

Questions for Group Study

Based on Lessons 1–3

Our only agenda is Jesus!

WELCOME

- Openers (choose 1 or 2): 1. Tell of a time when someone stood up for you. 2. Have you ever been so lost it scared you? 3. What is God doing in your life right now?

WORSHIP

- Choose some combination of: prayer, Psalms, responsive reading, singing, short devotional thought, guided prayer / meditation, etc.
- Spend some time praying for each other's specific hurts & needs

WORD

In this section, each group is invited to bring in relevant cross-references from Scripture. To "dig deeper," any verse can be further contemplated using these questions: 1) What does it say? 2) What did it mean in the historical context? 3) How should it be applied today (in my/our life)?

1. Read Jeremiah 29:11-12
2. What was significant about the historical context of this text? (See Lesson 1 devotion)
3. What trials and struggles is God guiding you through right now?
4. Do you know God's plan for you?
5. What do you think is God's plan for Our Savior?
6. Read Romans 8:29-31
7. What does it mean to be predestined?
8. How does one be conformed to the image of Christ?
9. How does God call us? What is His call on your life?
10. If God is for us ... WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
11. Read Romans 12:1-2
12. What does it mean to "sacrifice" something? Do you still have it after it has been sacrificed?
13. What then is a living sacrifice?
14. What does it look like to be conformed to this world?
15. How is your mind transformed? Renewed?
16. What effect does this have on your execution of God's plans?

WORK

1. Pray for the Strategic Ministry Planning process...
- That the Body of Christ at Our Savior be inspired to participate
 - That God would reveal His work for us in this place and time
 - That obstacles to participation be removed

Week 2 — January 14-20

Lesson 4 — Understand the Lord's Will for You.

Read: Ephesians 5:15-17

Be wise, not unwise. Don't be foolish. Paul certainly gives a bit of warning to us here. Our lives are not to be ones of selfishness and self-centeredness — which is the height of foolishness. Our lives are not to be ones where we live thinking that what is most important is simply what we can get and enjoy — that is the height of being unwise.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom. This is what Paul is reminding us. That as Christians we are those who are to live out the first commandment — that we are indeed to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. As such, in everything that we do, we are to go to God's Word, to check and see if our actions and desires are in accordance with God's Will.

You see, in the Bible, God lets us know what we need to know. Understanding God's Will doesn't involve sitting in a corner and humming like some Buddhist monk — it doesn't involve spending sleepless nights pondering the mysteries of the universe. We are (as Paul says in verse 8) children of the Light — so to understand God's Will for us, we let the Light of His Word shine upon us. We fear God — that is we acknowledge and understand who He is — and as a result, we go to the Word that He has given us, and we search the Scriptures and delight in what He gives us there. To understand the Lord's Will for you is simply this — to read the Scriptures and study them. This is where we find God's Wisdom which He has preserved for us.

Prayer: *O most Merciful God, You have given to us the Gift of Your Word, whereby You give us not only your Saving Gospel, but also show us Your will for our lives. Help us to use Your Word, that we might always seek to act in accordance with Your Will. By Your Word correct us when we err and return us to repentance, and by Your Word always hold before us the forgiveness won by Christ for us. In His Name we pray, Amen.*

Lesson 5 — God Asks for Obedience

Read: Hebrews 11:8-10

To have faith simply means to trust in God. And this means trusting and believing not simply that God exists, or that's he's powerful. Satan knows that. Abraham shows us the meaning of faith — Abraham trusted that God was for him, that God's commands were indeed for Abraham's benefit.

Think what it would have been like to be Abraham. To simply pick up the stakes and head out into the middle of nowhere, away from family, away from friends. Yet Abraham believed God's Word and trusted that God had a perfectly good reason for moving Abraham. And indeed, God did. We see in Genesis how richly God blesses Abraham (in spite of Abraham's many failures, I might add).

God has your best interests and the best interests of this Congregation in mind. He is working good for us, right now, even before we begin any planning meetings or the like. However, it's good for us to know how God is using us, so that instead of becoming arrogant and proud or forgetting God, rather, we like Abraham pay attention to His Word, and believe that God is a God who is indeed for us.

Prayer: *Almighty God, You have promised to be our God and to be our Defender and Shield. Help us to grow in knowledge and trust of You, that we might at all times be confident in Your love for us and that we might grow in awareness of how You are working good for us in our lives right now. Give us the strength to follow Your Word, even when to our eyes the road seems hard or difficult, so that in all things we might give praise and glory to You. In the Name of Christ Jesus, Your Son, our Lord, we pray, Amen.*

Lesson 6 — Know God's Will and Do It!

Read: James 4:14-17

We all know the old saying about the best laid plans of mice and men. They tend to fall apart. I'm sure each one of us has had many plans fall through the cracks and crumble, probably even just in this past week. Our plans have one simple, fundamental flaw — we can't know what the future will hold, so our plans will always have to change.

Not so we God's plans! We may be like a mist that vanishes — but God endures forever. As we approach our Strategic Ministry Planning, we ought do so with humility — that whatever we attempt or try will only succeed if it is indeed the Lord's Will. When it is God's plan, it is sure to succeed.

And what we need to remember is that God's Plans are always bigger than just us. Our Congregation is made up of more than just me. In fact, from God's perspective, it's made up of all the people who were part of it and have passed away, and it's also made up of all those people whom God will call to it in the future, even after we are long gone. We aren't making plans for ourselves, what we want. Rather, we acknowledge that God is using us for His purposes not only in this generations, but in countless generations to come. This is His Will, that His Word be proclaimed to all peoples in all places. Through this congregation, God is accomplishing part of His Will. Let our focus not be on our plans, wants, or desires, but rather God's Goal of seeing the Saving Death of His Son proclaimed.

Prayer: *Gracious Lord, guide our thoughts and deeds, so that in all we think or do, we might not become haughty or boastful, but rather that we might always remember that You are indeed God, and that You will see your Plans and Goals accomplished through us to Your Glory. Make us willing and glad full instruments, and break in us all sinful desires which run againstto Your Word. This we pray in the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.*