

THE JOURNEY IS THE DESTINATION

- LEADERS GUIDE -

Chapter 9: Pursue Authenticity

This week the subject matter is pretty deeply imbedded in us. As we talk about authenticity, it can be very personal. We need to get below the surface, but we understand that many of our groups are newer and not everyone is prepared to unearth their stories to a group. So, we are going to try to balance our approach. You'll notice some of the questions (1,3, and 5) are more outward and positive. We are trying to break up the more difficult moments. All of the questions help lead us into our own stories. If we don't go there - we never move beyond talking and experience "authenticity." Thanks for helping your group navigate - and navigating first.

1. Personality - everybody's got one. In one or two words describe your personality.

"[...] the root word behind the word "personality" is the Latin word persona, which was commonly used by actors in the ancient theater to describe the masks behind which they hid. Thus, your personality may be a mask that you hide behind to find a safe place to express yourself." (p. 134)

2. We were all dropped into a very specific setting when we were born. Based on where (and how) you grew up, how do you think your personality adapted to cope with your environment?

Some people were born into a very dysfunctional world where they had to fend for themselves - so they became very independent. Others landed in a home where everyone was loud and brash, perhaps their personality is more subdued - just because there wasn't enough air in the room for them. You get the idea.

3. Words can build up or tear down. Can you think of something positive someone has said to you that really stuck with you? (I.e. I believe in you / you are smart, beautiful, capable, talented / you can do it / etc.)

Pro Leader Idea - as people share some ways they have been encouraged, this is an amazing opportunity to affirm. If someone says my mom always told me I was _____, you can offer agreement. "I see that in you too. Your mom hit the nail on the head." People soooooo need to hear affirming things from others.

This chapter talks about the fact that every pain leaves a wound and every wound leaves a message. The enemy is the master of building distorted messages. We ALL have some stuff that bounces around our minds that are negative, questioning, hurtful, and defeating.

"The enemy looks for opportunities to grab ahold of your heart. Every time you experience pain, the enemy waits in the wings to whisper something to you, hoping that amidst the pain of the moment you won't notice." (p. 138)

4. Think for a second. What message do you feel the enemy has whispered to you to discourage you from becoming your best, truest, authentic self? (I.e. you are weird, ugly, dumb. You will never... they don't love you... you don't fit here... you'll never be enough. Why try?)

This is the tough one of the night. Don't steer away from it. Everyone has some crazy going on in their head. I just talked to someone who has a running narrative about the fact that she needs to constantly do - and do - and do more. If she doesn't, she's gonna let down those she loves, maybe God too. The enemy whispers (maybe yells) to everyone. Wanna know mine? "People will love / like you - as long as you are useful to them. Then . . . all bets are off."

The enemy knows that words and messages can rip us apart. God does too. In the Bible there are over 7,000 promises God makes to people. Do you think that's accidental? No way! He knows we need to be reminded.

5. Can you think of a couple promises that God made that are meaningful to you? Why those? (I.e. I will never abandon you / I love you / I will strengthen and help you / I have a plan for your life / I will never fail / God is faithful / God will give you strength) - if all else fails, Google is your friend.

Pro Leader Idea: The goal of asking a "how would you help someone else" question is to get into the topic w/o be so head-on about it. As people share, there are often good questions to use for follow-up. As they share, maybe a good question would be, "How tough was it for you to identify those wounds in you?" OR "How long was it for you to get past some of those hurts?" Fight to help our groups not be general and surface with their answers - Authentic requires specific - as much as we can in this setting.

6. You've been alive for a minute or two now. You've learned and experienced some pretty important things. If someone just beginning their faith journey came to talk to you - what advice would you give them about identifying their hurt or wounds and how to get past them? Your answer doesn't have to be mind-boggling or complete. Just start with what you've got.

TAKE IT WITH YOU

If you are serious about finding some freedom, here is an idea. List areas of pain you've experienced, then find a specific truth in the Bible to combat it. For instance, if you have experienced unfaithfulness in your life, find promises from God to you about His faithfulness. Google verses about God's faithfulness. You can do that! If you feel alone, find truth about the fact that God is close to you. Get it? Good - go get it! Own the truth - rumor has it that it can set you free.

