

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
THIS IS US WEEK 3 | WE ARE A TEMPLE
JOHN 4:1-26
FALL QUARTER WEEK 3 OF 13

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, Together, 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 with whom we need to be in relationship in order to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

I think the discipleship value most highlighted this week is **pursuit**. Here is how we've defined it -

"We live in a God-bathed world and the Scriptures shout the good news that the God who is all around us is also the God who pursues us. Our desire as the people of God is to respond by growing our awareness of his nearness. We do this so that we might truly know he is with us and so that we might encounter the life, peace, freedom, and joy he brings. Like the psalmist, we affirm that the nearness of God is our good."

Being a temple of the living God - both individually and corporately - means we're a place where God dwells - both individually and corporately. We want to respond to His pursuit of us and presence in us by "growing in our awareness of his nearness" (what is often called "Practicing the Presence of God"). We also affirm that "the nearness of God is our good."

The way we do these things is through worship, but not just worship on Sundays. We endeavor to live a lifestyle of worship (Romans 12:1-2). All of life should be worship, though we don't get it right more often than we do.

Worship is how we pursue a greater awareness of God in our lives. It is how we focus our attention on Him, even as we go about the business He has called us to. It is how we respond to His pursuit of us. It is how we receive all He has for us.

Speaking of worshipping while we work, I have always loved this quote from Brother Lawrence in his book *The Practice of the Presence of God*,

"O God, since Thou are with me, and I must now, in obedience to Thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me the grace to continue in Thy presence; and to this end do Thou prosper me with Thy assistance, receive all my works, and possess all my affections."

Isn't that good? That is what it means to be a temple of the Holy Spirit and to live as a faithful worshiper.

In the being **WITH**, becoming **LIKE** and doing **AS** paradigm, this week's message focuses us on **being with**. Through the text we are presented with the challenge to become the worshipers our Father is seeking, and worship is fundamentally a "with God" thing.

So, to be the worshiper the Father is seeking means to continue to cultivate and respond to an awareness of Him in our everyday lives. We are a Temple. He lives in us. All of Him lives in us. We don't need more of His presence. We need to grow at being more aware of the fullness of God that we already have. Worship is the way that happens. That is what we will discuss this week.

Renewed by Grace

1. What small thing that you use each day are you grateful for?

Mine is the tea bag. I drink lots of tea throughout the day, and I am very grateful for that little bag full of tea leaves that dissolves in hot water and which tastes good, rehydrates and provides caffeine.

How about you?

Equipped as Disciples

2. Review with each other how it went practicing last week's "I will..." statement. Remind the group what you decided to do. Talk about if you did it (and why you didn't, if you didn't), and how it turned out. Did you get the result you were praying for? Why?

This is a question you and your group are going to see every week going forward. We'll talk more about this in the Leaders Lunch we are having next month.

Part of my strategy for helping EFCC become better disciples is emphasizing obedience and accountability more. Some groups do this very well. Others do not.

For those groups not used to doing anything as a result of their time together, I expect this will be a bit of a challenge. For those groups not used to being held accountable for what they said they were going to do, I know this will be a challenge.

I do not want to take out any of the elements of fellowship, care, prayer, friendship, etc. that make Life Groups what they are. I do want to add a component of "How are you going to respond in obedience to the text?" and "How did it go last week with your step of obedience." I want to lead us to step up our obedience as a way of being better disciples. I can tell you that adding a more intentional obedience element to my walk with God recently has enriched it.

If your group doesn't respond the way we want them to at first, keep plugging away. Lead by example. Encourage people who aren't adopting the new direction by telling stories of how God showed up when you or others in the group obeyed. Model by having a measurable "I will" statement every time you meet, and model by doing what you said you'd do and talking about how it went - be it good or bad. Encourage people to do an "I will" statement and encourage them when they do one but don't follow through. We want to be like Jesus, who was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Yet we are reminded that we are leading adults and we really can't tell anyone what to do. We can encourage and pray and do our best to influence and inspire. The heavy lifting is up to the Holy Spirit, and He has His ways and He has His timing.

I will look forward to engaging with you more about this at the Leaders Lunch in October.

- 3. Have one person read the passage in its entirety. Then have someone else retell the passage in his/her own words (like she/he was telling a friend who wasn't there). Ask the group if they agree with the retelling. Did the person add or leave out any important things?**

This is harder than it sounds. Not the reading part, of course, but the retelling part. We probably have heard tens of messages preached on this text, and we probably think we know it so well that I bet a retelling might be harder than we think. Also, we rely a lot more on our eyes than our ears.

One reason for having this question is to help people pay closer attention to the text. They will listen harder, concentrate more, if they know they may have to do a retell.

- 4. What does this passage teach us about humanity?**

There sure is a lot in here. In the spirit of this style of Bible Study - called **Discovery Bible Study** - the idea is to not introduce any outside information or insights. Now, that's obviously not possible since Ryan preached a whole message on it. But what I can do to contribute to the strategy of the question is to not add any additional insights or thoughts.

The idea is that we want the people in your group to experience the joy of discovering truths, insights and principles for themselves without outside influence. So while I have observations, and while Ryan had observations, I am going to withhold them.

May the Holy Spirit illuminate the text for you and give you the joy of discovery.

- 5. What does this passage teach us about God?**

What I wrote in Question 4 goes for Question 5.

- 6. Do you have any additional observations about this passage that you would like to share with the group?**

Sent in Love

- 7. What is your "I will" statement for this week?**

Here is where the challenge may come. Here's why:

- In addition to those who are not normally used to coming up with an application for the message, there is the added challenge of doing so well.
- Your role will be to help your people come up with something they will do which can be measured and marked as complete. For instance, I was leading a Life Group last Wednesday at our Growth Track on Wednesday night and we are using this method of Discovery Bible Study plus very practical application for our time of Bible Study as part of our Life Group time. One of the people at the table had an application to try and bring more people to Jesus (we were studying John 1:35-42). So we talked more about what that specifically meant. And about what he was going to specifically do. By the end of our short conversation he had decided he would invite at least one co-worker to church or to our Wednesday Night Growth Track Life Group. We talked about the fact that we would celebrate the invitation and let God decide when or even if the person would accept said invitation. Success for this person was based on extending the invite, not on

whether or not the invited chose to respond affirmatively. When we next meet, we can ask if the invitation was offered and celebrate a step of obedience.

- Sometimes people think their application has to be this grand gesture. It most certainly does not. For many, obeying the Scriptures even in a small way becomes a grand gesture. It is far better to start with little things, accomplish them, and then move along as He guides. We want to encourage, model and celebrate whatever way a person responds to His Word. Obedience is the path of the disciple. It adds texture, opportunities to live by faith, and the joy which comes from obedience.
- I'll ask you to be patient with your group, if that is what is needed. I'll ask you to model well this practice. And I'll ask you to pray people catch the vision.

One Final Note

You'll see me going back and forth between this DBS method of asking three questions of the text (What does the passage teach us about humanity? What does this passage teach us about God? What are your observations from the text that we have not yet discussed?) and my more normal method of asking questions of the sermon. I'm not going to say how much or when I'll use each one. I'll pray for guidance and go with what makes the most sense for that week.

One thing that will be a constant, however, will be a check-in at the beginning of the group meeting regarding how the applications from the previous week went, and ending with asking people to come up with concrete I WILL statements.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

I will roll out more insights and training on how to facilitate a DBS as we go along. And we will talk more about it at our lunch together.