



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

Best Practices – Part 3  
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**Main Idea** – God not only has a plan for your future, He has a plan for your next few minutes. Put God first in your planning, in the commitment of your resources, and in your expectations.

### Build on a strong foundation

- Anything that can withstand stress must be built on a good foundation. When difficulties and challenges come into our lives, we want to be prepared by having built our life on a good foundation.
- **Matthew 7: 24-25 - Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.**
- Prayer is one way to build a good foundation. Prayer is simply having a conversational relationship with God. As with all good relationships, there must be good communication between the parties involved.
- Worship is another means to build a good foundation. Worship enables us to focus on what is important. We must make sure we are worshipping God with what we think, say, and do so that we do not unconsciously begin to worship something else.

### Three things everyone needs

- Hope for the future – before there was a you, there was a thing for you to do.
  - **Jeremiah 29:11 – For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**
- Repentance from the past – you can't walk into your future if you're clinging to the past.
  - **Philippians 3: 13-14- Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**
- A plan of attack – we must continually rely on God and His Word for a strategy for each step of our day, and beyond.

- **Romans 12:2 - Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (Message)**
- It is essential we continually assess where we are at with our life, and how we are doing things. We must ask ourselves how we can improve upon things.
- “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” Henry Ford

### **Three steps to the best results in life**

- Go to God first.
  - Functional Atheism is defined as “saying you believe in God, but then relying on yourself when faced with a challenge.” The Bible says this kind of person – even a believer – is an unstable individual.
  - **James 1:5-8 – If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**
- Give God the first of everything. For example, start every day with God.
  - God was in the beginning. So, He should be at the beginning of everything we do. **Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**
  - Give your attention to God first. **James 1: 19-20 – So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.**
  - Give your resources to God not based on where you think they are going, but from where they came. **James 1: 16-17 – Do not be deceived, my brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**
  - Take steps as God guides you. Don't sit still. **James 1: 22-25 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a**

**forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

- Expect God to bless the path of your life.
  - **Proverbs 3: 6-10 – In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones. Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.**

### **Look in the mirror**

- If you put Him first, God will lead you on a life-path full of significance and meaning.
- Stay connected to Him, communicate with Him, worship Him, use His Word as a way to measure how you're doing. **James 1: 23-24 - For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.**
- Look into the mirror of God's Word. Let it lead you to something better; you'll be able to see where you've been, where you are currently, and where you are going.

### **Reflective Questions for Best Practices – Part 3**

1. Look at the definition of Functional Atheism (above). Where do you put yourself on a scale from 1 to 10; where 1 is “not a functional atheist at all”, and 10 is “a full-fledged functional atheist”?
2. How good are you at starting your day with God? If you are pretty good at starting your day with God, how good are you at staying in touch with Him each step of the day?
3. God created each of us with talents and abilities, with the expectation we would use those tools. Based on the Bible passages of this sermon, what are some things we can do to make sure we are putting God first as we are using our abilities?