



DANIEL DARLING

THE DIGNITY REVOLUTION

STUDY GUIDE

RECLAIMING GOD'S RICH
VISION FOR HUMANITY



INTRODUCTION

1. On page 17, Darling writes:

A gospel-saturated human dignity movement unites two seemingly disparate strands of the Christian life. It reminds us that personal salvation without neighbor love is an incomplete gospel, and it reminds us that social justice without individual transformation is powerless.

What do you think about that statement? Have you seen one of these strands of the Christian life played out without the other?

1. WITH GLORY AND HONOR

2. Why is it necessary to ground a vision of human dignity in the Christian story?
3. Apart from connection to God, what metrics does our secular society use to categorize and define people?
4. On page 23, Darling writes:

To acknowledge the fact that we are made in his image means both embracing humility and enjoying dignity.

How do you experience the Christian life, holding a biblical view of yourself as created in the image of God, but not as God? What are the dangers of losing a sense of either humility or dignity?

5. In your own words, what does it mean that all humans are made in the image of God?

2. LOSING OUR HUMANITY

1. Darling critiques modern philosophy's idea that humans are basically good, chalking up our folly to factors outside of ourselves.

Why it is necessary for Christians to understand that sin is a heart problem, one we are responsible for? What are some potential consequences of minimizing our depravity, or denying it altogether?

2. Darling writes that the doctrine of original sin, though it “violates our modern sensibilities,” is actually the gateway to the good news of the gospel.

How do you think Christians might engage a culture largely opposed to the idea of human sinfulness with a gospel that proclaims just that?

3. On page 40, Darling critiques the notion that we have progressed beyond being capable of committing atrocities, listing a few examples of groups that are dehumanized today.

Do you agree with his examples? Would you add any other groups of people that are dehumanized in our society today? What acts of injustice against certain image-bearers grieve you?

4. On page 38, Darling explains that:

The gospel tells us both that the crisis is worse than modern man is willing to confront and that the cross of Christ is greater than modern man can ever realize.

How does the life, death, and resurrection of Christ offer us liberation from the shame and guilt that sin brings? How does living out of that forgiveness—with a new identity in Christ—enable us to more clearly see the dignity of others?

3. DIGNITY REDISCOVERED

1. Darling explains in this chapter that the kingdom of God arrived in Jesus, but at the same time “has not come in its fullest form.”

How do you experience this tension of the kingdom being both at hand and still breaking through? What areas either in your life or in the world can you see the kingdom at hand, and what areas do you long for more of God’s kingdom to come into?

2. On page 53, Darling describes the two-fold mission of the church as “communication” and “illumination”—encouraging us to see gospel proclamation and social activism as inseparable.

Of the two, is there one that you personally, or your church group, tend to emphasize more than the other? Why is it important to both preach the good news and do acts of mercy?

3. Darling speaks in this chapter about the upside-down kingdom that Jesus inaugurates with his coming to earth.

How can we live counter to the culture at hand, witnessing to this upside-down kingdom as Christians and as a church? In your own words, what is “upside-down” about this kingdom, and what do you find beautiful about that reality?

4. On page 57, Darling writes:

God, in Christ, is not merely calling persons but a people.

What is encouraging or difficult about recognizing that this work of welcoming people into the kingdom is not a solo mission? Why must it take the church, a family of believers?

4. I AM A MAN

1. On page 67, Darling states:

Racial unity is not incidental to gospel witness but a feature of the gospel's work.

Why is it important to see how the gospel reconciles us both to God (vertically) and to each other (horizontally), and what implications does that have for racial unity?

2. Darling writes that for white Christians, helping starts with listening.

If you are white, what friends or voices do you listen to on the topic of race? If you are from a minority, whose voices do you appreciate that you would suggest white Christians listen to?

3. How might the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 be instructive for our current racial context in America today? Why do you think Jesus tells this parable in Luke?
4. How would you talk to a brother or sister in Christ who doesn't believe that racial reconciliation is a gospel issue, or who believes we live in a post-racial society?

5. THE LITTLEST PEOPLE

1. What struck you about the examples from Scripture on conception and the personhood of the unborn (pages 81-84)? What was surprising, moving, or challenging about them?
2. What is a healthy Christian response to women who have made the decision to abort a child? What types of responses have you witnessed from Christians—good or bad?
3. On page 92, Darling writes:
To be pro-life is a way of life.
What does it mean to you that being pro-life is a way of living, and not just a stance or policy?
4. What would you say is the posture of your church toward women who have made the choice to abort a baby? How would you comfort a woman who is experiencing intense shame as a result of her decision to abort a child, using the message of the gospel?

6. FRENEMIES

1. How does understanding that God's heart and laws are rooted in justice shape our own desires to see justice enacted in the world? Why should Christians grieve injustices?

2. On page 104, Darling writes:

It is right to be angry with a perpetrator for what they have done, and to call for justice to be done—but it is also right to mourn for them, for the way that the image of God has been so twisted and marred, and to pray for and seek restoration for them.

Do you see this response played out culturally—seeing the tragedy on both sides, calling for justice for the victims at the same time as praying for restoration for the perpetrator—or not? What is difficult about holding justice and grace together?

3. Throughout this chapter, Darling acknowledges the dangers of dehumanizing rhetoric directed toward criminals, immigrants, and refugees.

What are your experiences with this? How might Christians offer a different language of dignity toward these image-bearers?

4. Darling highlighted a number of justice issues in the chapter: the racial disparity of the criminal justice system, the plight of immigrants and refugees, and the tragedy of human trafficking.

What do you find difficult, shocking, or complex about these issues? What do you think the church's role in displaying justice in these areas might look like?

7. FACING THE FINAL FOE

1. On page 120, Darling lists a few reasons why Christians are opposed to euthanasia.

What arguments have you previously encountered, if any, around the issue of euthanasia, and did this chapter alter or strengthen your stance on the topic? If so, how?

2. On page 127, Darling writes:

Both the fake gospel that promises a life without suffering and the “death with dignity” movement that offers a death without pain are peddling false promises.

If these are lies, how does the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and the promised future resurrection of our own bodies as Christians shape our view of death and dying?

3. When we value youth at the expense of listening to and caring for the elderly, what do you think we lose in society as a result? What gifts do the elderly have to extend to us that we should be eager to receive?
4. Do you have any experiences in your families or churches with caring for the elderly? What was meaningful and/or difficult about it? What did you learn from those experiences?

8. GOOD WORK

1. Darling talks about two ways we are “tempted to think wrongly about our work”: worshipping our careers as ultimate or minimizing our work as insignificant.

Which one of these tendencies do you most resonate with? How so?

2. What are some markers that might help us identify when we are making work an idol? How might we respond to put work back in its rightful place—as a gift, not a god?

3. Darling highlights Scripture’s call to Christians to care for the poor, calling this response “intrinsic to a holistic gospel message” (page 140).

What is missing from a preached gospel that leaves out caring for those in poverty?

4. Darling ends the chapter by encouraging us:

Never let the fact that you cannot do everything mean that you do not do something.

Have you ever felt helpless to address large-scale problems like poverty? Knowing that you cannot and do not have to solve everything, what is one area of poverty relief—in your church, community, or in an organization—that you could serve in or support?

9. THE BETTER STORY

1. On page 152, Darling writes:

There are many manifestations of self-love, but perhaps the most powerful is the sexual revolution. Its central belief statement of “If it feels good, do it” has become the soundtrack of our age.

Do you agree with Darling’s summation of the revolution’s message? Where have you seen or heard this belief system played out, and to what effect?

2. On pages 152-153, Darling encourages us to admit that the church has not always taught a robust view of biblical human sexuality.

What has been your own experience of the church’s teachings on sexuality? How did it shape your own understanding of human sexuality? How has that understanding changed, if at all, over time?

3. On page 154, Darling says that the sexual revolution...

... promised freedom [but] has ended up creating a world where people are treated with less dignity.

Do you agree that the sexual revolution’s promises of liberation fall short, and instead lead to self-enslavement and the exploitation of others? If so, in what areas have you most prominently seen this take place?

4. On page 157, Darling states:

Our sexuality, whether we are single or married, can be a signpost to something beyond ourselves—to a deeper intimacy with Christ.

What is compelling about this vision for you? How might this view infuse our understanding of sexuality with more meaning and beauty?

10. I AM NOT MY AVATAR

1. What does your current technological consumption look like, and does it feel healthy? Are there areas of technology that you feel more enslaved to than others?

2. On page 173, Darling highlights how our technologies can produce in us an inflated sense of importance and an illusion of control.

Do you resonate with either of these characterizations? What would you say is the most significant underlying temptation for you that technology presents?

3. On page 177, Darling writes:

Uncritical engagement with technology can turn us away from the worship of the Creator and toward worship of creation in ways that tell us lies about our humanity and drain away our dignity.

How do the promises of technology clamor for our worship? How can we put it in its rightful place—as a gift, not as the Giver?

4. What do you think about Darling's assertion on pages 181-182 that going to church is an important embodied act in an increasingly digitized world?

11. AGREE TO DISAGREE

1. On page 191, Darling writes:

Some of our notions of working toward a “Christian nation” are at odds with religious liberty.

What arguments have you encountered about needing to make America a “Christian nation” again? How does Darling address those that he presents himself?

2. How should holding confidence in the power of the gospel shape the way we think about religious liberty? What is our confidence?
3. How are human dignity and the right to believe freely connected? What is unbiblical about coerced belief?

4. On page 197, Darling explains that all of us...

... help shape the climate of our culture conversation by conversation. And we promote or diminish religious liberty in how we speak to and about others.

What do you think about the current climate of civility or incivility toward religions other than Christianity in America? How can you promote speech that affirms the dignity of those that believe differently?

12. A LAND BEYOND LEFT AND RIGHT

1. On page 204, Darling writes:

We are tempted to make too much of our government or system of rule—but we must not make too little of it either.

What are the dangers of making politics ultimate? What are the pitfalls of disengaging altogether?

2. How does the idea of political engagement as a way of loving our neighbors (pages 205-207) differ from a secular view of politics? How does this idea affirm or change your own view of Christian political engagement?

3. On page 211, Darling explains:

A genuine Jesus-follower realizes that he has no permanent home in any one tribe.

In a culture that so identifies people with their political party, why must we primarily locate ourselves within God's kingdom, and not within political tribes? Why is seeking permanent shelter in one party or the other futile for the Christian?

4. How would you respond to a Christian who argues that politics is a distraction from the gospel, so we should exit the political sphere altogether? How would you explain the Christian calling to activism?

