

LifeGroup Discussion Questions

James 4:7

December 13, 2020

Overview:

If you want an interesting read Google how to catch a monkey with a coconut. The first step is to secure the coconut with a rope. Then drill a hole in the coconut large enough for the monkey to get his hand in, but not large enough to pull it out once he makes a fist. You will need to put an object or some food in the coconut the monkey wants. He will reach in and grab it, but not be able to pull out his hand. All the monkey would have to do is let go of the object and he would be free, but his desire for whatever is in the coconut is so overpowering he cannot let it go. This method is used by indigenous jungle tribes to catch monkeys. The monkey has trapped himself by his inability to surrender what is in the coconut. The inability to let go will ultimately lead him to be slow roasted or boiled for the evening meal.

James 4:7 reads: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." How do you submit or surrender yourself to God? This is a somewhat difficult question. Another way of asking it is: "What do you hold to be the most precious in your life?" Is it your job, retirement account, the security of where you live, family, friends, money....? Think of whatever it is that you hold to be the most precious. Place it inside a coconut and picture yourself reaching in and grabbing hold of whatever it is. Maybe if you are a grandparent it is your grandkids. Maybe if you are a business owner it is your company. Whatever the case is, what if God called you to be a missionary or to serve Him in a way you had to let go? Could you let go and surrender to God? It is less about what you are letting go of and more about the position of your heart before God.

All of us have something we hold on to tightly. We might be 90% surrendered to God, willing to do whatever He asks, but there is that remaining 10% we don't want to let go of. It is the 10% that has us trapped. This is not an easy process. Jesus states in Luke 9:23-25 ²³And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" I find it interesting that in this passage Jesus says to take up the cross daily. Surrendering to God is not a one and done decision. It is a daily battle of having to prioritize things to where God doesn't just come first on our list but becomes our list. Verse 25 could be written like this: what does it profit a man if he holds onto whatever is in the coconut and loses his life.

Letting go gives you freedom, fulfillment, and contentment. You may not have to actually let go of whatever you hold to be most precious, but you need to have a willingness to let go. Jesus' disciples had to let go of everything to follow Him. Judas, who didn't let go of his desire for money, ended up betraying Jesus. Judas had his hand in the coconut holding onto 30 pieces of silver. The rest of the disciples, except for John, ended up dying a martyr's death. These men experienced the ultimate cost of discipleship. I doubt anyone of us will have to pay this price, but there is a cost to surrendering. What does the cost of discipleship (surrender) look like for you? Imagine if you were to sit down at a table with God with all that you own. What are you willing to hand over and what do you want to hold on to?

I'm not sure any of us are strong enough on our own to fully surrender. What if that monkey whose hand was stuck had another monkey come along and tell him to let go? They both could celebrate the freedom. We need other people to help us in letting go in our areas of weakness. Our grip on the things of this world are too tight to let go of by ourselves. We need someone to tell us and help us to let go. Only then can we celebrate the freedom together.

Bible Study:

1. What does surrendering to God look like in your life?
2. Luke 14:33 states: ³³ "So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." Why is the cost of discipleship so high?
3. What area do you struggle with the most in letting go to God?
4. How can being part of Christian community help you learn to surrender?
5. In what ways does surrendering bring a sense of freedom, contentment, and fulfillment?

Read the following verses and discuss what it means to surrender:

Matthew 11:28-29 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 26:39

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Matthew 6:33

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."