



James Bryan Smith – Becoming an Apprentice to Jesus

Discussion Guide

This resource is designed to help your small group or college class discussion. It's shaped to inspire you to consider new ways to understand the issues discussed in this video. You don't need to answer all the questions. Please allow time for discussion and response.

Materials

1. Person Interviewed: James Bryan Smith
2. Theme of Video: Becoming an Apprentice to Jesus

Preliminary discussion

Consider the questions suggested below to start the conversation for your small group or college class. They'll consolidate the content of the video, after you've viewed it.

1. What were the major themes in this video?
2. How do those themes relate to your life and context?
3. Discuss the difficulties of the content. What was difficult to understand? Was there anything you would like to clarify with the group?
4. Theological method: How is the interviewee's theology and outlook informed and shaped by their practical ministry and context? What approaches do they take in understanding God in the context of their daily life and ministry?

Explore and apply

Explore the major themes raised in the video. Critically engage with the theology. Consider the questions that respond to the issues raised in your preliminary discussion. Apply the answers to these questions in your own setting. Ensure the discussion is specifically drawing on your local setting. Make sure the discussion is relevant to the lives of faith for your small group or college class. Encourage relevant and thoughtful examples from each participant.

1. One of the key themes in Smith's books is "Becoming an Apprentice to Jesus." What does it mean to be an apprentice to Jesus?
2. Smith says that our struggle in discipleship often comes from our misdirected focus on willpower. How does Smith explain the problem with this, and why transformation isn't a function of the will?
3. Instead of focusing on behavior management, how do we shift to asking: "What are the right stories about God?"
4. How can we discern false narratives from true ones, and adopt Jesus' narratives about God for our lives?
5. What are some examples of these false narratives?
6. Dallas Willard says, "If you've got toxic narratives and you start the process of spiritual formation, [these narratives are] going to get worse." What does he mean?
7. Why do false narratives lock the church into focusing on behavior, causing fear of failure and imperfection among its members?
8. How do pastors and leaders isolate the narratives that are crippling people, and help people embrace life-giving narratives?
9. How does Jesus help us understand who God is and who we are as God's children?
10. Smith says that "The real gospel is that we don't face life alone. Jesus came to give us life with God now, not just in heaven when we die." What does this mean?
11. How is faith interactive knowledge, which is why we can grow in it?
12. What does Smith mean when he says that, "Grace is not simply unmerited forgiveness, but it's also God's action in our lives and something we grow in"?
13. How does hope anchor the soul?
14. What role does soul training play?

How does personal spiritual formation relate to communal/corporate spiritual formation?

Informing Community

Facilitate the space for your group to respond to the discussion. You might consider this section as a personal time of written journal responses to the following questions.

1. What is God encouraging our group and me, to do?
2. In response to the issues raised in the video, what are areas I want to ask God for forgiveness in? How do I need to change? What does God want me to stand up for?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community, for us to better engage with the contextual issues of our community?
4. How can I gain a better understanding of the issues discussed in this video? What do we ask that God would do in our hearts?

Prayer

Spend time in prayer over what you've learnt.

Invite the ministry of the Holy Spirit to clarify, heal, and inspire change for your participants and communities.

Links

Website: www.theglobalchurchproject.com

Books:

Graham Hill, *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (IVP Academic, 2016).

Graham Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City (Second Edition): Ecclesiology for the Global Missional Community: Volume 1, Western Voices* (Cascade, 2017).