

Luke 8

John Karmelich

Title: Understanding God's power and how that affects our role as believers!

One thing I've learned is a purpose of the Bible is to teach us what God desires from those He called to be a witness for Him. I get that much of the Bible explains who Jesus is and why it is key to living how God desires. I realize most of the Gospel texts are illustrations and examples for us on how He expects us to live. God provides the power (the Holy Spirit) to live as He desires. Once we understand that we can harness that power, and live as He desires! Does that mean we like Jesus can raise people from the dead or cast out demons? While such things are rare for most Christians, the underlying point is to get that only God knows who's saved, but He works through believers to lead others to Him. We were not saved to just give our lives to Jesus then ignore Him until we die! I realize that is old news for most of us. I'm just saying the idea that God works through us is important as we go through this chapter.

Okay, let me begin to summarize this long chapter: Luke opens by stating the events of Chapter 8 took soon after Chapter 7 (logical) but not everything in the Gospels were in chronological order. He states some women also worked with Jesus. That tells us the Gospel isn't just for men! Credit is given to all these women as they provided for Jesus out of their means. If Jesus "multiplied the loaves", He could provide food for everyone around Him! A key reason we honor Jesus as God and He encourages us to honor Him, is because that effort helps us to keep our focus on Him. Luke gives credit to these women since they made the effort to provide for Jesus and probably the other apostles as well.

We then get Jesus telling the famous parable of four types of soil. The most important thing to get from it is some people's hearts will be open to the Gospel, and some won't accept it! None of us know who'll be saved and when, so our job is just to present the Gospel. The rest in effect is His business! What we must do is to pray for people's hearts to be open when we share with them. Jesus also says the purpose of the parables is to hide the truth! It's not so people cannot read it and figure out what Jesus said. The point is unbelievers refuse to believe the Gospel truth, so it is "hidden" from their hearts. Then we get a reference to Mary and Jesus' half brothers. In effect, they want "backstage passes" since they're family! Jesus' response wasn't about their salvation! It's to show the crowd the saved are those who believe the Gospel, and family connections got nothing to do with that!

We also get a comment about the obvious fact that when we light a lamp we don't hide it. We want that light to shine. When we make the effort to pray and read our Bible, He'll provide more information on being a better witness for Him! It reminds us God does not reveal our whole life to us all at once! God wants to guide us day by day and seek Him, to guide our lives for His glory!

Then we have a few miracles to say in effect, "Jesus is God deal with it!" He told the disciples they are to go by boat with Him across the Sea of Galilee. A big storm came, and most of them were fishermen who understood storms. Bottom line, Jesus calmed it and condemned their lack of faith since He stated they're going to the other side. When they arrived, Jesus cast a lot of demons out of a non-Jewish man who lived there walking around naked scaring the locals. Notice Jesus performed the miracle on a non-Jewish person. The place where he was had an economy based on raising pigs, which is "non-kosher". The demon referred to Jesus as God, and the next thing to happen is Jesus cast out the demons, so they ran into that heard of pigs who couldn't stand the demons in them! The pigs drowned by running off a cliff into that Sea. The townspeople there were scared, as Jesus in effect damaged the economy. Jesus

told the cured man to preach about Him. He is the last person anyone would expect to be a witness for Jesus! That teaches us we never know who will accept the Gospel and when! It is a requirement when preaching this passage to mention it's the famous case of "Deviled ham"!

The last two stories are more examples of God's power and what we are to do with it! One is about the local synagogue leader (probably back in Capernaum a city on that sea). He wasn't necessarily the one who preached as much as the guy who ran things! He had a daughter who was dying and asked if Jesus could visit. As opposed to the Roman soldier in the last chapter who just asked Jesus to help, this guy's requesting a personal visit. Jesus always works on our levels to bring people closer to Him. On the way there was a woman with a blood flow problem (considered unclean in Jewish society). She just wanted to touch Jesus to see if that help. Jesus was aware of what she did, and He asked her to "take a big leap of faith" and publicly admit it. When most people commit their lives to Jesus, they're usually scared to do anything in public. Just as Jesus led her to the next step, so we're called to lead people closer to Him so they too can be a witness for Him.

That leads me to the final story of the chapter. I realize it is a long chapter, and the underlying purpose is not just to show His power, but just to teach us how to rely on His power to lead people to Him! The last story also shows how His miracles are His miracles, so we should not count on Him doing them on request! Our job is just to be a witness for Him! He saves who He chooses to save on His timing. That leads us to the final chapter story of Jesus and His traveling gang going to the synagogue's leader home to raise his daughter from the dead. Jesus ignored the naysayers, as He went to see the girl face to face! With Jesus was her parents and a few of His disciples. I figure one of them shared this with Luke years later! God obviously has power over life and death. Who God decides to raise up is His business, and we must accept it. What we are to learn here story is Jesus will go to whatever lengths are necessary to draw people to Him. It's a lesson all of us need to remember as we go through life, hopefully using our lives as God wants us to use them as a witness for Him!

I can just hear many of you thinking, I don't have God's power! How do you expect God to use me as a witness for Jesus? In other words, why bother? Why not just go through life and watch for situations to be used by God? It comes back to remembering why He created us in the first place, to use our lives as a witness for Him. Reading of all these miracles and people being drawn to Him is designed to remind us some people do have open hearts to the Gospel message. The underlying purpose of these stories is not to just remind us "Jesus did this here and that there". It's here to remind us God created us so we're to do likewise. We too are "raising people from the dead", when we preach eternal salvation. We take advantage of the fact some people's hearts are open to the Gospel truth. We too can lead non-believers away from bad or demonic teaching. We too have power over storms in that God says His power will work in us to face whatever we face. I'm not saying there isn't pain in life. I am saying God provides us with the strength to face whatever we must deal with. I realize we have lives we're called to live. It is a matter of keeping in mind WHY we're created in the first place! As I preach all the time, if we put God first in our lives and make time for Him daily, the rest of life falls into place!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.