

Saturday The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776) made this startling claim:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Read Galatians 3:25-29 (one of Paul's startling claims)

Obviously some people have disabilities; some have special talents that others don't; some seem to have more misfortune than others. In what sense are all "equal"? Is this concept from colonial America the same as the Bible's conception of humans?

What is the most important insight God has shown you this week?

What new thing(s) can you do to express your faith?

A Parting Prayer from John Greenleaf Whittier
Verse 1 of "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" (hymn, 1872),
The United Methodist Hymnal (1989), #358

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives they service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.*

Recovering from Christian Atheism Believing But Pursuing Happiness

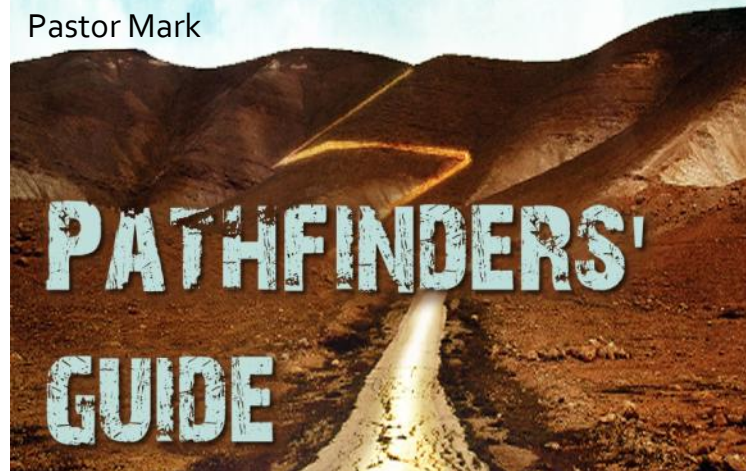
February 12-18, 2012

We played the game as kids as soon as we were able to understand the rejection of authority. We asked each other things like, "Yea, well who says?" or said things like "Uh-uh, you're not the boss of me!" Of course, the rejection of imposed authority had much to do with struggles to live with each other on the playground and other places where play took place.

I have often wondered how much and how well we carried that rejection of authority into our adult lives. It is sure that we often still live with some degree of adolescent rebellion in our lives. Sometimes I think we do simply to give us the illusion of control in a culture that dehumanizes and takes away our individuality under the guise of making things better for us. We may voluntarily seek to obey most of the laws of the land unless one becomes cumbersome or interferes with some self interest of ours. If we do that with the laws of the land, how much more so with God?

What can we do? I think Jesus said it best, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness..." Seeking, for me at least, has always been an act of submission and the simple acknowledgement that God may know better for me than I think I know for myself. Seeking is humble and seeking is hard, but the zeal of discovery is that we find Him to be the God we really wanted all along. Got humble?

Pastor Mark



Sunday

Paul encouraged Timothy to "take hold of eternal life."

Read 1 Timothy 6:11-15

What are the major obstacles to following the example of Jesus and Paul?

Wednesday

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus advised what is most important in life.

Read Matthew 6:25-33

According to this passage, how will food and clothing be "given"? How do you understand the passage?

Monday

Some people wonder how such a cynical book as Ecclesiastes was accepted into the Bible.

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-14

Does he have a point? Living before the time of Jesus, what did he miss?

Thursday

In today's passage, joy is linked to following commandments. That seems contradictory to many who value freedom more than obedience to someone else's rules. ("We live in a free country, don't we?")

Read John 15:10-11

It seems that Americans value freedom more than obedience. Shouldn't it be that we know God first and then are convinced to obey?

Tuesday

Isaiah often spoke in poetic imagery and eye-catching paradoxes.

Read Isaiah 55:1-2

Reword his message in today's terms.

Friday

The James passage says we "ask wrongly" in our prayers.

Read James 4:1-4

Give some examples of "wrongly asked" prayers. What should we pray for?
