

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Daniel 8
Stand Strong Series
May 19/20, 2018

Main Idea:

“Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” (Romans 5:3-4)

Discovery Questions

1. Did you ever break a bone as a child in sports, on the playground, at school? What was the story behind that?

This week we return to our series “Stand Strong” through the book of Daniel. As we come to Daniel 8, we find an interesting section of scripture. Located in the apocalyptic section of Daniel, and therefore containing weird images that refer to something else, this passage isn’t about the “apocalypse”—the end of the world—it’s about events that occurred about ~300 years after Daniel wrote them. Thus they were written in the future from Daniel’s perspective but from the past for us.

In our study we’ll look at a section of Daniel’s vision that refers to an especially wicked ruler who persecuted the Jewish people around ~190 B.C. Then we’ll use this passage to talk about difficulties in life, in general.

2. Read Daniel 8:9-14, 23-27. What do we learn from this passage about King Antiochus IV (who the “horn” of 8:9 represents—see Leader’s Guide for more information) and what he will do to the Jewish people?

There are a lot of things that we learn from this passage. But as we focused on in the message this weekend, we see here that sometimes the righteous suffer (the Jewish people) and sometimes the wicked prosper (King Antiochus IV)—and therefore we cannot look at the circumstances of our life to determine what God thinks of us. It’s with that in mind we ask the following questions.

3.
 - a. How have you seen people reflect the belief that circumstances are a sign of God’s approval / disapproval / opinion of them?
 - b. What do you think of the idea that “sometimes the righteous suffer” and “sometimes the wicked prosper”? Does that strike you as unfair? What do you do with those thoughts?
4.
 - a. When have you been tempted to look at the circumstances of your own life and see in them a view of God’s approval or disapproval of you?
 - b. When have you been “blessed” through a difficult circumstance?
 - c. How can we remind ourselves that God’s opinion of us is grounded in the cross and what He says about us in His Word, not in the circumstances of our life? How does knowing that truth affect how you look at your circumstances?

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5. In Romans 5:3-4, Paul says, “We...glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” How have you seen a difficult circumstance reveal the work that God has done in your life? How does that give you hope about the future? How can we be reminded of that when we go through tough times?

Leader Guide Starts on Next Page

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Leader Guide

1. Did you ever break a bone as a child in sports, on the playground, at school? What was the story behind that?

This is a “lighter” question designed to get the conversation going. Spend about 5-7 minutes on this question.

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In our study we’ll look at a section of Daniel’s vision that refers to an especially wicked ruler who persecuted the Jewish people around ~190 B.C. Then we’ll use this passage to talk about difficulties in life, in general.

2. Read Daniel 8:9-14, 23-27. What do we learn from this passage about King Antiochus IV (who the “horn” of 8:9 represents—see Leader’s Guide for more information) and what he will do to the Jewish people?

In Daniel 8, Daniel is given a vision of the next ~350 years of history on this earth. First, he is given a picture of the future dominance of the Greek Empire on this earth, and the rise and fall of its most famous leader, Alexander the Great (this is the image of the “goat” that defeats the “ram” and the first “horn” on the goat’s head). After that, Daniel is given a vision of a ruler who will come from this Greek Empire and persecute God’s people. This is the ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes, one of the most wicked kings in human history. Antiochus IV had as his goal the complete eradication of the Jewish people. We know from other accounts in history that he tried to round up all the copies of the Torah (the Jewish Bible) that he could find and shred them; he killed the parents of any baby born in Israel that was found circumcised; and, he desecrated God’s Temple in Jerusalem, turning God’s House into a Temple for Zeus, sacrificing upon the altar of God a pig (an unclean animal in the Jewish faith) to Zeus. Eventually, however, Antiochus was killed and his army was defeated. The temple was then re-consecrated to God—an event still celebrated by Jewish people today in the Hanukah holiday. This time period in the history of the Jewish people is told in the book of 1 Maccabees, an inter-testamental book found in Catholic Bibles to this day.

Spend 10-12 minutes on this question.

- 3. a. How have you seen people reflect the belief that circumstances are a sign of God’s approval / disapproval / opinion of them?**
- b. What do you think of the idea that “sometimes the righteous suffer” and “sometimes the wicked prosper”? Does that strike you as unfair? What do you do with those thoughts?**

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For part “a,” it’s common to call good circumstances of sign of God’s “blessing,” often carrying with it the idea that “Because I’m doing things right, God is blessing me.” It’s also common for people to ask when they go through difficult circumstances, “What lesson do you think God’s is teaching me in this?” implying that if we could only learn the lesson God wants us to learn, we wouldn’t have to go through the difficult circumstance.

Spend 7-10 minutes on this question in its entirety.

4.
 - a. **When have you been tempted to look at the circumstances of your own life and see in them a view of God’s approval or disapproval of you?**
 - b. **When have you been “blessed” through a difficult circumstance?**
 - c. **How can we remind ourselves that God’s opinion of us is grounded in the cross and what He says about us in His Word, not in the circumstances of our life? How does knowing that truth affect how you look at your circumstances?**

For part “c,” knowing God’s truth about who He says we are, and seeking to see the good that can be gained from circumstances are both important. A prayer that some have found helpful is the prayer, “God help me see myself the way that you see me.” Furthermore, reminding ourselves of the way that difficult circumstances of the past have molded and shaped us into the character of Christ and taught us dependence upon God can help us see the way that God might use difficult circumstances in our lives (see next question).

Spend about 10-12 minutes on this question in its entirety.

5. **In Romans 5:3-4, Paul says, “We...glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” How have you seen a difficult circumstance reveal the work that God has done in your life? How does that give you hope about the future? How can we be reminded of that when we go through tough times?**

In this passage Paul says that ultimately “suffering produces hope.” How? Because when we suffer and see revealed in our character how far we’ve come, it’s a sign that God is changing us. If God is changing us, it means that the Holy Spirit is in us. If the Holy Spirit is in us, it means that we know where we’re going when we die—into God’s presence. Thus suffering gives us hope.

Spend 7-10 minutes on this question.