

OCTOBER 10/11, 2020
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
DISTANCE LEARNING | THE WANNABE KING
DANIEL 5
FALL QUARTER WEEK 5 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 to me is *obedience*. The theme presents itself in the life of the "Wannabe King", King Belshazzar, and in the life of Daniel. And it is the main point that Josh highlighted - You cannot be a wannabe king while proclaiming that Jesus is King.

When I think about *obedience* in the context of this text and message, I think about it as it relates to recognizing and obeying the LORD as King. "The LORD sat as King at the flood; Yes, the LORD sits as King forever." (Psalm 29:10) "The LORD is King forever and ever." (Psalm 10:16) And, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11 Worship the Lord with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psalm 2:10-12)

King Belshazzar DID NOT practice Psalm 2. In fact he did just the opposite and experienced God's kindled wrath. Daniel, on the other hand, has been practicing 65+ years of paying homage to God, of taking God seriously, or worshiping Him as the King, of recognizing Him as the King. (If you are wondering how I came up with 65+ years, it's based on the fact that it is believed that Daniel is about 80 in this passage and that he was brought to Babylon when he was around 15.) This text is a tale of two men going in opposite directions when it comes to recognizing the LORD as King. King Belshazzar loses his kingdom and his life; Daniel is elevated from an already prominent position (ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon [2:48]) to third ruler in the kingdom. One man was going down the escalator while the other one was continuing to go up. And in this account, it has everything to do with each's view of and response to the LORD's authority as King.

As we look at where this value of *obedience* fits in the Discipleship Model, it is *becoming Like* because one of the things we want to do as we seek to become more like Jesus in our character is to become women and men who understand our identity is as people who live under authority and who obey the LORD with joy. We know Jesus lived in submission to His and our Heavenly Father, and that He obeyed joyfully. Sure, this message is also about *doing As*, but we'll mainly focus this week on being people who

are continuing to live in faithful submission to the King (one huge theme I see from Daniel's life in this passage).

Engaging with Each Other

- 1. If you could have someone follow you around all the time, like a personal assistant, what would you have them do?**

Write down all of the wise things I say throughout the day, and keep track of all of the things that I am supposed to be doing. They could keep and maintain a master list for me of all the things that come up throughout the day that I am supposed to do. Then we could meet each night and go over that list so that I could better plan what I was going to do the next day.

What would you say?

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

- 2. After having listened to the message, and after having read the passage together as a group, discuss some of the bigger themes you see in the text. Here are some questions that might help get the discussion going:**
 - a. Do you see any recurring emphases?**
 - b. How would you compare and contrast King Belshazzar and Daniel?**
 - c. What are your thoughts on the fact that we haven't heard from Daniel in over 40 years? What do you think Daniel's been up to during this time?**
 - d. What does King Beshazzar teach us about ourselves?**
 - e. What should we be learning from Daniel's life?**

As I wrote above, I think there are two main themes at play in this passage - the disobedience of King Belshazzar and the obedience of Daniel. This is what I was getting at in 2.b. and 2.c. King Belshazzar is living a loud life of disobedience while Daniel is living a quiet life of obedience. King Belshazzar is proud and pompous and arrogant and flippant toward the LORD while Daniel is faithful and careful. They couldn't be two more different men. I would love to know what your group thinks about these two and the trajectory and ultimate ending of King Belshazzar's life. (For instance, it is completely incomprehensible to me that the king did not think to fall on his face in repentance after receiving the interpretation from Daniel. Rather, he matter-of-factly gives Daniel the lottery ticket (as Josh called it) and apparently goes back to the party. One wonders what would have happened had he repented?)

For 2.b. I think it would be instructive to ask people to come up with a list of the ways Belshazzar and Daniel are the same and different. About the only way I can think they are the same is that the LORD has put them in positions of power. They have both been the recipients of His grace in that way. Beyond that, I have already talked about a few ways that they are different. I am sure your group will come up with more.

For 2.c., this is a fascinating question. We haven't heard from Daniel in roughly 50 years (I know Josh said 42 or 43. Scholars are a little divided, but the point is that Daniel has been off running his portion of the kingdom for 4 or 5 decades without any mention, until now.). This is so intriguing to me. As far as we know, Daniel has been in the same position for this whole time. No promotions. No increased responsibilities. Maybe he wanted more; maybe he didn't. He's been incredibly faithful and we know he's been successful because he has managed to keep his job (and perhaps his life)

through four leadership “transitions.” He is living a life of faithful obedience in the role the LORD had assigned him (remember, he is the guy who praised God in 2:21 because “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.”).

Then we can get into 2.d. and 2.e. In order to distill the learning that we’ve been doing (Question 2.c. will help us answer 2.e.).

What does King Belshazzar’s life teach us? What can we learn from him? Well, the first thing would be to focus on the writing on the wall. Josh pointed out that it would be appropriate for us to learn from Belshazzar that our days are also numbered. This theme has been coming up a lot lately in my life. The second thing is to remember that our lives have also been found lacking. And the third thing is that our “kingdoms” can also be divided and destroyed if we continue to live like Belshazzar did. Beyond that, here are some other things that come to mind:

- It’s better to take God too seriously rather than not seriously enough. People think they can mock God with no results. Sometimes God is less patient than others!
- Ryan Paulson will release a devotional about this one - It’s better to initiate “life evaluation” with God than to wait for God to initiate it with us. God evaluated Belshazzar’s life because Belshazzar was not. The writing is on the wall of all of our lives. Are we courageous enough to sit with God and let Him go through it with us?
- Belshazzar was not taking his responsibilities seriously enough. He was partying while the Babylonians were right on the other side of the wall. I see Belshazzar as like a rich kid who just parties all of the time and acts like he doesn’t have a care in the world and that he is untouchable. You know that kind of person that I’m talking about, right? When their life crashes, it’s quite a spectacle.
- People do stupid things when they are drunk. Don’t get drunk!
- What else?

What should we be learning from Daniel’s life? Again, I go back to his faithful obedience. Perhaps it’s a good thing that we don’t hear about him for 42-50 years. He’s staying busy running the “kingdom” God has entrusted to him. I don’t get the sense that he partied or took much advantage of the privileges of his role. I could be wrong. He seems to me to have a seriousness about him. Here are some other things which stand out:

- He’s still working into his 80s. I don’t know what the average life span was back then, or if people retired or not, but he’s still getting up and going to work every day.
- Though he has survived four leadership transitions, and though he’s been placed in an important role in the kingdom, Belshazzar doesn’t even know who he is. Does this say more about Daniel or Belshazzar? That might be debatable, but I think it points for sure to Daniel’s humility and focus. I get the sense that he was the kind of guy who wasn’t flashy or over the top, but who walked humbly with God (Micah 6:8) and showed up every day ready to be used by Him. I like that about him.
- He is still bold at 80.
- He was up to the challenge. He didn’t send a deputy to go give the interpretation.
- He had a good reputation, even in the new knucklehead king doesn’t know who he is.
- While Belshazzar was partying, and while the Babylonians were attacking, I bet Daniel was praying.
- The fact that he did survive four leadership transitions, including this one, certainly speaks to his value and to the job that he was doing.

- What else?

3. Of all the things your group discussed, which one or two seem to be most important for you right now? Why?

For me it's all about Daniel's faithful obedience over the long haul in Babylon. But that needs to be coupled with the awareness that my days are numbered, and that the writing is on the wall of my life. What this means is that I need to make sure I'm being faithful to do the right things! Also, I don't need to be so concerned with my role as I am with being faithful to do the right things, the things that God wants me to be doing.

Engaging the Scriptures with Life

4. What is a practical thing you can do to put feet to the way the Spirit is speaking to you?

See you next week!