**God’s Spark**

***Part One: Disruption; When God initiates contact with us***

***Proposition:*** When God initiates contact with us, it can create tremendous disruption to our lives.

***Evidence***

As we consider the evidence for this proposition, let’s explore the book of Matthew.

**A Virgin Pregnancy. Matt 1: 18-25**

Have you ever thought about how disruptive the virgin birth was to Mary and Joseph? I wonder if we should call the event the “Virgin Pregnancy” since that is where the disruption began in their lives. This initiative contact from God turned their world upside down.

**A New King in the Wings. Matthew 2**

When the wise men show up inquiring about the person who has just been born “King of the Jews,” this piece of news sent disruption into King Herod’s life. The disruption yielded so much anger that King Herod decreed an unspeakable act of murdering infant children.

**Confusion of Roles. Matthew 3**

Imagine spending your whole life waiting for the Messiah and then being asked by the person whom you think might just be the Messiah to baptize him? Shouldn’t this be the other way around? Since when are laypeople called upon to baptize clergy or even deity? It is no wonder that John the Baptist is still asking, “Are you the one” eight chapters later.

**Leave Everything. Matthew 4:18-22**

For many, being called into the ministry or vocational service is a long and often arduous process of discernment, discussion, and community assessment. Imagine being asked to give up everything and follow in response to a single command. The world of Jesus’ initial followers was turned upside down.

**A New Way of Living. Matthew 5-7**

The disciples were not the only ones whose lives were disrupted. Jesus asked everyone with inclinations to follow to adopt a new way of living. “You may have heard it this way in your bylaws, standing rules, church constitutions, and devotional books, but I am giving you an entirely new set of rules of procedures to follow that will radically change your life and the lives of your neighbors,” Jesus taught.

**Service. Matthew 8: 14-17**

Jesus comes to Peter’s house and discovers that his mother-in-law is ill and has a fever. Jesus heals her and she immediately begins to serve him. Given the other encounters with Jesus, I suspect that this was a change or disruption in her life, but no evidence is given of that. Service, however, is one of the changes that occurs following an initiative contact by God.

**A Stormy Life. Matthew 8:23-27 and Matthew 14:22-36**

The patterns is beginning to take shape. Jesus’ presence will initially lead to a stormy existence for us. Even when Jesus came to the disciples walking on water, it was in the midst of a storm. Surely walking on calm water would have sufficiently made Jesus point about gravity, but this took place in the midst of stormy water. Perhaps the storm is part of the message.

**Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? Matthew 9:9-26**

Even mealtimes are laden with disruption when Jesus comprises the guest list. Instead of a quiet evening at home with a little respite away from the maddening crowd, Jesus invites tax collectors, sinners, and even prostitutes to dine with the disciples. Whom did you last invite to dinner?

**A Lack of Resources. Matthew 10:5-23**

Have you ever complained that you just didn’t have the right tools, the qualifications, the right stuff, or a sufficient supply of resources to do your work the way that it should be done? Imagine being sent out on your first assignment with no provisions, no script, and no hotel reservation.

**Strolling to Church. Matthew 12:1-14**

Surely, strolling to church is one journey that can take place with little or no disruption. But no, Jesus chose a particular path through the grain field, perhaps where Pharisees have been known to gather nearby. Not only is church disruptive, but the journey toward it is disruptive as well.

**Returning Home. Matthew 13:54-58**

Perhaps home will provide some departure from the disruptions that seem to attach themselves to Jesus wherever he goes. But, not even home is a place of peace. Rather than being taunted by the differentness of Jesus, this time he is taunted by his familiarity. Where can one go to flee the disruption?

**Washing Your Hands. Matthew 15:1-20**

It is not just the meal itself that is disruptive, but even the preparation for it. A simple act of washing one’s hands becomes a source of disruption for Jesus and the disciples nearby.

**Be Careful How You Answer. Matthew 16:13-23**

At first, Peter’s answer to “Who am I” is met with praise from Jesus. But, be careful how you answer. In the end, Peter is told to “deny himself” before returning to his following ways.

**Enjoy the Perks While They Last. Matthew 17:1-13**

The Mount of Transfiguration provides some joy for the disciples who witness Moses and Elijah sojourning with them. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to build some temporary or even permanent housing and experience community with these people? This day must have provided some needed perks for the disciples, but in the end, did it create more questions for them trying to figure who ultimately is to be included in Jesus’ community?

**Reflective Questions**

1. Is God intentionally disruptive? If so, what is God’s intent in being disruptive?
2. In ways does today’s church need disrupting?
3. What have you witnessed recently that may be signs of God’s disruption in your life? In your church? In your world?

**Lectio Divina/Dwelling in the Word**

Several American Baptist Churches are currently using Lectio Divina or Dwelling in the Word small group processes. The exploration of the God’s Spark material included with this document lends itself well to such a process. Here is a suggested outline:

1. Select a passage from the list above and ask two different persons to read the passage aloud in your small group.
2. Listen for the word or phrase that stands out to you and share that word or phrase with the group using “Mutual Invitation” until everyone in the group has had an opportunity to share.
3. Hear the passage read aloud a third time. This time listen for a place in the text where disruption seems to be taking place. Share that with the group using “Mutual Invitation.”
4. Hear the passage read aloud a final time and reflect upon what God is inviting you to do amidst the disruption that is occurring in your life, church, community, etc. Share your reflections with the group using “Mutual Invitation.”