him or her how knowing Christ helps one to be authentic?
5. Is it possible for a church to be a place where people can be authentic with one another? What are some obstacles that prevent authenticity from being a core value in churches?
6. Larry Crabb writes in his book *The Safest Place on Earth*: "It is our weakness, not our competence, that moves others; our sufferings, not our blessings, that breaks down the barriers of fear and shame that keep us apart; our admitted failures, not our paraded successes that bind us together in hope." Do you agree or disagree with Crabb?
7. Is your small group a place where you and the other members can be "real" with one another? If not, what steps can you take to help it be a safe place?