

OCTOBER 3/4, 2020  
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS  
DISTANCE LEARNING | The GOAT  
DANIEL 4:1-37  
FALL QUARTER WEEK 4 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 thought and prayed about which value seems most prevalent in this text, the one that stands out the most is *journey*. In looking at the life story of King Neb. here, it sure seems to me that a journey from pride to humility is what's happening. We can all appreciate his journey and try to learn from him so that we don't have to experience the same harsh "lesson plans" he did as God built the character quality into his life.

It's interesting, too, that Ryan pointed out how humility was not seen as a virtue when Neb. reigned. Doesn't it seem like it's not a virtue anymore, as well? One would have to look far and wide on both sides of the aisle to find humility among our political leaders. People don't seem to apologize or admit wrongdoing or even their sins. It's crazy.

What's also crazy is how Christians can get caught up in it. Could some of us be on a journey from humility to pride? Could God be working in some of our lives to bring us back to a place of humility? Even if we are doing pretty well with humility generally, I am sure there are still areas in each of our lives where growth is needed and where God is working. Thus, *journey* is the value of the week!

In our model of "With, Like, As", this is clearly an inward focus value and so we focus on becoming LIKE Jesus. We know he is gently and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29). We know we are called to imitate his humility (Philippians 2:3-6). We know his Spirit lives in us (Romans 8:9) and will be the one giving us the grace to cooperate with God's working so that he can change us.

A great thing to remember is that we can't grow in humility by ourselves. To think that is to be, well, full of pride! A humble person recognizes only God can grow them in humility. A prideful person thinks they can grow themselves. As always, our job is about alignment and cooperation with the Spirit as he leads us and guides us and does the work of spiritual growth and transformation. It takes a posture of humility to grow in humility.

### Engaging with Each Other

#### 1. What is one thing you did as a child but wouldn't even dream of doing now?

The first thing that comes to mind is riding motorcycles/dirt bikes. When we were younger, my parents bought us dirt bikes and we rode around in the open spaces that were next to our house. There were hills, vineyards, washes, gullies, and all kinds of things.

We'd go out there for hours at a time and ride around. I think I'm too risk averse to do that anymore!

How about you?

**Engaging with the Scriptures (Read the passage here, if you want to.)**

2. Discuss this quote from Ryan's notes: "Each one of us will either live with a posture of pride, or a posture of humility...and that posture will position us to either be with God or against God. It positions us to either live in abundance or deficiency. That posture may be the most important thing about us." (1 Peter 5:5-7; James 4:6-7a, 10; Matthew 23:12; Isaiah 57:15; Luke 1:52)

I added these verses in parenthesis above if you want some additional texts to look at.

Question 2 directs us toward what we need to learn, or be reminded, concerning pride and humility so that we might continue on the inward journey of growth in Christlikeness. The (a) and (b) questions below are general questions that you can use to direct the conversation of the quote that is above. If they are helpful, please use them. If they are not needed, please toss them. A main goal of Question 2 is to create space for a discussion where we come away with this objective: we agree that pride is bad and humility is good, and that we want to be people who pursue humility and reject pride (with God's help and guidance, of course) and that we want to be a people who respond well to God when he is working in our lives in relation to these two areas.

One thing I alluded to above is the idea that we can live with a posture of humility in one area of our lives while living with a posture of pride in another. I suspect none of us are living with complete humility in every area. But maybe some are! In some areas of life we can experience God giving us grace (1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6), while in other areas we can experience God being against us (also 1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6). Having said that, I do think we can live with a general posture of humility which positions us to receive God's grace and that positions us well when he begins to work on our humility in an area we were unaware was an issue.

And this is where *journey* comes in because (1) we may have to admit that we are prideful in some areas while being humble in others (and that growth is needed) and (2) we may have to admit that there are areas of our lives where we were unaware of just how prideful we are (and that growth is needed). (I can attest to this as God is showing me some areas of pride/lack of humility that I was unaware of. How I choose to respond to him will be telling and will no doubt influence just what my personal journey looks like.)

God never stops working in our lives to produce humility, so there will always be growing to do. Even the way we position ourselves to admit that will be important. If we think we've arrived in any area of our lives (that we don't need to learn more or grow more), then we show our pride and God will be against us until we recognize we still have growing to do! Journey. Journey. Journey. (And our journey is not always "up and to the right." Sometimes it's a little circuitous until we learn the lessons God wants us to. Or it might be two steps forward and one step back. Or one step forward and two steps back. But we are loved by a gracious and patient God who works with us to move us forward! The key is to keep moving forward. Continuous growth is expected!)

A leader's note - You will have to prayerfully decide how much time to spend on Question 2. It's a great question, but I wouldn't want you to not have time for 3 and 4. Question 3 lets us internalize the Word, and Question 4 lets us focus on a practice we can do to apply it. You know the goal for #2, so if you sense that you're beating a dead horse, move along!

- a. **Why is pride so tempting? What are some reasons pride is so damaging? In what ways does a posture of pride lead to a life of deficiency? How have you experienced the downfall of pride?**

Here are some general thoughts that might help out the discussion. I add these to your group's amazing answers!

Why is pride so tempting? For me, it's very tempting because I want to be in charge and in control. I want recognition and credit for the things I've accomplished. I want to act like I got them done myself without any help from anyone else. Also, it's very tempting because I want to be the center of my life. Pride whispers in my ear that these desires I have are good and that I should definitely pursue them.

What are some reasons pride is so damaging? First, it makes God be opposed to me. That is probably the most important thing we can say about it. Second, it draws me away from God. That's not good either. Third, it destroys interpersonal relationships by creating division as people live for themselves and not God (who calls us to live for him and others even as we do look out for ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4)).

In what ways does pride lead to a life of deficiency? Well, defining "deficiency" as the opposite of "abundance," I would say that, when I am prideful, I am thinking first and foremost about myself, which limits my desire to be generous and colors the way I see the world. When I am only looking out for me, I will not be living in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus, and I will not be in a place to receive, among other things, some of the financial blessings that he intends for me to enjoy (certainly) and pass along to others (1 Timothy 6:17-19). But there is more to it than just financial deficiency. There is also relational deficiency. Relationships between prideful people break down eventually. (I've seen it in friendships and marriages over the years.) Companies led by prideful CEOs and Presidents will not thrive and prosper. Pride creates divisions, and divisions lead to deficiency. Prideful people normally lead pretty lonely lives.

How have you experienced the downfall of pride? Well, there are some deeply personal experiences that I won't go into since these notes are for public consumption. One experience that does come to mind is when I was laid off in 1993. I had been out of University for three years and I thought I was pretty hot stuff in my first job after graduation. Turns out I wasn't all that I thought I was. It took awhile for me to acknowledge that.

- b. **Why is humility so difficult? What are some reasons humility is so necessary? In what ways does a posture of humility lead to a life of abundance? How have you experienced the uplift of humility?**

Why is humility so difficult? Because it runs contrary to the old sinful nature which still deeply influences the way I live, because it runs contrary to the way the world is organized and run under the influence of the devil (the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)), and because it runs counter to the devil's priorities for my life. Pursuing humility in this broken world is not recognized, celebrated, honored or valued. It's like swimming upstream. It's completely going against the current. Everyone and everything is seemingly telling me to not pursue it, and is saying, in fact, that you cannot be successful and humble at the same time (so you better pick one or the other!).

What are some reasons humility is so important? First and foremost, being humble positions me to have God's blessing. That is the most important thing we can say about that. Humility also is important because I'm called to imitate Jesus (and I can't do that when I'm being proud). Humility will, in the end, lead me to the kind of life that I really desire - one of relational richness, one of experiencing the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), one of influence and usefulness, one of not being a "score-keeper."

In what ways does humility lead to a life of abundance? Well, if God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble, then a life of abundance is sure to follow the presence of the grace of God. The challenge is to believe it's true when everything inside you screams to pursue pride and not humility. A life close to God, a life where God is on your side, a life of blessing from God, a life of influence and usefulness, this is a life of abundance, with or without material blessings.

How have you experienced the uplift of humility? I would like to think that where I am at EFCC these days is because of humility. I hope so. I also love the Life Group I'm in and the friends I have and the marriage I have, and I know these can be directly attributed to the humility God has bestowed upon me. There are other things as well.

**3. The message contained four things that humility does, or is. What are those four, and which one is more significant than the others for where you are on your spiritual journey right now? Why?**

Here are the four that are on the outline:

1. Humility understands that life is temporary, not permanent.
2. Humility recognizes that influence is a stewardship, not ownership.
3. Humility acknowledges that prosperity is given, not earned.
4. Humility liberates us from competing with God and fees us to receive life from him.

For sure, the one for me is Number 2 about influence being stewardship and not ownership! I won't take the time to go into it, but this one is for me. Which one is for you?

**Engaging the Scriptures with Life**

**4. What is one way you can practice what was preached?**

I'll be praying about how to practice seeing and living out my influence as stewardship and not ownership. I need to send some time on this one.

I hope you'll encourage your group to have a specific practice or two they can follow to help them apply the passage.

See you next week!