

SEPTEMBER 5/6, 2020
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
RAISE YOUR VOICE | SEND US
1 KINGS 8:54-61

For this week, the discipleship value that the text presents to us is that of “together.” Our “together” value is based on John 13:34-35 (ESV), “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” The value is stated as: “We commit to caring for and encouraging each other through authentic relationships.” I can’t think of a better way to encourage a fellow sister or brother in Christ than to speak blessing into their lives.

But what about the model (Being With, Becoming Like, Doing As)? Where does blessing fit in? I believe it fits into “Doing As.” Some of the key competencies we have identified for “Doing As” are: Love your neighbor, Missional, Service, Community. Blessing people - Christian or otherwise - with our words helps us love our neighbor, is missional when directed toward those who aren’t yet followers of Jesus, is a way of serving others and definitely helps build community.

So, we’ll talk about things we need to learn and practice in order that we might bless others in ways that reflect and bring honor to Christ.

But first, a totally random Icebreaker Question.

Engaging with Each Other

1. Do you have a Pandemic Obsession? What is it and why is it so attractive to you right now?

I don’t necessarily want to reveal online and in this forum my views about what is going on with ethnic issues in America right now, but I will say I’ve discovered a particular author who has been very helpful to me in my thinking. Since the pandemic started I have read two of his works and I am currently on a third. In a good way, learning from him has been the thing I’ve been most “obsessed with.”

How about you?

Engaging with the Scriptures

2. Read 1 Kings 8:54-61. What stands out to you about this blessing? What stands out to you from this blessing? How do you think you would have reacted had you been in that crowd as Solomon spoke these words? Why? Is it easy for you to receive blessings from others? Why? Is it easy for you to give them? Why?

This will be the “learning” portion of the night.

You don’t have to ask all of the questions I wrote. Pick and choose the ones that make the most sense for you and your group. Ask them in a different order, if you’d like. Or even in a different way. And of course Hook had some good things to say about the text that you may want to incorporate, or that others may incorporate. Here is the link to the Sermon Outline, in case you

want it: <https://bit.ly/2Z7jfgA>. (Check back on Tuesday for the outline fill-ins. Normally the outline fill-ins are done on Monday, but Monday is of course a holiday.)

If it's helpful, I'll take a stab at answering these questions. I'll provide some brief insights and observations.

About the blessing:

- That he stands to bless Israel but actually blesses the Lord! (56)
- How "Lord-centered" this blessing is. (Teaches me that it's a blessing to remind people about the Lord's involvement in their lives. "Lord-centered" blessings are true blessings, indeed!)
- His blessing quickly turns into a prayer for the Lord's work in their lives (58), and for his protection/provision (59) and that all the peoples of the earth would know that "the Lord is God; there is no other." (60)
- What else do you see?

From the blessing:

- That it is a blessing to remind people about the Lord's involvement in their lives.
- The things the Lord has done for them:
 - Given rest (56).
 - Kept his promises (56). It is a huge understatement to say, "He kept his promises." There is so much that goes into those words.
 - Do you see anything else?
- The things Solomon and the people are dependent upon him to accomplish for them:
 - That he would not leave them or forsake them (57).
 - That he would incline their hearts to him so that they would walk in all of his ways and do everything mentioned in verse 58.
 - That he would maintain the people's cause on a daily basis (59) SO THAT the nations would know that the Lord is the one and only God.
- That there is a human responsibility to the blessing received. Verse 61, "Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day."
- What else do you see?

How do you think you would have responded were you in the crowd that day?

This blessing is so good and so encouraging that I'm fired up just reading it alone in my office. I can only imagine what it would have been like to hear it and to have been surrounded by all those in attendance. AND, we have only read the benediction. 1 Kings 8:22 says, "Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven..." Put yourself in the assembly of Israel, read the prayer that they heard, then read the benediction and think about how you would have felt. I think verse 61 would have been something I would have been excited to do. In fact, go back and start at 1 Kings 8:1 because it looks to me like they got to experience all of it.

So, I think I would have felt:

- Encouraged
- Inspired
- Motivated
- In awe of God
- Worshipful
- Grateful
- Thankful
- More of a heart of love toward God. More “in love” with God for those who like that kind of language.
- More of a desire to know him.
- More of a desire to serve him.
- Like I wished I could remember Solomon’s prayer. I would have been glad to know that someone wrote it down and I would probably have wanted to try and memorize it.
- Excited about the future.
- Glad we had a king like Solomon.
- Excited that the Temple was finally done and that the Ark of the Covenant was there.
- What would you have felt?

Easy to Give/Easy to Receive Blessings from others?

- I’m going to talk to my group about this one, but my general answer is, “It depends!”
- How about for you?

So now we’ve learned some good things about blessings/benedictions. We have a very helpful model to follow when we seek to bless others. We know what to say, what to focus on, what to ask for, what to trust God for. We know how to bless others with our words. But how are we going to practice it?

Engaging the Scriptures with Life

- 3. There were a number of very practical suggestions provided for how to apply this message. Which one(s) will you put in play in your life this week? How can your group pray for you? How can we practice blessing? What are some steps we can take?**

Here are the suggestions Pastor Dave gave:

- Study the blessings of the Bible. Pray God’s Word over others.
- Stay connected to the community!
- If you want God’s blessing, go get it! Look for where He is blessing and join Him.
- If you want to experience the “flow” of God’s blessing, then give it away.
- A WORD , A TOUCH , A GLANCE

I am a big fan of “a word, a touch and a glance.” I’ve tried, sometimes more successfully than others, to implement this in my ministry. So this is a great reminder to get back to doing that more. But also, I was reminded of the power of words and of the power of a parent’s words. So I

want to re-focus this week on prayerfully thinking about how I speak to my three young adult children and to prayerfully think about what I should be saying to them. And it's not hard to answer that question because this text gives me all kinds of good things to focus on.

How about you?