

## Small Group – August 16

### Read Daniel 6:1-16

1. Despite Daniel's long life of faithful excellence, he still encountered opposition and undue hardship. Part of being surrounded by a morally inhospitable world is that a good and faithful life is not often rewarded. In fact, it is often met with hostility and evil. Today, how do you as a Christian handle and respond to the hardship that we face even as we try to live our lives faithfully?

*We must affirm and accept the reality that we will and must all suffer in this life, and suffering is an inescapable human experience independent of our deserving it or not. Affirming and accepting this reality is the first step but is not the final step. It is mere blind fatalism to stop there. We must then move on to affirm and trust that suffering is not the ultimate reality because God had designed and purpose our human existence to be good and perfect, and that God had addressed the problem of evil and suffering in Jesus Christ. We do not yet experience the full liberation of our human existence from evil and suffering. And so, we must go about our earthly lives affirming and accepting the first premise (suffering is inevitable) while also affirming and trusting the second premise (suffering is not final and permanent because God has undone and will undo the power of evil in all creation through Jesus Christ).*

2. Part of being surrounded by a morally inhospitable world is that the governing laws of our world cannot fully represent what is good, right, moral, and true. How do we as Christians navigate the complexities of what is legal and lawful in Toronto versus what is right, true, and good according to Scripture?

*This question may bring up very contentious political and social issues in our late modern times. Allow space and room in the discussion for gracious disagreement and dialogue. Issues such as abortion, contraception, prostitution, use and sale of marijuana, sex education, etc. may be brought up, and not everyone is on the same page on these issues. If anything, we must first relate to each other kindly and generously as we first seek to listen and understand. Because these issues remain as debated issues, there are no simple solutions or answers to them. As Christians in a socially democratic society, we have the privilege and the right of expression, to freely exchange ideas and thought, and to deliberate with others in our societal contract with one another.*

3. Part of being surrounded by a morally inhospitable world is that we as Christians cannot feel or cannot be at home in this world as it is. The world will reject us in some ways. And we are called to reject some aspects of the world. How do we live faithfully in this difficult and liminal existence of being in the world but not of it?

*We must engage and participate in the goods and services of our world to the extent that they are good, true, right, and permissible according to the laws of God. But we*

*do so not in ultimate reliance and captivated submission to the demands and idols of the world. Just as Daniel and Jesus have done, take hold of opportunities faithfully, fully live out your calling in their season, be ambitious but not overreach, be assured and seek the balance of rest and work but do not succumb to sloth, complacency, luxury, and comfort. In everything else, consider how you are contributing to the good and love of your neighbour, to the next generation, to the health of nature and the economy, and to the witness and promotion of the Gospel.*

4. Part of being surrounded by a morally inhospitable world is that we cannot finally hope or put our ultimate trust in our earthly leaders and in the circumstances of life. How do we tangibly display in our words and actions that our ultimate hope and trust is in Jesus Christ, and not in our governments, institutions, and human exemplars and leaders?

*We should not insist on our political or national or corporate identities as our ultimate markers of personhood. While they are important aspects of our participation in this world, they are not the primary elements of our persons, such as our race, sexuality, and religion. We must hold our leaders, institutions, and enterprises accountable while also promoting and assisting in their success, leading, and serving our world. Alongside that, we invite everyone to put their trust in Jesus Christ, who alone can lead us to perfect freedom and existence. Our leading, serving, and participating in the economy and market are all part and parcel of living out our God-given capacities to create, multiply, and serve in the kingdom. But the kingdoms of this world are passing away, no matter how good they are for a time. And so, we must bid all people to finally rely and trust in Jesus Christ lest we are all swept away by the tide of time and of His judgement against the evils of our world.*