

Questions for Group Study

Based on Lessons 7-9

Our only agenda is Jesus!

WELCOME

- Openers (choose 1 or 2): 1. Do you ask permission or beg for forgiveness?
2. Do you know anyone who has a servant? A maid? landscaper? 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 Proverbs 15:22
2. Have you charged into some plans without counsel? How did it go?
3. Why don't we seek counsel?
4. Who are your counselors? Who gives you advice?
5. How does one seek the counsel of the Lord as 1 Ki. 22:5 suggests?
6. Read 1 Peter 4:10-11
7. What spiritual gifts do each of you have? Special talents/abilities?
8. How are you using your gift in the service of God? If you are not, ask your group to help brainstorm how you might.
9. How does it feel when you are serving out of God strength? Compare that to how it feels when serving under your own strength.
10. Read John 20:19-23
11. What is the context of this reading (See John 20:1-18).
12. Why does Jesus first say "Peace be with you"?
13. What has the Lord called His disciples to do? How has He equipped them to do it?
14. What is the primary tool of God's Church? (see v. 23)

WORK

1. Pray for the Strategic Ministry Planning process...
- That we would submit and surrender all that we have and all that we are to God's will for us
- That our facilitator would be inspired by the Holy Spirit to guide us according to God's will
- That our hearts would be open to God's direction for us

Week 4 — February 4-10

Lesson 10 — God's Battle Plan

Read: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

We so often forget one simple, simple thing. Fundamentally, it is not we who act, we who do, but rather God who acts on our behalf. Jehoshaphat's "battle plan" is a prime example of this. Not one of his soldiers had to draw his sword or launch an arrow, and yet God completely destroyed Jehoshaphat's enemies. God accomplished everything.

Now, we need to remember this, and it can be hard for us to — God is the One who does stuff. As Christians we acknowledge one simple thing, along with Paul — that it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me. This is the implication, the impact of Baptism. We were buried with Christ and raised with Him. In all that we do, we are to understand that if anything good happens, it is because God is working in us and through us His Will.

Let this be foremost on our mind as we approach any Planning that we do in the months to come. We aren't the ones who are at work — rather we are simply God's tools and instruments to accomplish His Will. Whether God accomplishes His Plans in the middle of the night like He did for Jehoshaphat, or whether God accomplishes His Plans through us, it still is the same thing — God doing the work. Thus we can approach this coming month with calm and peace, trusting that God will use us as He wills.

Prayer: *Gracious Lord, through us you accomplish more than we could imagine, and grant us undeserved successes. Bless us as we prepare to make plans for this congregation, so that we might act according to Your Will and that You might act in us and through us to Your Glory and praise. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*

Lesson 11 — Leadership Defined

Read: Nehemiah 2:17-20

Here we see Nehemiah demonstrate to us what leadership is. Leadership isn't coming up with fantastic plans of your own devising. Leadership isn't duping people into doing what they want. Leadership is simply doing what you know God wants you to be doing, and providing others and opportunity to do God's Will along with you.

Two things come out with this. First, we see Nehemiah share God's Will with others, so that they know what to do. This is a vital part of leadership — letting people know where God wants us to go and what God wants us to do. Being a leader doesn't mean that people follow you blindly, but rather it means that you show and share with people what you know.

Second, being a leader doesn't mean everyone will be happy. The simple truth is that not everyone will be happy with any plan or task that is presented. In fact, most often some people will refuse to act or help. Being a leader means letting them not help. So often we think leadership means making everyone happy — that's not leadership, that's pandering. Nehemiah sees and understands that God's Plan is more important than what people think of him, and he acts accordingly.

In the months to come, we will be given tasks to do, and our responsibilities will mirror Nehemiah. We will be called to let people know what we are doing, and also we will be called to continue on with our task in spite of opposition. This is what it means to be a leader.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, give us courage to remain faithful to the tasks that You set us to, so that in spite of whatever obstacles Satan might through in our path, we might with boldness do Your Will and help others to do Your Will as well. In Christ Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*

Lesson 12 — Commit First to God's Will

Read: Proverbs 16:3

Don't go off half-cocked. That might be another way to phrase what Solomon is saying here. All too often we want to simply do what we want to when we want to. We put first and foremost our wishes, our desires, our wants. However, that's not how we are to approach our plans. Rather we are to take anything we might want to do and present it to God.

Our work is to be committed not to us, but rather to God. When we act, what we are to have on our mind what God's Will is. This is why we ought to gladly pray every day the Lord's Prayer. This is why we ought to gladly pray "Thy Will be done" — because as Luther points out in the Small Catechism, in so doing we are simply praying that God's Will be done in our lives.

That's how we commit our work to the Lord. We realize and understand that it is in fact His work. We realize and we understand that God is the One who works through us. We realize that we are to seek to accomplish God's Plan. Our prayers should constantly remind us that we are trying to live according to God's Will. Our reading of Scripture is to show us what God's Will for us is. With these two prongs, prayer and scripture (which basically is what the Sunday service is, as you may have noticed), God sees that we do indeed commit our work to God.

Prayer: *Gracious Lord, we pray that Your will might be done in our lives. Give us Your guidance by Your Word, and constantly refocus us by prayer, so that in all our actions and doings we might follow Your plan for us. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*