

PAUSE SERIES: WEEK ONE

What you will need for this week:
- Bibles

Suggested Structure:

Opening game

Ask if anyone has anything they want to say about what they heard on Sunday

Discussion questions and prayer

GAME:

Everyone needs to take a coin out of their wallet/purse. (Borrow from your neighbour if you don't have one on you).

Look at the date on the coin.

Everyone to share the following about that year:

- What were you doing that year?
- What was your favourite memory from that year?
- What was going to happen that would be your biggest surprise that year?

DISCUSSION

Ask if anyone has anything they want to say about what they heard on Sunday

Someone read Jeremiah 17:5-6...

5 Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. 6 He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

Verses 5-6 speaks about the qualities of a person who lives for the approval of people, ploughing all their time and energy into their public worlds: he likens them to a shrub in a desert.

What are some examples of how we invest in our public selves?

'Why do we tend to be consumed by our public selves, putting almost all our time and energy into developing it?

After some discussion if the following haven't been covered, add them:

It is what people and culture tend to notice and applaud.

It is easier to measure our progress here.

The demands that drive us come from our public world. (eg Our children are shouting ‘feed me’. Our boss is yelling, ‘Get the work done.’ Our spouse is begging, ‘Paint the house.’ Our friends are hinting, ‘Spend time with me.’ Spurred on by these demands, we plough our time and energy into our public world.)

So the benefits are obvious. But what is the cost of ploughing almost all of our time and energy into our public world, our public selves?

After some discussion, add the following if they haven’t been covered:

- Yes we get stuff done, but we’re restless, anxious and fearful.
- Yes we accomplish much, but we’re tired and weary, and often feel empty.
- Yes we fly at times, but we’re easily overcome in difficult times.
- Yes we know lots of people, but we don’t develop the kind of character God intended us to.
- Yes we make a difference, but we don’t make the kind of difference God intended us to make.

Someone read Jeremiah 17:7-8 ...

7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. **8** He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

- In contrast verses to verses 6-7, these verses speak about the qualities of someone who, ploughing considerable time and energy into their relationship with God, sends their roots down by a stream.

Someone read Psalm 1:2-3...

2 His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Think of a tree. The life of a tree consists of ...

- 1) what’s above the ground for all to see. This is what could be called ‘the public tree’
- 2) what’s below the ground, the unseen root system that drinks in water. This is what could be called ‘the hidden tree’.

The wise person invests considerable time and energy into their hidden, private world, and into their relationship with God.

What are the benefits of doing this? Does anyone have any stories to share where they can say this was definitely true for them?

After some discussion, you can remind them of the following. The reason we invest in the private self is because when we do so:

We’re faith-filled not fear-filled

We are energized not exhausted.

We confidently endure adversity.

We become the kind of person God intended us to become.

We make the kind of difference God intended us to make.

What are some of the things we do to invest time and energy into our private, hidden worlds?

PRAYER POINTS

Break into pairs and pray with and for each other:

Spend some time thanking God that he is so invested in our private lives. Thank him for what he has been doing this year with us as individuals and as a community.

Over this next season, it can become easy to focus on the public life. Pray that God help us to use this time to invest in our private lives.

If either person has specific requests, they can pray for these too.

SUMMARY: ROOTS BY THE STREAM

In a culture where we're taught to focus on what everyone can see (achievement, success etc) Christ invites us to focus on what can't be seen (sending down our roots into him)

'Pause' is about taking the time to go deeper into our own hearts, and deeper into God – something we're usually too busy to do.

We put enormous amounts of time and energy into what's public and visible about our lives, into what could be called - 'our public self'.

What do I mean by our 'public self'? It is all that is easily observable about us...

- Think of how much time and energy we put into school and study and gaining academic degrees.
- Think how much time and energy we put into gaining work experience and succeeding in the world of work.
- Think how much time and money we put into accumulating money, goods, possessions.
- Think how much time and energy we put into gaining and growing key relationships with people.
- Think of how much time we put into hobbies and sports.
- Think of how much time we spend developing our bodies and doing what we can to look more attractive.
- Think how much time and energy we spend trying to capture our lives on camera and uploading to facebook for our 100s of friends to see.

They make up the public self. Of course, there is nothing wrong with these things. And indeed Christ wants to shape how we go about doing all these things. But notice how they so easily consume our lives and become the focus of our lives. Why?

My question:

So the benefits are obvious. But what is the cost of ploughing almost all of our time and energy into our public world, our public selves? Without explaining it in much detail let me say it simply – you might get applause, you might make progress, and you might still the demands but at the end of the day...

- 1) Yes we get stuff done, but we're restless, anxious and fearful.
- 2) Yes we accomplish much, but we're tired and weary, and often feel empty.
- 3) Yes we fly at times, but we're easily overcome in difficult times.
- 4) Yes we know lots of people, but we don't develop the kind of character God intended us to.
- 5) Yes we make a difference, but we don't make the kind of difference God intended us to make.

Is there another way to live? Oh yes there is...

B. Let's briefly look at three passages in the Bible...

Let's turn now to Psalm 1:2-3...

2 His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

This verse speaks of a person who delights in God, in God's word. This person spends much time – in fact day and night – in the secret place of their hearts – mulling over God's word. And this verse compares them to a tree – planted by a stream.

Lastly turn to Jeremiah 17:5-8, the main Bible verses of the entire series...

5 Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. 6 He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

Do you see what Jeremiah says here?

- Verses 5-6 speaks about the qualities of a person who lives for the approval of people, ploughing all their time and energy into their public worlds: he likens them to a shrub in a desert.

- In contrast verses 7-8 speaks about the qualities of someone who, ploughing considerable time and energy into their relationship with God, sends their roots down by a stream. Let's ponder the picture of a tree a little more...

C. Now I'm ready to introduce the main metaphor of this series...

Think of a tree. The life of a tree consists of ...

- 1) what's above the ground for all to see. This is what could be called 'the public tree'
- 2) what's below the ground, the unseen root system that drinks in water. This is what could be called 'the hidden tree'.

It's about one of the best pictures to help us understand ourselves. We also consist of two selves. There's the above-the-ground public self, which includes public roles we play for all to see. Then there's the below-the-ground hidden self, which consists of what happens in the depths of our lives, usually in private, where no one can see.

All three of these verses – 1 Kings 17, Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17 – make the same point...

The wise person invests considerable time and energy into their hidden, private world, and into their relationship with God. Did you know that the roots of trees are usually three times the length of its branches?

Moreover, in this picture Christ can be likened to a kind of underground stream. And we are encouraged to 'send out our roots by the stream'. We're urged to make our life's priority not what everyone can see, but rather what only God can see.

D. Let me speak about WHY we should make it our life's priority to 'send out our roots by the stream'. I have five reasons.

To find them, look closely at Jeremiah 17:7-8 again. See the 5 benefits of sending out our roots by the stream: 'He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, 8 and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.'

The first reason to take the time to send your roots out by the stream is...

We're faith-filled not fear-filled

Verse 8 says we 'do not fear when heat comes'.

In the face of much adversity and uncertainty, God told Noah to "Build," Abraham to "Go," Joshua to "March," and Daniel to "Pray." These men made God's Hall of Faith, because their roots went deep - they built, went, marched, and prayed *by faith*. They believed God instead of allowing circumstances and people to control their destinies.

When we plough most of our energy into our public worlds, we're easily dominated by fear. But if we PAUSE, and take the time to send out our roots by the stream, we're faith-filled.

The second reason to take the time to send your roots out by the stream is...

We are energized not exhausted.

Listen to how Jesus makes a similar promise in Matthew 11:28-30. Let me read it from the Message translation: ‘Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out...? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.’”

If we put almost all of our time and energy into our public selves, we end up internally exhausted. But if we PAUSE, and take the time to send our roots down to the stream, we end up internally energized.

The third reason to take the time to send your roots out by the stream is...

We confidently endure adversity.

If we put almost all of our time and energy into our public selves, we end up broken by adversity. But if we PAUSE, and take the time to send our roots down to the stream, we are able to confidently withstand adversity.

The fourth reason to take the time to send your roots out by the stream is...

We become the kind of person God intended us to become.

But if we fail to send down our roots, our driven lives will be marked by everything but this ... irritation, frustration, restlessness, impatience, competitiveness, abrasiveness and more.

If we put almost all of our time and energy into our public selves, we end up not becoming the person God intended us to be. But if we PAUSE, and take the time to send our roots down to the stream, we do.

The fifth reason to take the time to send your roots out by the stream is...

We make the kind of difference God intended us to make.

I'm not saying you can't make a difference without sending your roots down. You can. But what *kind* of difference do you make? You might bear fruit but it is a fruit that lacks the truly life-giving nutrients only a truly life-giving stream could have provided.

To sum up this point, if we put almost all of our time and energy into our public selves, we end up not making the kind of difference God intended us to make. But if we PAUSE, and take the time if we send our roots down to the stream, we do.

E. So let me sum up what I've said...

- We all have a public self, the part of us that is above-ground. And we all have a private self, the part of us that is below-ground.
- But we tend to plough most, if not all, of our time and energy into what's above the ground because what's above-ground
 - is what tends to draw applause and approval from others.
 - is easier to measure in terms of progress.
 - is where the demands come from.
- But if we're wise we'll PAUSE to take the time to send down our roots by the stream because Jeremiah 17:8 promises that we'll...
 - be faith-filled not fear-filled
 - be energized not exhausted.
 - confidently endure adversity.

- become the kind of person God intended us to become.
- make the kind of difference God intended us to make.