BIBLE STUDY

SHANG-CHI AND THE LEGEND OF THE TEN RINGS (2021)

Focus

Facilitator Note: *We encourage facilitators to take this Bible study and expound on it throughout the week, allowing it to be a springboard for deeper conversation and personal meditation.*

PRESS START

Shang-Chi was a fantastic film that was a definite genre shift as far as MCU films go. It looks and feels very much like a martial arts film. This is amplified by the addition of several actors from famous martial arts films like *The Grand Master*, *Master Z*, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

> **Ask: What famous martial arts actor would you have loved to see in this film?**

EQUIP

In this movie, we meet Shang-Chi (going by the name of Shaun) and his best friend, Katy. At the beginning of the film, the audience discovers Shang-Chi, a man who comes from a distinguished family, is working as a car valet. He and Katy not only do this to pay the bills, but they seem to have fun doing it. However, they are later chastised by friends and family for not being more focused and successful at this point in their life. This push to "do something" with your life is not exclusive to Shaun and Katy. Many people today have found themselves in a similar boat.

> **Ask: Have any of you had family members or friends seemingly get frustrated with you because you did not seem to be on a successful path? How does it make you feel when someone does that?**

(Facilitator Note: If no one in the room has been in this situation, ask, "Let's put ourselves in their shoes. How do we suspect asking these questions makes them feel?")

Perhaps some of you here have not experienced that, but you have been the one who prodded a friend or family member.

Ask: What was your motivation for doing that?

(Facilitator note: If no one in the room has been in this situation, ask, "Why do you suppose people do this?")

More than likely, the motivation behind this prodding is not necessarily coming from a place of malice. Instead, it's likely coming from a genuine place of concern and love. Don't get me wrong; some people are simply nosey. But often, the frustration you see comes from a loving heart that sees something greater in you.

But why do people end up in situations like Katy and Shang-Chi? Minus the whole running from a family legacy involving assassins and a vast array of illegal activity, much of it can be traced back to a lack of focus. This may come from a place of not wanting to be "stuck" in a lifelong situation or commitment that could lead to unhappiness. Many Millennials and Gen Z individuals don't want what their parents and grandparents had for various reasons. But at the end of the day, stability, purpose, and the knowledge you're accomplishing something are at the root of both the modern desires of modern generations and those that came before.

In the film, Katy is thrust into an interesting situation. While discussing her lack of focus, she is led to a training ground for archers. Here, a grandmother-like character puts her in place to learn to shoot and then tells her, "If you don't aim for anything, you'll never hit anything." Thus, it is in archery that Katy learned to focus. Amid the battle, she discovers the fruit of that focus. It wasn't that Katy wasn't a skilled and talented individual; earlier in the film, you discover she's highly gifted in the academic world. The issue was simply that she was not diligent in continuing what she had learned and applying it.

LEVEL UP

In the Bible, we have access to a book put together by the wisest man ever: King Solomon. This book is the book of Proverbs - a collection of common wisdom he learned from his own experiences, as well as observations given to him by the Lord. One such nugget of wisdom is found in Proverbs 21:5.

Read Proverbs 21:5

Ask: What does it mean to be diligent?

Webster describes being "diligent" as "characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort." The Hebrew word used in the Bible is ḥārûṣ (khaw-roots), which carries the idea of something being sternly decided. You could paraphrase this part of the verse as saying, "The plans of a person who is purposefully working towards a goal."

The idea here is if we are purposefully working toward a goal with laser focus, we will find abundance. Of course, this doesn't necessarily mean riches and fame. But it does mean we will see the fruit of that hard work. Contrast this with the second half of the verse, and we see a very different story. Someone who is not intentional in their actions will find themselves in a terrible place.

MOD

Some have found themselves in a type of analysis paralysis. There are so many options they don't know what to do. For Katy, she was given a specific task and told to complete it. This gave her confidence and purpose. Most of us are not facing a soul-sucking dragon anytime soon, though. So, what should we do?

Read Proverbs 16:3

Simply put, seek the Lord and let him establish the path for you. This does not mean you should sit around and do nothing. You must take action. As you read through the book of Proverbs, you see the key to success requires you to step out and do something productive. The question that paralyzes some is, "But how do I know the Lord is in it? How do I know He's ok with what I'm doing?"

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Does what I'm planning to do go against the word of God?
2. Have I sought wise counsel about my plans? (Proverbs 15:22)
3. Have I been actively pursuing the Lord through prayer, fasting, and studying the scriptures?

If your answer to the first question was no and the other two were yes, then just make a move. Trust in the Lord and allow Him to guide you one step at a time.

PRAY

What are some plans you need to put before the Lord that we can pray with you about?

(Facilitator Note: Don't rush. Allow individuals to discuss what they are seeking the Lord for. Don't get lost in the details and try to help them make plans just yet. Take these to the Lord first, and then connect with them after to see how you can help them.)

THE NEXT LEVEL

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

> *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

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