

Fourth Talk, Monday 22 Sept Evening Session

Bruce began the talk by sharing a story about a woman whose life turned around when she decided to let God be in the number 1 position of control rather than in the number 2 position.

Then he spoke about Abraham and the struggles Abraham went through leading up to putting his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice. We often don't think about the three day journey they went on to reach that place. On that journey Abraham wrestled with the will I? won't I? and came to a place of trust. God does something in the journey with us, things that can only happen with time and age. That's why it can seem to us that it takes Him a long time to do things. Life is not about what we can do for God but about what God can do in us.

God is found on the other side of surrender.

Parish missions are good, but they fade quickly. So I have a 40 day challenge for you. Pick one out of the six and practice it for 40 days.

1. **Daily surrender.** God today I give you my life. I want to do things Your way, not my way. We need to keep choosing God.
2. **First and last thoughts.** Begin : God, can I do this day with You?
End: God I didn't live up to the person I wanted to be, forgive me and work in me as I sleep.
3. **Constant conversation.** Treat God as an invisibly present friend. Talk to Him. He has an opinion on everything in your life.
4. **Expectation and experience.** Live with the expectation that God will do something in your life today. He may ask you to risk things in your life. Respond to Him.
5. **Constant input.** Study. Learn something about God every day. Seek input from good sources.
6. **Discipline of His presence.** Sit quietly, feet on the ground, hands in your lap. Close your eyes and don't think of anything for 20 minutes. Listen and get attuned to God's presence.

Notes from the St John the Baptist Parish Mission at Woy Woy with The Catholic Guy 18-22 Sept 2014

Disclaimer : These summary notes are only how one person heard the Parish Mission talks, and there may be many inaccuracies.

First Talk, Thursday 18 Sept Morning Session

It is good to remind ourselves of the power of the Sign of the Cross. When we make the Sign of the Cross we say something about our identity and the extent of the love of God for us.

Bruce Downes then introduced himself as someone married for 32 years with 5 children (4 daughters, 1 son) and 4 grandchildren. He asked us to consider what we would do if God spoke to us personally during these days of pausing and reflection that the parish mission offers. Then he shared the story how on a European trip with his wife to celebrate their 25th anniversary they were in Rome when he felt God ask him to change his plans and spend the next day in prayer. This he did, but no answers came until the day was almost over, 'Bruce there are some things I have wanted you to do, and there is no next step until you have done them'. Back in Perth as he began to work on those things a new message came 'I want you to make a Catholic television program'. God then arranged many things to fall into place. But when He calls, He often gives us very few details to work with. That is because He wants us to have faith and to say, 'Lord, will You lead me?' Then using the Gospel passage of the woman with the haemorrhage and the daughter of Jairus he spoke about how fully and generously God responds to the prayers of the desperate. Faith is more than belief, it is trust. Faith is a free gift that God gives. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God, and by begging God for it. Put things up at home that will remind you to ask for more faith.

Second Talk, Friday 19 Sept Morning Session

Today Bruce talked about the Old Testament story of Jonah and the whale. When we are doing what we are meant to be doing, then we are in the presence of God. Jonah ran away from what God wanted him to do. Sin is attractive and it often feels good when we sin. However because Jonah ran away he put the lives of the innocent others in the boat with him in danger. How come the actions of one affects others? Proverbs 13:20 explains this. 'He who walks with the wise becomes wise, the companion of fools suffers harm'. Jonah was a fool, because a fool runs away from doing what God wants them to do. The longer those in the boat tried to save Jonah, the worse it got for them. We cannot change others, we can only change ourselves. Those in the boat with Jonah only reached calm when they tossed Jonah out of their lives and out of the boat. For some listeners, the people you are hanging out with are doing you harm. God is interested in a relationship with us, and tough times often help us to turn back to Him. Those who worship idols forsake their true loyalty. An idol is anything we put before God in our lives. Sometimes, like Jonah, God asks us to do things that you don't want to do. Do them anyway. He always gives us the grace to do the things He asks us to do. In younger days, due to feeling unfairly different to others, Bruce would tell himself 'I'll survive, I'll get by, I don't deserve better'. This only changed when his wife realised this was sabotaging his life and prayed from her heart for him. As they prayed about his birth, Bruce felt the presence of Jesus saying as he was born, 'You're all right, you'll be OK' and years of pain fell away from him. Who has control in our lives? God or us? We can choose to surrender our lives to God. We place barriers in our lives to God's help if we tell Him, 'God I can get through this on my own'. Bruce invited us to symbolically let God have the troubles and issues in our lives by dissolving tablets in water.

Third Talk, Sunday 21 Sept Morning Session

Our God is a talking communicating God. But regrets, hurts and lack of forgiveness can block the voice of God in our lives. We need to let God be in charge. 'Sorry' is only used 9 times in the Bible, and only as an expression of disappointment. Forgiveness is used frequently. In life we never have control over anything else. Time has a role, but time never heals our hurts. The only thing that will begin our healing is the giving of forgiveness. Nothing you have done makes you unacceptable to God. He will forgive us to the extent that we have forgiven others. Forgiveness is hard, and we need God to help us. When we don't forgive, we are the ones who are hurt, injured, disabled. There are three stages that prepare the way for forgiveness.

1. Rediscover the humanity of the person who hurt you, remind yourself of the good in him/her that coexists with the bad.
2. Relinquish your right to get even. Doing this does not surrender your right to justice. Vengeance only prolongs the pain.
3. Revise your feelings towards the person you seek to forgive. This means changing your language and thoughts towards and about them

Forgiveness does not mean reunion. It does not mean re-instatement and it does not mean forgetting. Romans 8:28 All things work together for good for those who love God. There is no hurt in our lives that God cannot use. Forgiveness happens inside the person who does it. Forgiveness means loving yourself. When we need forgiveness ourselves, here is how to ask for it: 'I want to ask your forgiveness. I did because..... I am sorry, please forgive me.' Only say 'I forgive you' in return if you truly can. Only say it when you are able to, because when you say 'I forgive you', you can never discuss it again. That's the way it works. Some of us need to forgive others. Some of us need to forgive ourselves. Some of us need to forgive God. If there is someone you need to contact, go do it.