

Connecting Group Study Guide

Knowing, Growing, Going

Week of May 29-June 4, 2016

Follow-up

1. Start by sharing with each other about your previous week.
2. Take some time for each person to share with one another regarding your practice of practical obedience from the previous week. What went well? Did you have any struggles? What did you learn from your obedience?

Knowing God (Encounter)

Read Matthew 26:36-46.

In this week's sermon we focused on the issue of tension in the midst of life. In the message Pastor Chris quoted Brandon Hatmaker, who said, "Tension is most likely not a sign of God's absence. In fact, it is the opposite. Tension is most likely evidence of his presence. Only when we recognize his presence do we grow in his presence" (*Barefoot Church*, pg. 125).

1. Take a moment and think about your personal life. How do you deal with tension when it arises in your life? Do you have any patterns of behavior that you fall back on, etc.?
2. In your own words, describe the tension Jesus is dealing with in this particular passage?
3. How does Jesus deal with this tension? What practical things does he use and rely upon?

Growing in Christ-likeness (Sanctification)

The medieval poet, Dante, said, "In His will is our peace."

1. In this passage Jesus does not shrink back from the tension, but rather, he moves forward with resolve (26:46). How can this example of Jesus heading to the cross inform the way we deal with tension in our own life?
2. Jesus focuses upon carrying out the will of the Father (mentioned three times in his prayers). Jesus is not focused upon the root of the tension, but rather on the larger picture. What insights can we glean from this passage about the way God often works in the life of his people?

Going to Our Neighbors and the World (Obedience)

1. When have you experienced the call of God to something that was difficult? Share that experience with the group. How did you get through it, etc.?
2. Is God currently calling you to something that is a point of tension in your life? How can your Connecting Group help you and hold you accountable with this tension point?

Action Step: Lean into the tension this week. In the above example, Jesus relied upon the company of a few close disciples and the Father in prayer. Implement a spiritual discipline this week and keep some sort of journal or log about it. Specifically, seek the Lord in regard to the tension point in your life. Be prepared to share about it at your next Connecting Group gathering.

Examples of spiritual disciplines:

- Solitude/Silence (turn off the phone, t.v., devices for a period of time)
- Prayer (at certain points throughout the day, or early morning, etc.)
- Scripture reading
- Fasting (can be from food, media, something that has your attention most of the time)
- Confession
- Service (reach out in a practical way to a friend, neighbor or even a stranger)

Close in prayer together.