

Lovely Opposites and Upside-Downs

Introduction

Without going further into this lesson, name all of the opposites and upside-downs of the Christian faith that you can. Then look at the list below.

- ❖ Whoever wants to be great must be like a child or a servant.
- ❖ Whoever wants to live must die to himself or herself in order to find his or her life.
- ❖ Your flesh is in opposition to the Spirit. (Galatians 5)
- ❖ The woman who had been bleeding for over a decade longed to go unnoticed, but Jesus doesn't allow us to live that way before Him. We are noticed. We are loved. He sees you.
- ❖ Forgive those who wound you.
- ❖ Bless those who persecute you. Pray for your persecutors. (Matthew 5)
- ❖ The flesh counts for nothing; the Spirit gives life. The words Jesus spoke are Spirit and life.
- ❖ What we deserve; death and hell. What believers are granted: grace and life, heaven.
- ❖ You are blessed when you are insulted and slandered for the Name.
- ❖ God can make plenty from next to nothing. (Matthew 15)
- ❖ What seems impossible with people is possible with God. (Matthew 19:26)
- ❖ Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many.

Add more from your own thoughts here:

Match these observations above with the scriptures that anchor them.

Scriptural exploration:

Enjoy some time in the gospel of Matthew by looking up these scriptures. Pay close attention to the theme of **opposites** as you read:

Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 10:37-39

Matthew 11:25,26

Matthew 12:30

Matthew 20:24-28

To know the heart of Jesus better, memorize Philippians 2:5-11 this month.
Consider the context and teaching of either Hebrews 2:10 or 1 Corinthians 4:10.

How do you see God working out Psalm 109:28 in your life? "They may curse, but You will bless." (David was in opposition with his enemies.)

Books

The Insanity of God: This book explores the fact that our loving Father God allows inexcusable suffering, especially and specifically among His own beloved followers.

Any of the books on the life of Mother Teresa; there are so many, and your group may already own some. A popular books are *Come Be My Light*; *No Greater Love*; *In My Own Words*.

Non-Scriptural Exploration

Find out about these people:

Jon Pedley, a former resident of the UK and former millionaire.

Yevgeny Pushenko of Vladivostok and Greece.

Artwork

Depict the tension and/or beauty between some of the **opposites** and **upside-downs** of the Christian faith.

Movies

Amazing Grace: Watch what happens when one man has the opposite convictions of his culture.

Online

Research the life of Charles (CT) Studd.

Questions to Ponder

Jesus is the ultimate walking contradiction. He left unimaginable riches and glory and honor and power to come to earth as a simple workman in an obscure village in a disreputable part of the country. He came to save us ... by dying for us. He was a Savior, but His method was unorthodox: He did not come as a conquering king or armed warrior with legions of fighters. He came humbly, quietly, as a servant, as a supernatural physician to the broken and repentant. He was a suffering Savior (see Isaiah 53, Hebrews 2:10, Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 3:18, Philippians 2:7,8). List all the opposites and contradictions and tensions you can think of in the life, death, ministry, and teachings of Jesus.

What would it take for you to swim upstream - do the **opposite** thing - that our culture says is right, but you oppose because of your faith?

What **opposite** is God calling you into more intimately and practically right now?

How has He called you to value things and people an **upside-down** way? Although these example may seem a bit polarized, I think we live somewhere on the tension-filled tight-rope between these two points:

- ❖ God says to use money and love people; the world says to love money and use people.
- ❖ God says greatness is meekness (Spirit-controlled power) employed for the good of others; the world says greatness is power used for self.

- ❖ God says to lose your life for the good of the Kingdom, and you will find true life; the world says spend your life finding your own happiness, health, companionship, and wealth, and you will find happiness.
- ❖ God says give, expecting nothing in return, even to your enemies; the world says, 21% interest and a court date if you don't repay.
- ❖ God says He is everything; the world says He is ... whatever.
- ❖ God says to serve humbly is to be great; the world says to dominate and lead is to be great.
- ❖ God says to be child-like in faith and service and simplicity is good; the world says to be dominant in faith, in work, in family is good.
- ❖ God says to forgive - even over and over - reflects His good heart; the world says that's stupid, even weak and ridiculous.
- ❖ God says to love the unlovable, even in costly ways; the world says they're not worth it, move on.

I think in Heaven we will be privileged to meet saints throughout the ages who lived hidden, small, costly lives because they were faithful and humbly served God, their families, and their villages. I can't wait!

I think we will meet the martyrs and hear their stories and watch them glow as they speak of how God met them in their extreme need. God will give them a special place and special gifts (see Revelation 6:9-11) because "they did not love their lives," but rather entrusted their lives to God, even "unto death."

I think we will meet disabled people and mentally challenged people whose simple, practical faith is exemplary, even if they could not express it here on earth.

I think we will see reconciliation between the persecuted and the persecutor, the served and the servant, the boss and the worker, the harmed and the perpetrator, because God's light and love will be there and we will be overwhelmed with His love and grace. His truth will have set us completely free, and we will be free to live in this upside-down way.