

Word notes Sunday 29/12/13
Madeleine & Charlotte: It's not about rules!

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: Matt 11:25-30 & Matt 15:1-11

“Child-like faith” (Matt 11:25-30)

The Jews, especially those who thought themselves wise and learned were trying to carry a heavy load - the law. Jesus came to take that load away in exchange for something much easier, so easy that children could understand where those too caught up in legalism could not.

Quiz: Which rules do we need to obey to get to heaven? The truth is of course that to get to heaven we need to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah and trust in his sacrifice on the cross, not obey rules. Obedience to God and His commandments comes out of having our hearts changed by the Holy Spirit as we trust first, then obey out of love for Jesus - trust comes first!

“Why I love God but hate religion” (Matt 15:1-11)

The Pharisees were not big fans of Jesus - he was teaching a new way, which threatened their hold on power and so they looked for any excuse to criticise him. Jesus says they are really odd getting worked up about a few men not washing their hands and not obeying tradition. Jesus points out to them that they adhere to tradition above obedience to God's commands and calls them hypocrites. He reminds them that it's not what you eat or drink that shows your heart relationship with God but what you say and do.

God wants people to say what's in their hearts and to act well. He's not interested about you obeying a set of rules but instead that you love him with all your heart. Religion is just behaviour modification - nothing has changed inside. God doesn't want religion; He wants our hearts! Regular discipline is good but God is interested in us doing those things because we love Him not to try and earn favour or look good to others.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

What is it that tempts us to try and keep to the rules? Can you think of scriptures in both Old and New Testaments that show us that what God really wants is something more?

So what has happened to the Law, does it still apply, has it been scrapped, what is our relationship to the Law if we are trusting in Jesus?

How does that affect our attitude to others – especially those who don't keep the same rules that we do? (Examples might be that they don't read the Bible as much, don't live the same kind of life, behave in ways we wouldn't.)

Why was Jesus' attitude to the Pharisees so harsh? How does that compare to His attitude towards sinners such as the woman caught in adultery? Explain the difference.

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

The New Year is upon us – what is your vision for outreach in 2014?