

JANUARY 10, 2021
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
REBUILD MY LIFE | REBUILD MY PRIORITIES
NEHEMIAH 6:1-14
WINTER QUARTER WEEK 1

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 the value that seems most prevalent in this text, the one that stands out is *wholeness*. *Wholeness* is about a lot of things, and in the context of this text and this sermon, it's about having integrity or alignment between how we live our lives and what we say our priorities are. To live lives of wholeness means to be people whose lives match their stated priorities and values. As we (re)build our lives we have the opportunity to prayerfully evaluate what we want to build back in and what we want to leave out.

As for the WITH|LIKE|AS portion of the model, I believe the best one to focus on is DOING AS because it makes me think of living life like Jesus did, and like He would if He were me. Once I embrace my priorities (Matt 6:33; 22:37-40), my goal is then to make sure that the way I live reflects those priorities in increasing measure. I never arrive, but I continually strive to get better. I want wholeness and integrity in my life, just like Jesus had.

These, then, are the things we'll discuss this week. But first, another random question!

Engaging with Each Other

1. If you were a high school teacher, what subject would you teach?

This is easy - economics. I majored in economics in University and I love the subject. How about you?

Engaging with the Scriptures

2. What two or three things from this week's passage/message impacted you most? Why? Of those top two or three, which seems most relevant for you as you look at the context of your life right now? Why is that?

For the next few weeks I am going to take a different approach with the questions. I am going to use a method that is working well around the world for Bible Study. It's called the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) Method. Rather than me asking specific questions about specific topics, I am going to ask these four very open-ended questions: (1) What stands out? (2) Why? (3) Of what stands out, what is most significant for you, given where you are in life right now? (This way of

looking at the Bible ensures that it stays current, fresh and relevant.) (4) Why is it particularly relevant right now?

I want to try this and see how it works. I will evaluate it in the groups I lead, and I'd love your feedback as well. I'd like to know if it's working in your group or not? Is discussion better, or worse? Are people sharing more, or less?

One thing about this DBS Method is that you may have to keep the discussion going a little more than normal (but not by talking!). You may have to ask more followup questions to draw people out and get them to share and unpack why they answered the way they did. The good thing is that you know how to do this very well!

What I will also do each week is grab what seems to be some of the more important things that Ryan said, and list them out. I would think that these can serve as discussion starters, or discussion continuers. Also, you should read the full text prior to the discussion here in Question 2.

One other thing I am going to start doing is providing a link to a Weekly Leadership Tip (starting next week!). You may find this helpful some weeks, and not so much on others, but I would like to start to lightly pepper you with reasonable tips and leadership development thoughts that you (and I) can use. (And I'll say this - If you come across a tip or leadership idea that you think would be good to share with all of the other leaders, please send it to me and I'll forward it along and give you credit.)

Here are the things from Ryan's teaching notes which stood out to me. Hopefully they will spark some discussion about Nehemiah 6! I hope and suspect that these will be similar but also different from what people came up with as they listened and took notes. (Highlighted items were fill-ins on the outline.)

- We maximize our lives when we align our time with our priorities.
 - "As I rebuild my life, how do I want to allocate and use my time?"
 - "The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of non-essentials," Lin Yutang
 - You don't necessarily get more done when you clarify your priorities, but you get the right things done.
 - Possible discussion questions for this area (either to launch the discussion or to keep it going):
 - What would you say are some of your top priorities right now?
 - Have you sensed God nudging you in any new directions, as it relates to your priorities and lifestyle? If so, what are they?
- We must identify distractions and embrace focus.
 - What if busyness is really just laziness – we're too lazy to identify our priorities and live by them.

- “The things we get distracted by are never as important as the things we get distracted from,” Andy Stanley
- Possible discussion questions for this area (either to launch the discussion or to keep it going):
 - What tends to be your bigger distractions that keep you from living your priorities?
 - How do you know - for yourself - when something has become a distraction? (Two people can do the same thing and that same thing can be a distraction for one person but not for the other. It’s important not to judge what others feel is a distraction, or to let yourself feel judged by others.)
 - What helps you stay focused?

● **Nehemiah is teaching us to refuse peer-pressure and operate with personal conviction.**

- Don’t let the expectations of others drive your priorities.
- Possible discussion question for this area (either to launch the discussion or to keep it going):
 - Is peer pressure something you struggle with when it comes to living your priorities? How come?

● **Nehemiah is teaching us that in order to live in line with our priorities, we have to reject compromise and pray for discernment.**

- Nehemiah is teaching us that in order to live in alignment with our priorities, we must think about the story we want to tell with our life. “33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33) If you live seeking the kingdom first, and genuinely have that as your priority, you will NEVER look back on that with regret.
- Possible discussion question for this area (either to launch the discussion or to keep it going):
 - Do you ever feel pulled to compromise on your priorities? How so? How do you handle that?

For Question Two, this was all about answering the unasked question, “What do we need to (re)learn about living with priorities?” I hope and pray that your group had a good discussion about living out priorities and about how easy it can be to get away from that, and about how hard it can be to be faithful to do that. Hopefully there were some good reminders and even some new learning that came from the text, the message, and each other as you shared your wisdom and experience.

Question Three is about honing what we talked about into one action that we can practice during the week. Depending on how you are as a leader, and on how your group tends to go, getting people to identify “one thing” could be one of your biggest leadership challenges! But it is essential to our growth and maturity that we identify one thing that we can work on over the next seven days, and then talk

about when we re-gather. We don't have to do everything, and indeed we can't. But we can do one thing, and I hope you and your group will.

Engaging the Scriptures with Life

3. What is one thing you will do this week to apply your response to Question 2?

Recently I was told about the "Power of One." If we can distill a sermon down to one thing and then pray about how to apply it (and then actually apply it in the context of friendly accountability), we will see growth and change that will excite and propel us to more growth and change. I think focusing on this will help keep our groups lively, helpful and cutting edge (by "cutting edge," I mean "relevant to where we are in our lives right now"). We constantly fight stagnation. One of the best ways to combat it is to live by faith - meaning we apply God's Word in the ways He directs us to, by faith, believing that He will show up and we will see Him work. Him showing up, and us seeing Him work, will grow our faith and our excitement to walk with Him even more. And that excitement is contagious for the others we are doing life with.

4. Share prayer requests and pray for each other, being sure to pray for each other's responses to Question 3.

I believe that a component of everyone's prayer requests each week should be their application from the message. That means everyone *should* have a request!