

## Faith One on One

May 30, 2011

Life presents us with many one-on-one situations. We see them most clearly in sports, where even team sports often come down to one-on-one contests between key players. At work, we sometimes have to deal one on one with co-workers or bosses who aggravate or confound us. School is similar, whether it be teachers or students who cause the aggravation. Families often have one-on-one confrontations between husband and wife, parent and child, or between relatives. In war, hand to hand combat is the ultimate test of valor.

The Bible records countless one-on-one confrontations. David and Goliath is probably the most famous of these. How about Eve and the serpent, Jesus and Satan in the desert, Moses and Pharaoh, Elijah and the prophets of Baal? There are many others, including many New Testament stories that reveal the heart motivation of individuals when Jesus walked in their midst, often asking remarkably pointed questions.

Hebrews 11 reminds us that we are part of a great cloud of witnesses throughout Scripture whose personal faith overcame one-on-one challenges in times of testing. From a spiritual perspective, we need to be ready to handle ourselves no matter what the circumstances of life, or the enemy, put before us.

What is the spiritual root of our individuality that makes one-on-one situations so crucial? Scripture reminds us that we are made in the image of God (*Gen. 1:27*), who knit us together in our mother's womb (*Psalms 139:13*). God is acquainted with all our ways (*Psalms 139:3*). In short, the God of all Creation knows us intimately, personally, as individuals, and not just as mechanical specks in His Great Creation. Moreover, "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (*Titus 2:11*). He extends his mercy to every one of us, individually and personally.

We are each given grace, called and destined in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (*Eph. 2:9-10*). Each of us was made to abide in Christ and bear fruit (*John 15:2*). God will supply the needs of every individual according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (*Phil. 4:19-20*). When we seek His Kingdom first, above all else, He gives us everything we need (*Matt. 6:33*), including His Holy Spirit, which He gives freely to all those who obey Him (*Acts 5:32*).

We are also individually and personally accountable, for "God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (*Eccl. 12:14*). "Each of us will give an account of himself to God" (*Roman 14:12*).

Everyone has a story about their one-on-one encounters in life. We hear them every day when we listen to music on the radio. Believers have a better story. We don't have to sing the blues. Our stories are the testimonies of how knowing Jesus has changed our lives. Sharing our testimonies is an important key to overcoming the enemy – and sharing our faith. When we share our testimonies one on one, and when people see our faith lived openly before them, the door opens to their becoming followers of Jesus, like us. We call this kind of sharing "discipleship."

Jesus invested three times as much time with his disciples as he did with the crowds. Of some 259 sequential events in the life of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels, nearly 200 involved training His disciples, often in compelling one-on-one encounters. The disciples eventually carried out Jesus' mission so powerfully and precisely that people "took note that these men had been with Jesus" (*Acts 4:13*). Notice, people did not say they had been *taught* by Jesus, but rather that they had *been with* Jesus. Paul echoed the importance of one-on-one discipleship when he wrote "we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (*1 Thess. 2:8*).

One of the most important keys to discipling others is learning to ask questions about peoples' lives. Yes, it's important to share the truth of God's Gospel. But by caring enough about others to ask them personal questions, God often opens the door to their hearts so they can receive the truth we want to share. The Gospels record Jesus asking question after question, at least 182 questions in all, repeatedly revealing and opening the hearts of those He encountered one on one. We can learn to do the same!