

DISCUSSION NOTES

APRIL 7, 2019

Start by praying and asking for God's help as you seek to grow as authentic followers of Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

1. Did you grow up attending church? In a sentence or two, share how that experience or lack of it shaped the way you view church.

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

2. Read Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 1:22-23, Matthews 16:18. What do we learn about the church from these verses? How do these describe the "universal church"?
3. Read Acts 2:42-47. Make 5-7 quick observations. What groups of people are in view? What activities take place? What does God do? How do these verses describe model behavior for the "local church"?
4. Read Colossians 2:6-7. What imagery is used? What can we learn about the spiritual life from this?
5. Read and respond to the following quote:

"Two major trends [that are influencing our day] are (1) the practice of continuous engagement in immediately gratifying activities that resist reflection and meditation, and (2) the growth of secularism...in which the transcendent feels less and less plausible."

– Alan Noble, *Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age*

Where do you see these forces at work in our world? What might this mean for our discipleship?

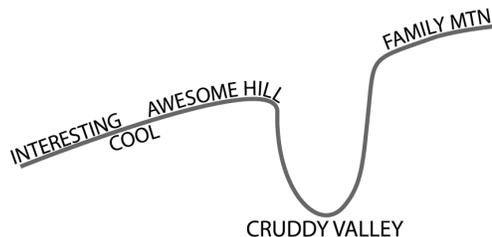
LIVING IT OUT

6. Read the article on the back of this page titled "Family Vacation — The Up & Down Journey." How does this resonate with your personal experience in churches?

How might this pattern apply to a serve team or to a small group?
7. Where might we turn for encouragement when we find ourselves stuck in cruddy valley? How might seeing the big picture of the journey strengthen and prepare you for what lies ahead?
8. Where are you personally in your small group's up and down journey? If you had to pick a category, which one do you think best describes where you are as a group at this time?
9. Read Colossians 3:12-17. If a church truly practiced what is taught in these verses, how attractive do you think it would be? What words would you use to describe a church like that?
10. Reread Colossians 2:6-7. What is one thing from this verse that you want to apply to your life this week? What is one way you will commit to live out these verses?

FAMILY VACATION — THE UP & DOWN JOURNEY

We are a family. The gospel is a deep and wide reservoir of riches (Ephesians 3:8). Community, or the creation of a new family, is one prime part of these riches. When God saves you, the good news is that He becomes your perfect Father. He adopts you and makes you His own. He pledges and promises that He will work for your eternal good every minute of every day for the rest of time. But God doesn't just become a good Father, he also gives us a new family, called the church. As you read about the church in the New Testament, various metaphors are used to describe the church (body, temple, bride). But the dominant metaphor for the church is family or the household of God. In light of God making us his sons and daughters and placing us within his family, we want to grow practically into what God has made us positionally.



THE JOURNEY: The line represents the journey of any church becoming practically (a family) what God has made the positionally (a family). Family mountain is when there is no pretense or pretending, people are 100% known (strengths and weaknesses). But that journey takes these very predictable turns.

INTERESTING: This is the starting point. It's when you look across a room and see a person that's interesting enough to take a step toward getting to know.

COOL: This is step two. As you take the few first steps toward them, the intrigue builds. When their name comes up in your mind it's associated with really good thoughts (they are wise, insightful, nice, etc). And this leads to...

AWESOME HILL: Awesome hill is when we've actually taken several steps toward them, them toward us, and a friendship is starting to form. We like them, they like us. But here's the problem with awesome hill, our friendship is still very superficial. We just know the parts of them that they've allowed us to know. We've seen their best characteristics, but we've been hidden from their worst. For the journey toward family mountain to continue, the next breathtaking turn has to occur.

CRUDDY VALLEY: Cruddy valley is the moment in a friendship where we see that this person is not just a nice, wise, insightful, fun person. They are also a self-centered, self-exalting, self-seeking jerk! At this moment we've fallen into cruddy valley. Now think about the person sitting at the front of the path looking down the road ahead. It would seem that family mountain is just one small step from awesome hill. From the front of the path, it's impossible to see the cliff and the fall into cruddy valley. But consider this point, falling into cruddy valley is absolutely necessary to get to family mountain.

FAMILY MOUNTAIN: It's only after falling into cruddy valley (where the worst of people is seen) that the climb up to family mountain can begin.

THE DISCONNECT IN CHURCHES: There is a reason most churches do not have rich community. Almost every relationship in the church is on awesome hill rather than family mountain. The disconnect happens when people fall off the cliff and land in cruddy valley. At that point, most people disengage with the person who pulled them over the cliff. Rather than walking with them through cruddy valley and starting the climb up family mountain, they short-circuit the process as they find another person who's interesting to start the journey over with.

[Source: Stonegate Church]