

THE JOURNEY IS THE DESTINATION

- LEADERS GUIDE -

Chapter 7: Pursue God

Leaders – great job last week. We’ve talked with a bunch of participants and it sounds like you guys killed it. One quick thought, then we’ll get to it.

Please, Please, Please take a few minutes to read through the questions and go ahead and answer them. The goal of leaders isn’t to ask the questions – it is to go ahead and allow God to work in your heart. If you do, your group will experience the same. Everybody wins.

In chapter 7, we are introduced to AAA approach. Grasping these three A’s is a huge step in enjoying the life we were created to live.

AUTHORITY

Authority - n. - the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.

Words like “give orders” and “enforce obedience” can be difficult to swallow sometimes. While we can typically understand why authority is necessary, accepting authority in our lives can be tough. We have all had many people in authority in our lives (parents, teachers, coaches, employers, etc). As you think through some of those situations...

1. What authority in your life has been the most difficult for you to accept or follow? Why?

Most people have had someone in their experience who was tough to follow. Try to get the story behind their experiences. Often these are shaping times – so listen well. If you can, try to understand why those people were such bad leaders (not trust-worthy, self-centered, abusive, clueless, etc).

*“It’s impossible for us to consider a relationship with God without understanding he comes before all things and is the glue that holds everything together. For us, that means God’s intentions, values, and judgments are more valuable and truer than our own. If we are going to live the “with God” life, we need to surrender authority to him.”
(p. 112)*

2. What is it that makes it so difficult for people to surrender to God’s authority?

Possible answers: surrender is tough. What if He wants something I don’t. Control is tough to let go of. Maybe faith is not strong enough yet. Bad experiences in the past. He doesn’t tell us what he will do in advance – feels like you are flying blind sometimes.

3. Is there one specific area in your life that is most difficult to turn completely over to God? Share.

This is the toughest one of the evening – not sure what to expect. For some people it could be finances, or their kids, or their careers. Maybe it’s control in general. Could be a relationship or a habit or even an attitude. Resentment – Forgiveness – and on we go.

AFFINITY

A lot of us grew up in a world where God was to be feared, revered, and mostly – obeyed. Okay. But God wants a relationship and relationship requires more than obedience. In most relationships where obedience is demanded and there is not much more – the outcome isn’t great.

For many people their introduction to Christianity is solely based on submitting to God’s authority (keeping the rules, thou shalt and thou shalt not). While these things are important, this one-dimensional

Question 4 has so many possibilities. The problem is - if you've never experienced a close relationship with God - it's hard to know what you are missing. The problem with obedience based faith is that we are never obedient enough. We all fail. If there isn't a healthy relationship people typically flame out / wear out / or just want out. Sharing your insight on this one will help a ton.

4. Read the statement. Now, look at some possible ways to complete it. Which one(s) seem more real for you. Why? Add your own if you want. Obedience without Relationship = Resentment - other possible answers: = short-term compliance and long-term frustration / exhaustion / discouragement / distance / avoidance / anger / emptiness / numbness / religion / legalism / joylessness / burnout / living "for" God, not "with" God.

ABIDING

A phrase resounds with me right now as I consider this idea: "I can't do this without you." For just a moment, consider the deeper meaning of that phrase. On the surface, it means I've got most of what it takes to overcome this circumstance, but without God's finalumph to get me over the finish line, I won't make it. But there's much more to it. Maybe I should rephrase it: "I can't do this apart from you!" (p. 117)

Hopefully, this question will draw out some stories of going through painful times and God showing up big. Most people can think of a dark time where they really sensed God's presence or activity in their lives. You may have to help prime the pump but it's 2 really important to remember what God has done - especially in tough times. It grows our affinity and abiding.

5. In your experience, when has life been especially difficult and felt like God's sustaining power was the most obvious?

6. In what part of your life do you find yourself relying on your own resources too much?

Sometimes we live by the motto - when all else fails - seek God's help. We may not say it out loud but we often try everything in our strength before realizing our dependence on God. Possible answers - relationships / finances / addictions / depression / figuring out my next steps (job, parenting, retirement, etc).

"Deep, slow, rhythmic breaths allow your lungs to fill with oxygen. This intentional act of filling your lungs with oxygen gives your body time to process the fuel before you expel it and start over. Abiding in Christ is just like that. Dallas Willard taught that abiding in Christ is breathing in deeply the words of Christ and allowing them to respiration our hearts. We can't expect our hearts to be filled with short, shallow breaths of Jesus." (p. 116)

Okay Leader - here's your chance to lead well. Thought, reading, and discussions are all great, but we have to learn the practice of taking it with us. Next Steps. We've listed some simple ideas to put into practice this week. PLEASE come up with a plan for you. Share your's FIRST. Set the standard for moving beyond the discussion. We have found that taking some steps while we are together increases the odds of actually taking a plan home with you. So, when your groupies are sharing, that's step one. If we can go to ourjourney.news and tap the "next steps circle on the bottom and you'll see My Next Step - that's step two. As we share our steps we are even closer to taking it home. It also helps us learn what people are doing, celebrate, and encourage.

7. What could you do this week that would, "breathe in deeply the words of Christ and allow them to respiration our hearts?" Here are some ideas:

- ~ Search for the 4-day reading plan from YouVersion Bible App called: Knowing God's Heart.
- ~ Spend 5 minutes each day focused on Psalm 119. 3 min. to read and 2 min. to pick one verse that stood out. Think - then, say a prayer to ask God to let it sink deeper into your heart. Easy!!
- ~ Make a list of 10-15 qualities about God that are great (i.e. he never gives up on you, forgiving, loves before he asks for love, etc). Pray and thank God for them.