

SEPTEMBER 19/20, 2020
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
DISTANCE LEARNING | FIRM GROUND IN A FALLING WORLD
DANIEL 2:1-49
FALL QUARTER WEEK 2 of 12

EFCC's definition of a disciple: Someone who is learning to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

EFCC's discipleship values: Pursuit, Obedience, Journey, Wholeness, Togetherness, Mission.

EFCC's discipleship model: being WITH (upward focus), becoming LIKE (inward focus), doing As (outward focus).

EFCC's discipleship methodology: focus on what we need to learn, what we need to practice and who we need to be in relationship with.

As I look at the message the value that I see to be most prevalent is **journey**. Journey is about pressing on (Phil 3.12-16). Journey is about us committing to continual growth through grace-driven effort. Journey is about our participation and alignment with the Spirit of God. Journey is about God's transformation of us into the character of Christ (Rom 8.29). Journey describes a life that is dynamic and not static, has stops and starts, and can be anything but predictable. I believe this is what Daniel is experiencing in Daniel 2 as he enters this crisis. It is another chance to let God grow him.

The part of the model we want to emphasize is being WITH. And that's primarily because those are the points Ryan highlighted in the text. One component to being WITH is abiding, and abiding in God is the big thing that Daniel does in this chapter through his trusting, through his turning to God for daily wisdom and spiritual insight, through his focus on the fact that God's hand is guiding and His plan is going and through his commitment to give God his unwavering worship during uncertain times. What Daniel does is all about staying close and connected to God as he goes through a crisis. So, this is what we will focus our attention on.

Before we get into the discussion questions, here are some random thoughts I had about the passage and the message.

- Ryan wrote that this text speaks to the issue of, "What to do when you don't know what to do."
- If you are going through a crisis right now, this text gives a roadmap and is significantly encouraging.
- But if you are not in a crisis right now, this text presents a training plan you can implement to prepare for the day when your next crisis hits.
- Following the pattern of Daniel allows us, whether we are in crisis or not, to create spiritual muscle memory.
- By practicing what Daniel does, we can train ourselves to instinctively do the things Daniel does.
- Tim Mayfield says, "Practice makes permanent." We can ask, "What Would Jesus Do?" in the middle of the crisis, but it's far better to have been doing what He would have done all along.
- So, we can practice now if that's our story at the moment.

- Also, it is obviously true that we can all get OJT (on the job training), of course we can, and we do because we are constantly growing. But I have a feeling from reading the text that Daniel has been doing these things long before this crisis hit, since he seemed to do what he did so reflexively.

Engaging with Each Other

1. If you were a superhero, what would your weakness be?

One of my many weaknesses wouldn't be a thing so much as a mindset, a mental temptation. It would be comfort, complacency, ease, relaxation. I know myself pretty well, and I know the things I have to fight against. Also, I should add "spending too much time thinking about" and not enough time "doing." I enjoy the journey more than the completion of the task. I also know this is something I have to fight against.

What is yours, or one of yours? Maybe it is a mental temptation, like mine. Or maybe it is a person, or a thing, or a position. You don't have to share the deepest weakness you have, but it would be nice if you could share something meaningful. Don't say, "Chocolate," or "Fantasy Football." Put yourself out there a little bit to the degree you feel comfortable.

Engaging with the Scriptures

2. Review your outline. The text gives us four things to focus on when a crisis hits. For each one, discuss:

I did not want to list the four things in the question because it would give away the outline fill-ins. I know you know what they are, but here they are again:

- Turn to God for daily wisdom and spiritual insight.
- Know that God's hand is guiding and His plan is going.
- Give God your unwavering worship during uncertain times.
- When crisis feels insurmountable, remember God's kingdom is unshakable.

What I'm trying to do with the questions is create some space for people to react and respond to the points. Remember, I'm always trying to have our groups discuss the message. Some weeks the questions are better than others, I get that, but always the goal is to discuss, digest and practice the weekend's message. So to do that, I often ask very broad and sweeping questions. This is one of those weeks.

a. What are some of your thoughts and responses?

You know how you can manage this, I am sure. You can go one-by-one through the list and discuss "Turn to God for daily wisdom and spiritual insight," then move to, "Know that God's hand is guiding and His plan is going," and so on. Or you can throw it open and ask people to respond to the ones they would like to respond to.

Just remember the context is, "When a crisis hits."

Here are some additional questions that might help. I'm only going to focus on the first three bullets that are above for the rest of the notes and discussion.

- When you're in crisis mode, how do you typically turn to God for daily wisdom and spiritual insight? Think back to the last crisis you were in, or think about the one you are in now - what verses from Scripture are meaningful? What seems to be the emphasis of your prayer life? What do you ask for? What do you trust God for? How

has God been speaking to you through His Word? Through people? Through circumstances? Through prayer?

- When you're in crisis mode, how do you remind yourself that God's hand is guiding and that His plan is going? What helps you do this? Is there a passage from Scripture you always go back to? Is there a place you always go to? Is there a song you listen to? Is there a friend you go talk to? Do you journal, or re-read your journal entries?
- When you're in crisis mode, how do you give God your worship? Is it through prayer? Song? Writing? Surrender?

b. Why is it important *for you* to keep these in mind when a crisis hits?

What you might want to do is ask "b" after a person shares their response to "a." Go "a-b" for each person. I can see that working better and giving a better flow to the discussion.

My purpose in "b" is to create space to let people share from their hearts. Also, it's to let them let others get to know them better. Finally, I think it will help them to better internalize the truths of the text.

I could write pages about why each one is important for me to keep in mind when a crisis hits. But I won't. You're welcome.

All of Question 2 is supposed to help us discuss what we need to learn in order to keep growing when we are in crisis (and even when we are not). It's about helping us learn from each other about how to abide and be WITH Jesus when things get tough and the road gets rocky. It's about helping us remember how important abiding is to us as Christians. Hopefully it will be used by God to help us desire to abide in Christ more, as we hear the stories and see the examples of those in our group. We have to continue to learn to abide so we can stay close to Jesus so we can let Him lead us on the journey He has for us as He leads us through the crisis He allows into our lives. But it's also important that we continue to learn to abide so we can stay close to Jesus so we can let Him lead us on the journey He has for us as He leads us through the calm times that He allows into our lives. And I admit that the learning process isn't always about learning new things. Sometimes it's about being reminded of things we knew and somehow forgot. "Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you." 2 Peter 1.12

I pray some learning, or some re-learning, will happen and that we'll all be challenged and encouraged to keep staying close to God, like Daniel did, when things are tough (but also when things are not).

Engaging the Scriptures with Life

3. How can you practice the "three affirmations" as you live your life in God's presence this week?

What are the "three affirmations"?

- God, I need You.
- God, I trust You.
- God, I worship You.

I think that the three points in the message fit into these affirmations in this way:

- Turn to God for daily wisdom and spiritual insight: God, I need You
- Know that God's hand is guiding and His plan is going: God, I trust You.
- Give God your unwavering worship during uncertain times: God, I worship You.

Whereas Question 2 is about learning, Question 3 is about practicing. Hopefully there are a lot of ideas and inspiration that came from the earlier discussion. The question is pretty straightforward. What are some things we can do during the week to practice abiding in Christ by doing one or more of the three points from the sermon?

I pray you're able to have a good discussion about this.