



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

September 4, 2016

Discussion Guide

Overthrowing the System

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they state they have held back.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- What is more important to you, the end goal or the means used to get there? Could you explain?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- Using the notes, discuss the nature of Jesus' experience in the wilderness.
- Read Luke 4.1-13 aloud. Seek to put yourself in Jesus' shoes, paying careful attention to what Satan is urging Jesus to do. Read the text once more.
- What means is Satan urging Jesus to use to establish the Kingdom of God?
- What reasons does Jesus give for rejecting each of these means? What form might the Kingdom have taken if he had followed Satan's urging?
- Do you see God's people using any of these means to establish God's Kingdom? What forms does the Kingdom take when these means are utilized?
- Why might God's people choose not to reject these means? Could you explain?
- React to the following statement: "If we want to see a different result, we must go about things differently."
- Read 2 Corinthians 10.3-4 aloud.

- In what ways do Paul's words address Jesus' choice to pursue the Kingdom by different means?
- How might we go about learning from Jesus how to pursue the Kingdom using different means? What might this look like in this group?
- Consider closing with a prayer of commitment to pursuing the Kingdom of God on God's terms.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

WILDERNESS

The wilderness is any place not inhabited by human beings, not necessarily a bleak desert area, just an area without people. In ancient times, the absence of people in these areas led to the development of the idea that wilderness areas were inhabited by demons (Matthew 12.43; Luke 8.29). However, in the story of God's people, far from being a dangerous place, the wilderness often served as a place of revelation, refuge, and formation.

The most important wilderness story is that of Israel's forty years in the desert (Numbers 14.33; 32.13; Deuteronomy 8.2). In this story, God's people found refuge in the desert from Pharaoh, but this place of refuge soon became the scene of covenant formation at Mount Sinai (Exodus 18.5; 19.1-2) and the development of God's people in preparation of their possessing of the Land of Promise (Deuteronomy 11). In this story, one can see the positive benefit the wilderness provides for God's people. It is their place of refuge to which they may flee. The wilderness is the place where God might be found and where God's people might be shaped into the people they are meant to be.

Throughout Scripture, God's people run to the wilderness, but always for reasons of finding refuge, revelation, or formation. Moses, Hagar, and David all flee to the wilderness to find refuge from those who pursue them (Genesis 16.7; Exodus 2.15-3.1; 1 Samuel 23-26). Likewise, Elijah flees to the wilderness to escape Jezebel, but his true desire is to find and meet with God and discover

his will (1 Kings 19.1-18). John the Baptist seems to have moved to the wilderness to train for and then carry out his ministry of repentance, inviting others into the wilderness to experience God's intended transformation of their lives (Matthew 3.1-12).

With this background in mind, Jesus' own experiences in the wilderness might be better understood. Jesus' ministry began with forty days in the wilderness, a period of character formation preparing Jesus for his Kingdom ministry (Luke 4.1-13). He often withdrew to lonely places because it was there that he found his Father and discovered his will (Luke 4.42; 6.12-16; Mark 1.35). It was in the wilderness that Jesus experienced the revelation of God's pleasure with him (Mark 1.11) and where Jesus' own true identity was revealed to Peter, James, and John (Mark 9.2-8).

The wilderness can still play an important role in the life of God's people. These wilderness places can be experienced physically through the practice of withdrawal, or spiritually in times which feel dead and devoid of life. When these places are embraced and even sought out, God's present people, as those before them, can find revelation, refuge, and formation. However, our cultural predisposition is to avoid these desert places. The loneliness of the wilderness is avoided with the constant noise of the crowds, the news, and the radio, but this noise drowns out the still, quiet voice of God which can only be heard in quiet, lonely places. The trials and stress of barren places are avoided by seeking quick fixes and pain management strategies because such stresses are viewed as "not of God." However, the avoidance of this kind of wilderness experience robs God's people of the deep formation worked by God through this kind of wilderness journey. The wilderness can provide a time of rest and healing but our production oriented, connected culture frowns upon such withdrawal leaving many people frazzled, fried, and burnt out. Perhaps some of the greatest benefits to modern believers are yet to be found in a rediscovery of the wilderness.

THE TEXT

LUKE 4.1-13: GOD'S KINGDOM ON GOD'S TERMS

The setting of Jesus' temptation is that of his baptism.

Jesus began his ministry by first aligning himself with the Kingdom message proclaimed by John the Baptist through baptism. At his baptism, the heavens were opened and Jesus was proclaimed to be God's son verbally and through the visible appearance of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3.21-22). This proclamation serves to affirm Jesus in his messianic role and to set the course of his ministry to follow. However, Jesus must first be prepared to carry out his Kingdom ministry. Therefore, he is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for a period of formation (Luke 4.1-2). However, this period of formation is marked by a continuous effort by Satan to derail Jesus' ministry before it starts. The full extent of these attacks are not detailed, but their nature can be seen in the three final attacks which came at the end of Jesus' time in the wilderness, a time in which he was physically the weakest. In these attacks, it appears that Satan has been attempting to derail Jesus' ministry by tempting him to carry out his Kingdom ministry using cultural methods and agendas.

The first such attempt is Satan's goading of Jesus to use his power to turn a stone into a loaf of bread. On the surface, it appears that Satan is tempting Jesus to appease his own hunger through the use of his power. However, such an act would not serve to derail Jesus as Jesus is not opposed to using his power to multiply bread (John 6.1-15). In Matthew's account, Satan tempts Jesus to turn multiple stones into bread thereby creating a field of bread (Matthew 4.3). Here we gain insight into Satan's agenda. Satan was goading Jesus to create bread not just for himself but for others, but for what purpose? The context of this goading involves God's declaration of Jesus as his son, something Satan seems to be picking at (Luke 4.3). It appears that Satan is saying something like, "If you are really sent by God to engage in this ministry, then turn these stones into a field of bread." In this context, the temptation becomes about how Jesus carries out his Kingdom ministry. Satan tempts him to carry out his ministry by creating bread to be eaten by others. This use of bread was well known and utilized by Rome. Much of Rome's might came by its pacification of the crowds with the distribution of grain and

bread; that is, Rome gained people's compliance by feeding them. Thus, Satan is tempting Jesus to gain the compliance of people by feeding them, to use an external means of getting the kingdom behavior he desired from people. It is important that what Satan is proposing is simply a different means of getting to the desired end of the Jesus' Kingdom ministry, the proper response of all people to God (Philippians 2.9-11; Romans 12.1-2). Satan argues that Jesus can get what he wants from people if he will fill their bellies. Jesus' response is important. He refuses to carry out his Kingdom ministry on Rome's terms because people need more than bread (Deuteronomy 8.3). The Kingdom is not about simple compliance but about the transformation of hearts and this takes more than bread.

Stymied, Satan tries a different tact. He takes Jesus to a place where all the kingdoms of the world are visible. He claims to have the ability to give them all to Jesus if Jesus would only worship him. This temptation is intriguing on two levels. First, Jesus does not deny Satan's claim to power. It seems that while governance was created by God, it has been hijacked by Satan. Second, Satan is offering Jesus the very thing he is seeking, his rightful claim of authority (Isaiah 9.1-7; Colossians 1.15-18). However, he is offering Jesus an easy path to the top. All he must do is switch his allegiance from the Father to Satan. According to Satan, a simple change in allegiance will give Jesus the very thing he is working to obtain. Jesus refuses this easy path by reminding Satan that the Kingdom could only be established if God was at its center (Deuteronomy 6.4-9). There were no easy paths to his rightful place.

Once again, Satan shifts his tactic by taking Jesus to the highest point on the Temple. This exact point is debated, but it was probably the southeast corner of the Temple which overlooked a 450 foot drop into the Kidron Valley. Quoting Psalm 91.11-12, Satan urges Jesus to jump off this point into the precipice, forcing God's hand by making him send angels to rescue Jesus. Such a demonstration of power would have been very public and stood as a testimony to Jesus' identity. This feat at the heart of the Jewish religious system would have potentially brought the religious leaders over to Jesus. Satan is probably urging Jesus to seize control of the heart of Judaism

with God's power thereby hastening the success of his ministry objectives. However, to do so would mean that Jesus was setting the agenda and using God and his power to accomplish it. Jesus refuses noting that God is not to be used in such a manner (Deuteronomy 6.16).

Unable to sidetrack Jesus, Satan withdraws until a more opportune time. Jesus emerges from his wilderness experience firmly committed to a Kingdom ministry carried out on God's terms.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

Jesus had a political bent. That much is clear. He wanted nothing more than the establishment of God's Kingdom, functioning on earth as it did in heaven. He called people to enter this Kingdom and join him in its establishment, but how exactly are we to go about it? How do we seek to establish God's Kingdom? Often I look to the tools I have at hand, tools like legislation, political party affiliation, and power moves. At times, I even pray for the success of the use of these tools, urging God to bless what I am doing. However, the more I look at Jesus, the more I question the use of the tools at hand. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was faced with a choice of how he would carry out his Kingdom ministry. Would he use the tools at hand or would he go another way? Interestingly, Jesus chose to reject the tools at hand, rejecting the commonly accepted political maneuverings of his day. He even went so far as to reject asking God to bless these maneuverings. Certainly he was for God's Kingdom, but he was going to go about it in an entirely different way. He seems committed to pursuing God's Kingdom on God's terms. None of the tools at hand were satisfactory. Something more was needed because something other than what already existed was being sought. I have to admit that such an approach throws me into a complete state of disorientation. I simply do not know how to go about accomplishing anything in ways other than the ways used by the world, but I am learning that if I want to see anything different I must pursue it differently. I don't have all the answers to what these different ways are, but I am paying close attention to Jesus. I am watching him, listening to

him, and learning how he went about life, a life pursuing the Kingdom of God. I am asking him to teach me, and asking for the grace to carry out what I have been taught.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

How do we go about pursuing the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which seeks to replace all other kingdoms? How do we go about leading people to honor God with their lives, to order society in an upright manner, to focus all eyes upon God? Typically, we do what we already know how to do. We pursue God's Kingdom using the means and methods of the kingdoms of this world. However, Jesus reminds us that such an approach will not yield God's Kingdom but just another variation of a kingdom God is seeking to replace. If we want to see anything different we must learn to pursue it in a different way. What are these ways? This is an excellent question, one which we can only answer if we are willing to pay attention to Jesus. If we will watch him and learn from him, we can learn the ways of God's Kingdom. If we will commit ourselves to living them out, we can begin to see the establishment of that Kingdom today. Perhaps the easiest way to learn the ways of the Kingdom is to immerse yourself in the life of Jesus. We recommend slowly reading through the Gospels. Pick a Gospel such as Luke and read it slowly, one small scene at a time. As you read, seek to imagine yourself as present, a disciple seeking to watch and learn from Jesus. Pay attention to how Jesus interacts with you and how you interact with him. Listen to his invitations to you and others and ponder your response. Continue following Jesus in this way every day, pursuing him in order to take up his life.



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SHIPP

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