

Sun. Clamor. People. Tables. Bazaar day.

"Hi! We're Yale's wildest....more fun than you dreamed possible....free food!"

"How much?"

"Tuesdays and Thursdays midnight to 3."

Steep price; then again, one is a freshman at Yale only once. So...why not? Carpe diem.

On you go down the aisle of tables: "Sing!" "Dance!" "Write!" "Bible Study!"

Hmmm. That's a new one--Bible Study.

"We get together twice a week...sing, pray, study the Bible."

Sounds boring. "Food?"

"Yes, both kinds."

Clamor. People.

They found him on the other side of the lake.

"Rabbi, when did you get here?"

"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures...."

"Sir, from now on give us this bread."

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Sun. The heat of noon.

She came to draw water and noticed him beside the well.

"Will you give me a drink?"

"You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

(For Jews do not use dishes Samaritans have used.)

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

Being a freshman at Yale is like being a child in a candy store. Everything is here. The problem is deciding what to choose. Some of you will find great success at Yale as scholars, as athletes, some as musicians, and others as leaders, but success comes at a price. Likewise, Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

While at Yale, you will be challenged beyond what you think you can bear. You will feel the satisfaction of success, and you will feel the sting of defeat. You will learn to think differently. You will see chaos, and you will see order. And you might ask, "What does it all mean?" Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you."

We invite you to come and join us in a study of the Scriptures, and we welcome you to Yale.

RUTH'S STORY

But when he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men'" But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him. (Luke 15:17-20.)

Not long ago, I heard a pastor speak on this story of the prodigal son.

In it, a son asks his father for his share of the estate and squanders it on a wild life far from home. The son runs out of money, the land he lives in falls into a famine, and he is forced to work feeding swine. He becomes so hungry that he longs to eat the very pods that he feeds the pigs, but no one gives him anything. Only then does he consider returning to his father, although he feels he cannot claim the status of son anymore, but only that of a laborer. Yet when he does return, his father runs out and embraces him, despite the son's filthy clothes, rejoicing and kissing him over and over again.

The pastor lingered over the abundant love the father showed to his wretched son. To draw a comparison, the pastor told how his wife had urged him, as a father, to comfort his crying son with a hug. Hearing his name called, the tear-stricken boy lifted his face, runny nose and all, and turned to his father with open arms. In his clean white shirt the father gingerly hugged his son.

The pastor pointed out that, unlike human fathers, our Heavenly Father accepts us, no matter how foul we are. He loves us unconditionally, without hesitation, and longs to show His love to us.

As the pastor spoke, I told myself that the story of this straying son was mine. I painfully remembered all the things I had embraced, thinking they could fill my heart's emptiness. I had been searching for worldly enjoyment, and keeping the company of people who were after the same.

All along I had known deep

"To disguise
my prayers
I would rub
my eyes..."

down inside that I was filling my time with these activities as a way of purposely ignoring the Lord. After pursuing these pleasures for a while, I felt just as empty as when I had started. Disillusioned, I stopped my chase, relying purely on my own self-restraint.

Coming to my senses

As I listened to the parable, however, I saw that my decision was simply too shallow; turning away from empty things was not enough. I needed not only to turn away from them but also to turn toward God.

I was ashamed; it hurt that I could not love this God as much as He loved me. For a long time,

I had been ashamed to be called a Christian. For example, I was self-conscious about praying before a meal in front of friends or strangers.

To disguise my prayers I would rub my eyes, pretending they were irritated, or bend down below the table to pick up a book or a napkin I had purposely dropped. Then friends would always ask the embarrassing question, "Are you okay, Ruth?" I burned at my own denial of the Lord, but would respond with a nervous half-laugh, "Yes, I'm fine."

The fact of the matter was that I was *not* fine. I continually felt an emptiness of heart and an unbearably sad loneliness. Always in the dark and groping for solidity and direction in my life, I reached for something specific but did not know what I wanted that something to be.

What I yearned for was God, although I did not know it. But, before I heard this sermon on the prodigal son, I could not comprehend the Lord's love for me. Since the age of six, I had been told countless times through Bible stories, sermons and prayers that Jesus Christ died for me and loves me. Yet, I still could not understand what the Lord did for me on the Cross.

What's more, I'd been told that He offers me eternal life, but I hadn't understood that eternal life is to *know* the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son whom He has sent -- to know Him as you would know a best friend.

The loving Father

As the pastor spoke about the great lovingkindness of the Lord, I shed tears out of regret for my sins, both deeds and intentions.

Continued on p.4

Entering Yale: The Spiritual Context

Most of us would rather not tune in a TV show that's more than half over, start a new book at page 150, or transfer to a new school over Spring Break. In each case, we'd feel out of step, ill-informed, out of context.

Amid the other briefings you receive as Yale newcomers, our experience suggests you could use some *spiritual* context, so here is something about your new spiritual context as studies - and life - begin again at Yale.

The first basic fact: Yale began and continued for many years as a Christian school. What did "Christian" mean? Founders, presidents and senior faculty for generations heartily entrusted their own lives *and* the school to Jesus Christ as the "only true and living way of access to God," to quote Timothy Dwight. The accompanying article, "Revivals Mark Yale's History," spans more than three centuries of such testimony.

Although outshouted and outvoted by competing advocacies in recent decades, the testimony of Jesus remains both fervent and unbroken from the founding of Yale to your arrival here.

My personal experience at Yale dates to 1967. (The Yale Standard Bible study itself dates back to about 1963.) Having been on campus weekly for most of the school years since, I think I

can give you a sense of what has remained constant and what has been changing.

First, the constants. Spiritually, the Bible portrays this life as a battle for believers in Jesus. (Ephesians 6; 2 Corinthians 10.) At Yale the battle has always been more intense than most other places. Why?

- o It represents life away from home and family supports for most students.

- o Yale is intellectually intense, hurling intellectual challenges, both ancient and intricate, in a younger believer's path.

- o Yale is diverse and many-faceted, like a great bazaar of cultural, emotional, physical and spiritual pursuits that cheerfully offer to absorb all comers. Serving God comes in for *lots* of competition. Matthew 6:33, though, still applies.

- o The choices freshmen make each year still mark crossroads in many of their lives, especially those with some prior acquaintance with Jesus Christ. By the time 20th Class Reunion (so far in the future!) rolls around, for every person that has waited until *after* graduation to serve God vigorously, I guess there will be half a dozen that took their stand *during* their years at Yale.

- o There is no such thing as a static believer at Yale. Either you are moving forward and taking fresh steps in faith, or you are losing ground, because the atmosphere is fundamentally antagonistic to faith. (*Continued on p. 4*)

The Yale Standard: An Undergraduate Bible Study Group

Introductory Meetings

September 1, Saturday, 7:00 p.m.
Dwight Hall Common Room

September 5, Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Dwight Hall Library

September 9, Sunday, 7:00 p.m.
Dwight Hall Common Room

Regular Meetings

Branford Chapel (Bottom of Harkness Bell Tower)

Morning Prayer (September 3 onward)
Monday-Friday, 8:00-8:30 a.m.

Bible Study (September 12 onward)
Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, 7:00 p.m.

For more information contact:

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Ruth (Continued from p. 2)

I finally saw the Lord for who He really is: the father of the parable who waited for me with welcoming arms, if only I would turn to Him. He was not, as I had thought before, a distant and abstract being waiting to judge and condemn me for my sins, which even I knew were wrong.

The Lord's love for me was true. He never once turned away even after I deliberately chose to live for myself and defy Him. He was willing and ready to forgive me, if I asked Him.

The Father's all-embracing and unchanging love showed me the half-hearted, incomplete and

unrepentant qualities of my own "turning" toward God before I heard this sermon. The Lord's love gave me a way out of my emptiness: a chance to turn to Him fully and receive forgiveness.

This time I could not refuse Him whose love I saw as a reality and who, out of His love, longed to have me share in His riches. Only when I realized this could I respond by giving Him myself and loving Him with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my might.

If you would like to know the Lord and the riches of His love and mercy, pursue Him who

loved you first and sought you first by dying for your sins. For the Lord God Himself declares that He has "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope," if you will search for Him with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Do not neglect the Lord, as I did, and "if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." (Psalm 95:7-8) Rather, won't you accept His invitation and let Him show you who He is?

Ruth Ku '93

Context (Continued from p. 3)

Second, and to me more exciting, here are the changes I have seen in the last twenty years, and even the last two or three years:

- o Since my senior year, when radical threats to bomb Yale buildings shook the campus, a lot of steam has gone out of the "rebellion for rebellion's sake" that ruled campus attitudes then. Many of the showcase radical activities seem increasingly to offer only shopworn merchandise to newcomers. That is observable in everything from politics to music to morality.

- o After radicalism blew over, elite careerism swept Yale, but much of the cocksure career attitude of five and ten years ago seems to have evaporated. Law school, consulting and investment banking are no longer the wildly popular meal tickets they were, and nothing has replaced them. (No offense intended: I applied to law schools, was a consultant for years, and am an investment banker.)

- o Most important, God has been moving among the students in a more and more prominent way. In 1971, one arriving freshman could only find about half a dozen student believers on campus that year. Last year, there were a number of strongly evangelical Bible studies, prayer meetings and undergraduate organizations. Some were structured and organized, supported by a variety of sponsors; some were wholly impromptu. Overall, God is clearly moving to bring a larger and larger group of believers in

Jesus to be His at Yale. Though still few in relation to the total student body, the believers are vital and increasing.

- o God has a plan for the life and pursuits of each believer that turns to Him. More and more Yalies are reaching out to apprehend that reality.

- o God intends believers to care for each other: by prayer, by simple friendship, by practical and spiritual support each can give the other. If you are minded to be His, God has others for you to love and care for in Him. That kind of mutual care, too, has been more in evidence in the last five years or so.

Last, let's extrapolate what the changing elements at Yale mean for your years here. To be sure, the more vehement opposition to Biblical faith will continue to be hostile. But Yale as a spiritual environment hasn't been static in the four years just now past, and it will keep changing. You can expect more boldness on the part of believers, more desire to put collegiate life on a solid eternal foundation, to reach for the substance of a life shared with God. You will also see more desire to testify to Jesus' love in public, and that desire will not be denied.

If that prospect stirs you, you may surely have a part in making it so. Welcome to Yale!, and may God bless you thoroughly in His Son, our dear Messiah Jesus.

Phil Chamberlain '70