

God in the Dock

Week 3 - Daniel Knutson

Testimony

Icebreaker:

Topics for Discussion:

We need life spoken into us, and small group is one of the best places to build each other up. Encourage vulnerability this week; be patient and understanding. Don't judge, but offer mercy and grace and love!

- Much of our present experience is informed by our past. In fact, the past can lay a huge burden on us as we push into the future. Mistakes and tragedies weigh us down like a wet blanket, dampening our spirits and preventing us from living with joy and separating us from each other.
 - Have you ever felt like you didn't belong or were rejected from a group (not church) that you were part of? What were the circumstances? Did you try to change yourself to fit in?
 - What about at a church (including Branches)? How did that affect your opinion of God and your idea of God's opinion about you? Simplify: Did you feel valued?
- While we have all been treated poorly by others, we are not always the victim.
 - Can you think of a time you were mean or intentionally removed someone from your circle or group? Looking back, do you think you were justified? Would you act differently in that situation today? Why?
- We all need forgiveness, mercy, and grace. We all need Jesus! Without him we are walking towards death, and we **do not** have the ability to save ourselves. In the midst of being treated unfairly or treating others poorly, we can come to regret and feel intense guilt or bitterness. These emotions, events, and activities create a feedback loop of separation that must be broken!
 - Read John 1:43-51.
 - Philip shared what he thought about Jesus. When Nathanael pushed back, Philip didn't say he was wrong. Instead he asked Nathanael to come see for himself. The revelation for Nathanael was when he learned the he belonged **before** he had come to know Jesus.
 - Discuss with your group some ways you can interact with people differently to let them know they belong. You might find your mind immediately going toward a "list of exceptions": people you do not value as much or actively try to avoid. It is those people who need your love and acceptance most of all. For them and for you!

Things to Consider:

- Without Jesus, we are no better than the worst person we can think of. This statement may offend, but it is reality.
 - Read Romans 3:22-24
- When you come to know Jesus, your perspectives start to change. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within you, and changes in your life begin to occur to intentionally make you more Christ-like. Because Christ values us so highly, should we not value others as Christ does?
 - Read Philippians 2:1-7

Going Deeper:

- Let's set a stretch goal! Think of someone you have intentionally avoided, rejected, or devalued because they did not act the way you think they should. Make it a point to reach out to that person in some way, to show that person the value they have.
 - Ask your group for some creative ways to make this happen if you're stumped.

Prayer: Pray for each other and for the communities you find yourselves in. Pray for encouragement, strength, and the words you need when you reach out to those who need to hear. Most of all, pray in gratitude for the acceptance and adoption we have received through Christ's sacrifice for us.