

Small Group Study Guide

Near to God when Alone and Questioning |
Psalm 22:1-5; Genesis 18:21-25
From Sunday May 3, 2020

Appetizer:

Question: We've all imagined an opportunity to ask God questions one day in heaven. What are some of the questions that you would ask him? Share as a group.

A couple questions from the passage:

Have someone read Psalm 22 in its entirety. What stands out in the passage? Why is it so familiar? Why do you think Jesus spoke this passage while he was on the cross?

Main Course:

The bottom line of the sermon on Sunday was that questioning God is part of a healthy relationship with God. Multiple people in the Bible questioned God, and the very name, "Israel" means "one who wrestles with God."

Question: If it's true that God wants us to wrestle with him, why do you think he wants that?

Question: Asking questions of anyone is not seen as something warm and fuzzy to bring into a relationship. In many cases, it's a form of antagonism, potentially creating distrust, or hurt feelings, or even animosity. And yet, question-asking seems to be a regular occurrence within our relationship with God.

What does this aspect in our relationship say about us? And what does it say about God and how the world works?

A look at Abraham

Jeff spoke of Abraham questioning God as he was about to announce judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. Throughout the centuries, scribes had the sacred task of translating and making new copies of the Scriptures, meticulously copying down sentences word for word. Sometimes they would come across what seemed like a mistake or

discrepancy, and they would either change it to have it make sense, or they would write some comments in the margins to explain the problem. In Genesis 18, for example, our current translations show Abraham standing in front of God. This is the proper stance of someone standing before a judge, or ruler. However, earlier texts of this passage suggested that God was standing before Abraham. Why would this have been seen as a tension for scribes? And if that was the original meaning of the text, what does this tell us about the character of God?

Whether it was Abraham standing before God or God standing before Abraham, the story gives a compelling picture of how an intimate relationship with God works. **Have you ever had a conversation with God that feels like a court case? Explain.**

Dessert:

Here are a few suggestions when it comes to being near to God while questioning Him.

1. **Add questioning to your prayers.**
2. **Remember that it's okay to be disappointed.**
3. **Take time to wrestle with who God is.**
4. **Anticipate Engagement.**

Perhaps all of us have at times been disappointed with God. There are also times when we have wrestled with who God is, or who we THOUGHT God is. And we all want to hear from him. Have one or two people in the group pray a prayer that includes all of these suggestions. Be creative. Here is a simple example:

Our heavenly Father,

Why does the future look so hazy? Why does life have to be so hard for people? We've been disappointed that life has been upended, and we don't understand fully why you are allowing events like the pandemic to happen. But we know that you have always been faithful. And we know that even in the silence, you speak: you mold us, and transform us—not just in the good times, but in troubled times as well. And so we look to you, and look forward to you speaking to us. We are all ears, and we want to know you more. We long to hear from you.

Amen.