



Journey 1 - Worshipers

Created in the image of God, people have the honor and responsibility to reflect God in all they do.

Introduction to the Journey Guide

The Foundations of Faith Bible study walks through key Scripture passages that explain the foundational question of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The intent is to answer this important question in a way that gets people engaging first hand with the Bible so they can understand the beliefs and practices that flow from it.

Foundations encourage people to explore the Bible in simple, honest, and engaging manner. You don't need prior knowledge or firm beliefs to participate—just a willingness to explore, ask honest questions, and consider what you encounter. At the same time these are not just beginner steps—they are lifelong rhythms. The most mature followers of Jesus don't move beyond them; they return to them again and again, going deeper over time.

Foundations has six parts that are arranged based on six identities of a Christian as a: Worshipper, Follower, Steward, Family Member, Helper and Witness. Each part consists of multiple Bible readings that develop and explain that identity, and each lesson focuses on one passage so that passage can be thoroughly understood before building on it.

The Foundations study will provide some key components for your journey:

- **The Scripture passage.** This is the passage the lesson will focus on and we recommend reading it a few times. Most Bibles have a table of contents at the beginning in which you can find the books of the Old and New Testament. The first number is the chapter and the second number after the colon is the verse number.
- **Guide to the Word.** This provides background and insight into the Scripture passage to help uncover its meaning and significance. Questions are also provided to help guide your understanding of the passage and important details.
- **Guide to Response.** Offers thoughtful prompts to reflect on how the passage speaks into real life—beliefs, decisions, relationships, and priorities of today.
- **Guide to the Lesson.** This equips group facilitators with practical suggestions for leading discussions, fostering openness, and navigating common challenges.
- **Discovery Group Questions.** These questions are part of our Discovery Bible Studies and are good questions to work through for each passage.

We encourage people to go through the Foundations study with other believers and a group leader so they can learn from others and experience Christian community. Many people will begin the course on their own and independent of a group. If you start on your own we would love to know and support you and would be glad to connect you with a group at any point.

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Overview for Journey 1 - Worshipers

Mantra: Created in the image of God, you have the honor and responsibility to reflect God in all you do.

Key Passage: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:27-28).

Beginning Journey Questions: Answer questions 1-4 below at the beginning of the journey, and review your answers at the end and answer number 5.

1. What does it mean to worship God?

2. What is a worshiper of God?

3. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate yourself as a worshiper?

4. What do you hope to learn in this journey?

5. After completing this journey, what stood out to you the most?

Key Points of Journey

- God is worthy to be worshiped in all of life.
- Worshiping God involves putting him first in all of life.
- Worshiping God through rest leads to finding regular spiritual renewal.

Lesson 1: Genesis 1-2:3 - Creation

A. Guide to the Word

Genesis 1 tells the story of how everything began. Before anything existed, God was already there. He did not come from anything, and nothing is beyond His power. With simple words, He creates the heavens, the earth, and all life. This shows us that God is eternal (He has always existed) and all-powerful. All creation comes from him. As he is the creator of all things, all things find their purpose in him. He creates, not out of obligation, but freely. The world is not the result of wars between gods as in Greek mythology, and it is not the result of accidental and random adaptation as in atheistic evolution. It is the work of an all-powerful, loving, good, and purposeful God.

God creates people in his image. At the apex of creation is humanity. Only they are endowed with the great privilege and dignity of being created in the likeness of God. Nothing else in all creation bears God's image, and so this is a great honor. However, it also means people have a responsibility to image God. That is their calling in life, and to go against that is to go against the purpose they were created for. People are to look to God and reflect who he is and what he does. As a painter painting a portrait of a person, things will go badly when they stop looking to the one whom they are to image. People are to glorify God by looking to him and following him as Lord. As some have said, "the highest form of flattery is imitation" so also looking to God and following him is our highest form of worship.

People have a purpose. Verse 26 states that God created people to have dominion over all the earth. In case people are not sure what this means, God has provided twenty five preceding verses of what it means to have dominion. God has been working in the world. He created the world, and in verse 2 deficiencies emerge with this world. It is dark, formless, and void. God then begins to work each day to bring light, life, order, and goodness to it. After seeing God filling the world with goodness, it becomes clear that people are also objects of God's love and goodness, and as his image bearers they are to imitate him in bringing these to the world. They worship him by following him and shaping the world through their work and also by refreshing themselves by pausing and resting. People find purpose, meaning, and rest in God.

God deserves the worship and adoration of people because he has created them and everything else. They worship him by looking to do what he says in all things. The passage ends with God resting. He does not do this because he needs to, but because his people need it. He provides an example of daily rest, in which at the conclusion of each day he reflects on what he has done, and also weekly rest, in which pauses from all activity on the seventh day. He provides a pattern of work as well as rest and refreshment, that people are to imitate. Rest is not wasted time but active worship.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What is problematic about the state of the earth in verse 2? How does God change this? What does this tell you about how God works in the world?

2. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? Is this said about any other part of creation?

3. What are people commanded to do in life?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. God is bringing goodness, order, and life to the world, so you are to trust and honor him in everything.
2. People are created with dignity, significance, and purpose and are to see this in themselves and others.
3. Worshipers seek to reflect God by shaping the world and resting.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. What is your explanation for who you are and what your purpose is? How does this compare to the biblical view?

2. How does God's gracious design and purpose for the world bring you hope and encouragement?

3. How can you image God by shaping the world and finding regular rest?

E. Guide to the Lesson

Today's culture hotly debates the origins of earth, and many will fight for one point of view over another. It can be enlightening for people to actually read the creation account to see first hand what it says and what it doesn't say. There are different views about literal days, figurative days, timeframes, processes, etc, and there is a time and place to debate some of these. You may give people freedom to share their ideas, but don't get too side tracked on this. There are also some issues that it is permissible for believers to differ over. You don't have to have everyone agree, and some may be reading this for the first time. Give them space to reflect on it without pressure.

A few things that are clear in this passage are: 1) God created out of nothing, 2) God created freely of his own love and goodness, 3) God created according to kinds, and 4) God created people uniquely in his image as the apex of creation to rule over the world.

This is often one of the most surprising passages for people to read first hand. Many have heard it taught about, quoted, or parodied, but they may not have read it for themselves. There will be many points to debate about the role of evolution, the dating of the earth, scientific findings, etc. There is room to discuss these differences, and it is worth taking some time to discuss, but a key point to get to is **what does this say about the life we are to live?**

The truth of this passage leads to people having purpose and dignity. As his image bearers people have significance, and this significance is hard to explain apart from Scripture. People also have a purpose, which is to image God in bringing life, order, and goodness to the world. These are incredibly significant aspects of creation that will likely resonate and encourage those in the group.

Also point out how we are to image God, and that just as a carpenter's work begins to deteriorate when he looks away from the blueprint, so too problems begin to occur when we turn away from the one we were created for. Ask questions about how this passage makes sense of life. God has a good purpose for people, and it leads to great celebration and worship to see it. Most people feel belittled and restless, and this passage can provide much encouragement.

A key theme in this journey is worshiping God in what we do and what we don't do. Many people are overwhelmed with stuff to do that they are worn out. Restlessness severs connection with God and fuels more restlessness. Genesis 1 shows that God rests, and people are to follow his example. Encourage people to have a time of daily and

weekly rest to connect with God. It is an act of worship and might help make participating in this journey a priority.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 2: Genesis 3:1-19 - The Fall

A. Guide to the Word

There are problems in the world today. We all know and see that. The wonderfully pristine world of Genesis 1-2 has been lost, and this chapter explains how it happened. The world was created with a realm of darkness (Gen 1:2), and it raises its slithering head here. People were created to live under the good and caring rule of God, but they rejected that rule to go their own way. They listened to the voice of another and sought to be like God on their terms. As a result, judgment, sin, shame, alienation, and death all entered into the world. The result of the fall is felt by every person, on every day of their life, in everything they do, from bearing children, to working, to relationships.

This chapter shows where temptation comes from. There is evil in the world, an enemy outside seeking to destroy, and a weak and rebellious nature within. The greatest most important thing people can do is to hear, trust, and obey the word of God. Adam and Eve's failure was a failure to worship, a failure to trust and believe God's words. Evil seeks to draw people away from God, and even twist their failures to more failure. But God calls his people, and if they put away their shame and pride and come back to him there is hope for restoration.

While this passage recounts the fall and the entrance of sin and judgment into the world, God's grace is also seen very clearly. Though sin deserves immediate death, God delays it so they have time to repent. God makes a promise that one day the work of Satan will be destroyed by the seed (child) of Eve (3:15).

Additionally this passage demonstrates an amazing provision of skins to cover the shame of Adam and Eve. God provides a much better solution than fig leaves for their problem of being naked and ashamed. Through animal sacrifice their shame is covered. This foreshadows a greater act of deliverance and sacrifice in which God will atone for sin. While people now live under judgment, they have reason to hope in and worship the God who is just and merciful.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. In verse three did Eve rightly remember God's command? Did God say not to touch it? Why is this significant?

2. People are created in the image of God. How does Satan tempt them to be like God?

3. How do Adam and Eve respond wrongly and insufficiently to the problems they created?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. Great diligence is required to know and obey God's word and to overcome the craft and subtlety of Satan.
2. The hurt, pain, isolation, and shame that are felt in the world are meant to drive us back to God.
3. Worshipers live awaiting the promises of a seed of the woman to reverse the fall and the effect of Satan.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. Can you relate to the behavior of Adam and Eve in sinning and seeking to avoid punishment?

2. What is your explanation for where death, suffering, and hardship come from? How do you hope and think these will be removed?

3. What ways do you see and feel the effect of evil, the fall, and sin? Do you deal with these on your own or by turning to God?

E. Guide to the Lesson

Adam and Eve fall short in the garden, and it affects all people after them. Just as parents pass on traits to children, so also after Adam and Eve all people inherit a disposition to sin. It may seem unfair that we are penalized for what they did, but if you were in their shoes, you would have done the same thing.

This passage is a powerful description of the fall, and makes so much sense of the world and human nature. It provides great insight into how the human mind thinks and acts. It also provides great hope that God can cover all of our sins and mistakes. God is a righteous judge, but he is also a caring provider. His justice and grace function as the two anchors of a tightrope, creating tension that holds one firm. Many view him as being only one or the other, but here we see a God that is much greater and worthy of our trust and devotion.

Genesis 3 shows the need to know God's word as there is an enemy that must be fended off. It also offers great consolation and encouragement. Many live under the weight of shame and judgment, and to know God is covering it provides great encouragement.

Take time to discuss the place of finding rest and refreshment in God. See how people are doing and encourage them to make this a daily and weekly priority. Ask people if this is encouraging to them and what they are doing to better know God. Encourage them to take time to rest from work and other things in order to refresh their souls in who God is, or to at least consider spiritual realities that they have not considered before.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 3: Genesis 4 - Cain and Abel: True and False Worship

A. Guide to the Word

In chapter 3 of Genesis, sin entered into the world. Human rebellion is alive, and in chapter 4 that theme continues. Adam and Eve's sons worship God, but only one does it acceptably. Both Abel and Cain worship, both believe in God, both offer sacrifices, but soberingly, the Lord has no regard for the sacrifices of Cain.

Some assert the reason for the acceptance of Abel over Cain is because God looks more favorably on fat portions than on the grain and vegetables Cain brought. However, in the law both kinds of offerings were acceptable (Leviticus 6). The real distinction is not in the kinds of offerings but in the hearts of the people. Abel brought the *first* of his flocks whereas Cain brought *some* of the harvest. Abel brought his very best. Cain brought the leftovers.

If God is not first in our life then he is not our God. There are many today who worship God, go to church, offer sacrifices, tithe, etc, but they have not given the first part of their lives to God. They are making offerings of what is available rather than giving their best.

Sin, rebellion to God, was at work in the life of Adam and Eve, and is now also in their sons. It is at work in our lives, and we must be vigilant to overcome it. The greatest threat to our lives is not financial, social, or physical, but spiritual. Therefore the greatest thing we can do is worship God with our whole hearts, and the greatest mistake is to not worship God wholeheartedly.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. In what ways does Cain demonstrate a hardness of heart to God (v3, v9)?

2. What does the image of sin crouching at the door convey about the need to be vigilant in our commitment to God?

3. Read Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12. What do these verses illuminate about Genesis 4?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. True worship is giving God the first part of all we have.
2. Christians are to vigilantly guard against sin crouching in their hearts and lives.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. What is the first and most important thing in your life? What gets the first portion, and what gets the leftovers?

2. Do you ever just go through the motions of serving God?

3. Why does God deserve to get the first portion of you?

E. Guide to the Lesson

This is a powerful lesson in what it means to worship God. Most people are content to give God what is available and not think much about it. But God is not pleased with the offerings of leftovers. He wants our hearts. Just as a spouse is not pleased with the leftovers, but wants the whole heart of the other, so too God is after the heart of his people.

An application for this lesson is to encourage people to take a few minutes to write down their top priorities in life. What is number 1, 2, 3, 4... in their life? Tell them to be

honest. Even consider what their life, finances, calendar say is most important. Give them time to do this and ask what should be the order of their priorities.

A good illustration for this is that of building a house. You want the foundation on the bottom, followed by floors, walls, and then a roof. If you show up to your new custom home and the builder put the roof on first and is now laying a foundation on top of that, then there are going to be problems. The foundation must go first because it is the only thing that can hold up everything else. Encourage group members to continue taking time to rest and reflect on their spiritual growth and journey.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 4: Exodus 20:1-21 - The Law of God

A. Guide to the Word

The popular sayings of today like “follow your heart,” “you do you,” and “whatever makes you happy,” do not jive with serving God. God calls his people to serve him and that means they are to conform to him. There are things to do and not do. This fact is made clear in the Ten Commandments. God saves his people out of Egypt and then commands how they are to live. God is in authority, and he tells them how they ought to live. These commands reveal who God is and what he requires of his people.

His people are to have no other gods. They cannot profess to follow the Lord and then bow down to others. They are not to have idols. Idols can be images of other gods but they are more than physical objects. They can also be the things that our heart longs for, craves, and wants (James 4:1-6). They are not to misuse the name of the Lord. That can be in cursing and foul language or claiming God has told you to do things he has not: “God told me to take your football.” They are to honor the Sabbath. Each week there is to be a day of rest and relaxation in which people put down their work and go to church (make the day holy). They are to honor their father and mother. You show respect for those over you, and you never outgrow this. They are to honor God with their sexuality. Sex outside the marriage bed is forbidden. They are not to murder or to even have hate toward others (Matt 5:21-22). They are not to lie and bear false witness. They are to push aside longing for what they do not have.

Worshiping God is not simply a matter of talk or of showing up to a church service one hour a week. It involves devoting your whole life to him. He is the Lord, and we are under his authority, so we trust and obey him. These commands show how to worship God, and they also introduce our need for mercy, because we have all fallen short of honoring him, just as Adam and Eve did. We have the same problems they had.

B. Deeper Questions

1. What do these commands tell us about who God is and what he values?

2. What do these commands tell us about our devotion to God?

3. How do the later commands to rest or not to covet relate to the earlier commands to not have idols or other gods?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. God is to reign over our entire life: our minds, work, time, sexuality, speech, families, friendships, etc.
2. All have fallen short in their devotion to God.
3. God is to be worshiped in all our doing and resting.

D. Deeper Questions to Obeying

1. What commands do you struggle with the most?

2. What command do you most want to work on obeying?

3. In Genesis 1, God rested on the seventh day, and now he commands his people to rest on the seventh day. How does this theme show the importance of rest? How might regularly making time to rest and pursue God help you in every part of life?

E. Guide to the Lesson

God gives clear commands to his people on how they are to live. It is a reflection of his lordship but also a kindness to them. People in your group may have questions on what each of these means. It can be good to talk through each, but make sure people don't talk and debate what they mean in theory and deflect any real transparency.

When God is first and worshiped first and foremost, it leads to obeying the other commands. A key theme in worshiping him is to reflect on how we are resting in him. If people do not take time to make God first and read his word they will never know his commands. Through this they gain an understanding of what is good and right in the world and how they are to live in rightful worship of him.

After going through these commands, it becomes clear every person is guilty before God. They have failed just as Adam and Eve did. Take time to reflect on how many times you have broken these commands. How many today, this week, this year, and over the course of your life? Write a number down for what you think it is. Each of these is a failure to worship God the way he commands. Imagine if a person sinned three times a day. That would be a pretty good day, but would also total up to roughly 1,000 sins a year! If death came after one sin of Adam then what hope do we have? God is holy and requires zero sin. This raises the big question of how can our sin be taken away?

In this discussion some people may want to go to Jesus being the solution to our problem. That is true and also the goal, but sometimes people need to weigh through this and have the weight of sin pressed on them. Ask them to pay closer attention to the commands over the next week and report on how they are doing or what they observe. This lesson is preparatory and essential for future lessons. Trust the process of the curriculum and give them time to consider the problem. Even ask them to take a week to reflect on God's holiness and their sinfulness, and their hope of forgiveness. Remind them death came to Adam and Eve for their one sin. The consequence of sin is death. How can they find hope for something else?

In this passage, God gives the law to guide his people, but in the future he will send his very own Son to save his people. This lesson is preparatory to seeing the need for a savior.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 5: Isaiah 6 - The Holiness of God

A. Guide to the Word

How would you describe God? Something like “good” or loving” is a typical response, but one key description of God is that he is holy. He is perfect and completely set apart from all other things. *Holy* is complete moral purity, and God is perfectly holy in his being. This is a great reason to worship him, but it is also a reason to stand in fear of him.

The prophet Isaiah has an encounter with God, and it shows us what might happen when a sinful person enters into his presence. Here we see God is not simply holy, but he is holy, holy, holy. We repeat words for emphasis. Grandma’s chicken and dumplings were good, good, good. Isaiah sees a God who is not just good, or loving, but completely holy. He loves, and it is a holy love. He is good, and his goodness is completely holy. There is no imperfection or impurity in God’s being.

If God is holy, holy, holy, then how can an imperfect and unholy person like Isaiah be in his presence? Even the mighty angels, whose voices shake the doors, cover their eyes in his presence (v2). He is too pure for them to look at. Isaiah is a prophet, but when he encounters God he is completely undone. He recognizes he is a man of unclean lips and lives among an unclean people. Isaiah becomes aware of his sin and recognizes he is lost and cut off from God. He is unable to be in his presence.

But God acts for Isaiah. God has mercy on him. Despite Isaiah’s own failures God sends a seraph, an angelic creature, with a live coal to touch Isaiah’s lips. Just as fire purifies metals, so too are Isaiah’s lips cleansed by the coal. His sin is atoned for through an act of God. **Atonement** is the word meaning “cover.” It means to be made clean and to have no blemish. Isaiah needs his sins covered over and pardoned. He experiences this through the coal, and then he is at one with God. Similar to God making skins to cover the shame of Adam and Eve, so now this anticipates God doing another act to cleanse his people of their sin and make atonement for their wrongs.

After Isaiah’s cleansing, God also has a mission for which Isaiah volunteers. After experiencing the forgiveness of God, Isaiah is quick to serve him. The mission is to go tell others about God. Isaiah is eager to do this work, but God also tells him the people will remain hard-hearted to the point of God having to bring destruction to their cities. They will not turn to God. Despite the great work of atonement and forgiveness only a small remnant of them will turn to the Lord.

B. Deeper Questions

1. What does Isaiah do when he is in the presence of God? What would you do in God's presence?

2. How does this passage show the greatness of God and his worthiness to be worshiped?

3. Why does Isaiah volunteer for the mission God has?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. God's holiness and complete moral purity lead to worshipping him.
2. God's holiness humbles the proud and reveals their need for grace.
3. Those who experience the forgiveness of God want others to experience forgiveness.

D. Deeper Questions

1. How does God's absolute holiness change your understanding of him?

2. If you knew you would stand in the presence of God later today, what might you want to change before you got there?

3. Does your life have purpose? How might God's sending Isaiah to tell others about his holiness and work of atonement give purpose and meaning to Isaiah's life? How would this give meaning to yours?
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E. Guide to the Lesson

This lesson builds on the previous lesson on the Ten Commandments, and it's a good idea to review that lesson to prepare for this one. Through the law (Ten Commandments) sin becomes very evident. This passage shows how holy, pure, and worthy of worship God is, and that it's a fearful thing for a sinful person to be in his presence. Many people make arrogant statements to the effect that, "God has some answering to do to me when I get to heaven." They are greatly mistaken because they do not know him. God's glory is unfathomable, and people can only fall to their knees in desperation when they encounter him.

God's holiness is something people don't like to talk about because it confronts their own sin. It means they have fallen short. But there is also something wonderfully healing and encouraging about his holiness. He is not like people. He is completely different from them. His moral purity should encourage everyone. What would happen if God overlooked sin and there was no consequence to it? He would not be worthy to worship or imitate! Isaiah experiences the holiness of God and wants to tell others about it. He worships!

This passage powerfully conveys God's holiness, but it also shows his grace and compassion. God intervenes for Isaiah's needs. Isaiah feels a deep sense of shame, unworthiness, and hopelessness, but God provides a means of atonement. God gives Isaiah forgiveness, cleansing, acceptance, and a renewed purpose in life.

Just as Isaiah was ruined by the holiness of God, so also people in your group may feel ruined by it as well. If they do then a great New Testament passage to read with them is Romans 3:21-26. This passage highlights that all have fallen short (are ruined), but are now justified through the redemption and atonement that is in Jesus. God did not excuse sin, and he remains holy, but he also made a way for sinners to experience his grace and love. This is the beautifully encouraging good news of the gospel, and it only makes sense in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 6: Luke 2:1-20 - The Good News of a Savior

A. Guide to the Word

Luke 2:1–20 tells the story of the birth of Jesus. It is a familiar passage, but many people have never carefully read the actual account. After seeing in Genesis 3 how sin, shame, and death entered the world, this passage takes on a much deeper meaning. The same God who created the world has now entered his world to rescue it. The birth of Jesus is God’s long-awaited answer to humanity’s greatest problem.

Jesus is born in humble circumstances. Though he is the promised King, he arrives not in a palace but in a manger. This shows that God often works in ways people do not expect. The child born in Bethlehem is the fulfillment of God’s promises throughout the Old Testament. From the promise that the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent (Genesis 3:15) to the prophecies of a coming ruler from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), God has been preparing for this moment.

The angels announce the meaning of Jesus’ birth: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). This is the heart of the gospel. Gospel means good news. The good news is that God has sent a Savior into the world. People cannot save themselves from sin, guilt, and death, but God has acted to save them through Jesus. He came to live the life we failed to live, die for sinners, and rise again so that all who trust in Him can be forgiven and reconciled to God.

The angels call this “good news of great joy for all people” because Jesus came not for one nation only, but for people from every background. Through him, people can find peace with God. This peace is more than the absence of conflict; it is the restoration of a broken relationship. The favor and fellowship with God that were lost through sin are now being offered through Christ.

Luke also shows different responses to Jesus. The angels praise God. The shepherds hurry to see him and leave glorifying God. Mary treasures these things in her heart, trusting God even without understanding everything. Others seem to make no room for him. The passage invites every reader to consider their own response. The coming of the Savior is meant to lead people to joy, worship, and faith. What is your response to Jesus’ birth?

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What does it mean that this child will be the Savior?

2. What are the different responses to the birth of God's Son?

3. Who are the people who will benefit from this child?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. The birth of the Savior leads to people glorifying and praising God.
2. News of God’s peace coming into the world is the best news ever and is impossible to contain.
3. Peace is found only in Jesus.

D. Going Deeper

1. What have you thought the birth of Jesus was about? How has that changed after reading this?

2. How does the birth of Jesus bring you peace and comfort?

3. How can you take time this week to rest in the peace of Christ? How can you rest and reflect on what you are learning?

E. Guide to the Lesson

This lesson connects many themes that have been learned so far. There was a fall, and as each person has disobeyed God, it causes each person to wonder what the solution for sin is. This passage shows God is solving the problem through the birth of his Son.

Some people may have different understandings of who Jesus is. They may know Christmas is about his birth, but not have a very good understanding. You might ask people what their familiarity of Jesus is. If you are new to the faith you may be learning a lot. If you are more mature in your faith there is still much for you to continue learning, and you may recognize growth from what you previously understood.

What the Son does will be explored more in upcoming readings. If people have questions and want to read more about his birth or what Jesus said and taught, they can do so by reading further in the book of Luke (or Matthew, Mark, or John).

Once again we see the connection of worship and peace. It is impossible to worship God when your heart is filled with anxiety and worry. We find peace in Jesus, because he is the one who can save us from all our troubles. His coming fills our hearts to worship him and to practice daily and weekly rest that continues to nourish faith. Many people anxiously strive to find peace where it can't be found. Take some time to discuss why only Jesus can provide us with the peace we long for. Also encourage people to make time to refresh themselves in God through daily quiet times and weekly worship at church.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 7: Matthew 4:1-11 - Temptation to False Worship

A. Guide to the Word

The Savior has been born, and it is immediately apparent his task will have much opposition. In Matthew 2, King Herod tries to kill him after his birth. In Matthew 4, Satan comes to thwart his work, and his temptation is a sneaky attack on the worship of God.

Jesus is now a grown adult and is beginning his ministry. He is led into the desert and is tempted by Satan (Matt 4:1). After fasting for 40 days, Satan comes at this ideal moment to tempt Jesus, when he is at his physically weakest point.

Satan's first temptation is with food (similar to Genesis 3) and it regards leading Jesus to reveal who he is in a manner contrary to God's design. Satan questions his identity "If you are the Son of God" and tempts him to rely on himself for food. Jesus uses Scripture to fend off Satan. He rests in God's provision of food, quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, and shows obeying God is foremost in his heart (Deut 8:2).

The second temptation is in regard to trusting God's timing of the revelation of his messiahship. Scripture states God will uphold his chosen one (Ps 91:11-12) and Satan uses this to prod Jesus into showing the world who he truly is. Jesus remains steadfast and quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 (which references Ex 17:7) to not put the Lord to the test, which the people did when they demanded God provide for their need. Jesus will not manipulate God nor demand he do things a certain way.

The third temptation of Satan is to test Jesus with all the power and glory that are in the world. If Jesus will just bow down and worship Satan (break the first commandment!) then Satan will give him all of these kingdoms. Satan promises the same thing the Father has promised to Jesus, but Jesus would not have to go through the pain and suffering of the cross. Satan offers him immediate rewards that cost much less, but the kingdoms of the world are not Satan's to give away. Satan is a liar, and Jesus fends him off with a right understanding of God's word and the words "Away from me!"

Satan tempts Jesus just as he tempted Eve, by twisting God's word, but Jesus resists Satan each time by quoting Scripture and giving its rightful interpretation. Jesus prevails where all others have failed. Satan uses Scripture for his own advantages, but Jesus uses Scripture to honor his heavenly Father. Jesus is a new man who is faithful to God even in the hardest situations. His heart is to obey the Father. There is an enemy of our souls at work in the world, and yet we see one who is now overcoming that enemy and can lead us to do the same.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What does this passage teach about Satan and how he attacks us?

2. What does this passage teach about the importance of knowing God's word?

3. What would have happened if Jesus gave in to Satan?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. True worshipers prepare every day to withstand the attacks of Satan.
2. True life does not come from bread, possessions, or positions, but from every word that comes from the mouth of God.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. How might Satan attack you to divert you from God's ways? How do you see Satan at work in the world today?

2. If Satan had offered you all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, would you have bowed down to him or would you have worshiped God?

3. How are you taking time to equip yourself to know God's word and find strength to resist the lies of the enemy?

E. Guide to the Lesson

This lesson shows once again that Satan and evil are at work in the world. He is out to destroy the people of God. We have an enemy we must oppose, and God gives us his word to discern and deflect his attacks. Jesus is the only person who has perfectly worshiped God. He withstands Satan every time. Satan wants us to worship him and makes promises that he can never fulfill. We must follow Jesus and root ourselves in what he has done for us.

Many people are dejected about life as they feel there is no one to trust, no one who does what is right, no one who is pure and holy. All people fail, but Jesus has overcome. In him we have hope. Where others failed and continue to fail, Jesus triumphs. This gives hope that there is a new man, a new person, that we can trust and hope in and not be disappointed.

Consider asking a deeper question about people's experience of evil, where they have been tempted or seen others tempted. We live in a society that is against most religious experience, but when it comes to experiencing evil they are often much more aware of it and looking for answers.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 8: John 3:1-18 - The Transforming Love of God

A. Guide to the Word

We now come to an important passage on knowing what it means to follow Jesus. In order to experience his salvation, one must believe and be born again. This is taught through a conversation with Nicodemus, who is “the teacher” (v10) of Israel. Nicodemus holds an important role for his people. He was not just a teacher, but *the* teacher– the chief teacher–Jesus has some profound news for him. Nicodemus comes at dark so as to prevent meeting with Jesus from jeopardizing his career as a Jewish teacher. He doesn’t want others to know he is talking to Jesus. He comes to ask about the miracles Jesus is doing (v2), but Jesus turns to a much greater topic, which is seeing the kingdom of God.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that he cannot even see the kingdom of God unless he is born again (v3). This looks back to the Old Testament where the prophet Ezekiel spoke about God bringing his people out of captivity, cleansing them from impurity and idols, and giving them a new heart and spirit that desire to serve God (Ez 11:19). Jesus calls this being born again, and it is a radical transformation with a deep and abiding change in the core of a person. It is a change so deep and profound that it is equated with a new birth.

Jesus is the one people must look to in order to be saved and cleansed from sin. He has come from heaven to share this message and make a way for people to be restored. He is the great dividing line. Whoever trusts in him will be saved and have eternal life, but those who do not believe will perish and be condemned (Jn 3:16). Amazingly, the salvation Jesus brings does not require us to do anything other than to believe in him. We experience salvation through faith in him, but that faith will also lead to a devotion to Jesus.

Nicodemus must wrestle with his own mortality and inability to serve God blamelessly. Even the “Teacher of Israel” must trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, and he must come out of the dark and into the light of faith and obedience. Those who do so will find true and lasting life. No person can achieve this salvation on their own. It is only through Jesus, and this is all the result of God’s love. God loved the world and didn’t give up on his people. Instead he chose to redeem the world through his Son. God brings redemption through Jesus, but people must not let their pride keep them from fully surrendering to him.

B. Deeper Questions in the Word

1. What did Nicodemus initially come to talk to Jesus about (v2)? Why did Jesus change the subject?
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2. How did God's sending his Son into the world demonstrate his love?

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3. How important is it to believe in Jesus? What is at stake?
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C. Guide to Obeying

1. Following Jesus begins with radically reorienting our whole life and being to him, and this is called being born again.
2. Life with God is found by believing in Jesus as the eternally begotten Son of God who saves us from our sins.
3. We do not live to please people but to please God.

D. Deeper Questions in Obeying

1. Have you been "born again?" How and when did this happen?

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2. Are there any ways you are "living in the dark" spiritually?
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E. Guide to the Lesson

Jesus is not calling for people to make improvements in their life. He has come to save them from their sins, and what he calls people to is a radical and complete devotion to him so all-consuming that it is compared to being born again. He calls them to become true worshipers who are giving him the first part of their lives. Everyone needs a spiritual birth. He is the only Savior, and if you do not look to him then you will not be saved. Everyone needs this saving faith in Christ no matter how "spiritual" or "good" they may be.

A point of discussion could be to ask people if they have truly repented of their sins and trusted in Christ. Previous lessons talked about putting God first and making him the foundation of life. This can be a good time to get to know your group better by asking where they are in their walk with God. Have they trusted in Christ and submitted their life to him, are they in a place of exploring who Jesus is and what it means to trust him?

Don't pressure people into feeling like they have to make a decision. You can help them see the importance of trusting in Christ and what this passage teaches about those who don't. It just might be a big step for people to be asked the question and state that they have not trusted in him yet. Encourage them to keep pursuing him and seeking to better know and understand what Jesus has done for them.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 9: Luke 15:11-31 - A Gracious Father

A. Guide to the Word

We have learned about God's righteousness and human rebellion in previous lessons, but now we see full-on the grace of God that fills the gap between the righteousness God requires and the sin that people live in. In this passage two sons are contrasted, and through the actions of an earthly father, we see how our heavenly Father deals with those who come back to him.

The younger son has it all, but decides to leave it to pursue reckless living. He essentially treats his father as if he were dead and goes his own way. He wants nothing from his father other than his inheritance. He leaves everything to go live a disgraceful life. When adversity hits and he finds himself living in a pigsty, he comes to his senses and realizes even the servants of his father are better off than he is. This illuminating experience parallels that of many others who turn away from their heavenly Father and eventually find that path unfulfilling and destructive.

The younger son decides to come back, but tension builds around how his father will react. To much surprise, the father celebrates the return of his son with great fanfare and celebration. He welcomes him back as a son and completely restores him. It shows how powerful the gift of genuine repentance is and how one can be completely restored to people and, more importantly, to God.

However, the older brother fails to share in the joy of the day. He is only aware of what the father has not done for him. The father is gracious and welcoming. The older son is cold and stingy. The older son knows nothing of grace, so he cannot share it with others. This brings a powerful illustration of both the need for forgiveness and also the need to extend grace to others. To fail to celebrate the grace of God toward others is to fail to be like God. The story gives great encouragement to those turning to God, but it's also a stern warning to those living in bitter resentment toward others who receive God's grace.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What was the condition of the son before he came to his senses (v24)?

2. What does the father do for the lost son?

3. How does the older son react to the father?

4. How do the previous parables in chapter 15 frame this parable?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. Every person has sinned and turned from God and must humbly repent and return to the Father.
2. Those who have experienced God's grace share grace with others.
3. Seeing and experiencing God's grace leads to celebrating and worshiping him.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. How have you turned away from God? Have you repented or turned back to him? If so, how did God bring you to your senses?

2. Who in your life might need to be made aware of God's grace?

3. How do you show grace to those who have squandered the inheritance of the Father? How do you want to be treated for squandering your godly inheritance?

E. Guide to the Lesson

This lesson brings home the grace of God in a powerful way. Everyone has turned aside from God and gone their own way (Rom 3:21). They asked him for their

inheritance so they could leave him and “live it up,” and that will ruin you every time! It is only by God’s grace that anyone comes to their senses, and it is only by God’s grace that anyone would be welcomed back into his family.

This may be a great time to ask people to share where they are in their walk with the Lord and what they have realized about their relationship with him. It may also be good to ask where they see God at work in their lives. Some may have things in their past that cause them to wonder if God will forgive and accept them. This parable provides much encouragement for that.

This passage is important for unbelievers, but it is extremely important for believers, too. They may have ways they are wandering in their faith. They need to see the grace of God that continues to welcome them back. They also need to share this grace with other rebels.

The son’s restoration to his father provides much reason for rejoicing. If we have been restored to our heavenly father, then we ought to rejoice in it every day. It is the greatest thing we could ever receive. Though we squandered our inheritance we were brought back into his house and family. There is no better news!

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeing the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 10: Luke 24:36-53 – Worshiping the Resurrected Jesus

A. Guide to the Word

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the center of all of history, and especially of biblical history. This passage looks at how all that has been promised and written before Jesus's coming points to what he will accomplish through his death and resurrection. This passage gives us a look into what happened in his resurrection and what Jesus said about it.

After dying on the cross and being resurrected, Jesus appeared to his disciples in his physical body. He is actually present with them and this is demonstrated in his eating with them and their touching his hands and feet (v39-42). Jesus did not simply show up to them in a dream or vision but in the flesh. It was "he himself" (v36) who stood before them. This resurrection appearance is what strengthens his disciples faith and why they go from fleeing to boldly speaking to others about his death and resurrection.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples he also gave them a Bible lesson. He says all that was written of him in the law, psalms, and prophets must be fulfilled. He also explains that it was written in the past that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead (v46). The result of this is that repentance and forgiveness would be proclaimed to all nations (v47). All the wrongs that people have done can now be forgiven in Jesus. Jesus died so that he might atone for sin and make worshipers out of all people!

Jesus's death for sins and resurrection fulfills the promises of the Old Testament. Everything that came before Jesus anticipates his arrival and his finished work. What you have read before in the Scripture (and on this Journey) point to the need of an atoning work for sin. The hope that the seed of the woman would destroy the work of Satan (Gen 3:15) and remove the curse, that atonement would be made so people can enter into the presence of God (Isaiah 6), that one would perfectly obey God's law (Ex 20), that death would be conquered, etc, all find their fulfillment in the work of Christ.

Jesus does this and he fulfills the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms and that is why his first words to his disciples are of peace. Peace with God can now be had. His disciples abandoned him in his time of need, and they would certainly have been anxious in his presence, but he announced peace to them. They can find forgiveness in him, and so can we.

Jesus leaves his disciples, but he doesn't leave them alone. He must go to the Father, but he promises to send the Holy Spirit to them to empower them for their tasks (v49). They are to tell the world of what he has done. After his disciples hear these things, they worship him. Jesus is not just a good person who gave a great example of how to live life well. He is the Son of God and Savior of the world. Eternal life is found in him, and he is worthy of our worship and devotion.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What is the disciples' initial reaction to Jesus? Does their reaction comfort you?

2. Why is forgiveness and repentance such a big deal?

3. What does Jesus's interaction with his disciples tell you about the nature of his death and resurrection?

4. What are Jesus's followers doing after he leaves (v49)?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. Disciples rest in Jesus for their salvation and worship him for his work.
2. Followers of Jesus look to and wait patiently for Jesus to give them power to do what he commands.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. How does the resurrection of Jesus give you hope?

2. Have you personally experienced repentance for your sin and a belief in Jesus that leads him to be your chief object of devotion and hope?

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3. How are you taking time to gather with other disciples to seek Jesus and make him known?
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E. Guide to the Lesson

This lesson on the resurrection of Jesus shows people what Jesus says is the effect of his death on the cross: forgiveness and repentance are proclaimed to all nations. Most people live feeling like there is very little to celebrate in life. The resurrection shows that God has done something marvelous that is to be celebrated every moment of every day.

Followers of Jesus are to live in worship of Jesus and in the presence of his people. It is to be a way of life, and doing this requires pushing aside other distractions—work, activities, and leisures—in order to focus on him. That is putting Jesus first, and it is what nourishes one’s faith. Talk about what it looks like to worship Jesus and make him first in your life.

This lesson focuses on the resurrection, but there is so much more for people to know and learn. If people have questions about the death of Jesus, encourage them to read more about the events preceding the resurrection. You may even add a lesson to this journey to have them read more about the crucifixion and/or resurrection. Meet people where they are and fan into flame their desire to know more. You could read other passages together as a group, assign it for the following week, or have them read it in their own personal daily quiet times. Jesus says all the scriptures point to him, so as you read other parts of Scripture you will see him through it. This is why his followers are devoted to reading the word, and why those who read the word grow strong in their faith.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 11: Romans 5:1-11 - Peace with God

A. Guide to the Word

This lesson is on Romans 5, and while most of our previous lessons have covered passages that were historical accounts of events, the book of Romans was written as an epistle, or a letter. It was a letter from the apostle Paul to a church in Rome. He provides practical and theological instruction to this group of believers on many issues. The historical accounts have a plot line to follow to understand the message, but the epistles follow a logical flow of thought. To better understand these you might consider outlining the main sections and their points.

This rich passage has one of the most concise summaries of what Christ accomplished on the cross and the hope it produces. Jesus's death on the cross provides our justification. Sin made us guilty before God, but Jesus takes the punishment we deserve and sets us free. We are no longer guilty, but justified. We are made righteous through his work and this gives access and peace with God.

Justification is a legal term and means "made right." It is a courtroom term that is used of someone who is declared righteous by the judge. They are no longer guilty or under suspicion of breaking a law. They are deemed fully in line with the law; that is, righteous. According to the Bible, we are all guilty sinners who deserve punishment, but Jesus took our punishment on himself. For those who trust in Jesus there is now no more punishment to be doled out for their offenses. They are now justified and made right. It is "just as if they had not sinned!" We are sinners, but God declares us righteous because of what Christ has done. He took our punishment and since there is no more to pay, we are declared justified.

Since we are justified we have peace with God. That is the effect of sin being taken away. Many people long for peace, but they look for it in all the wrong places. True peace comes from being reconciled to God and brought into a relationship with him. We no longer have the trembling fear that Isaiah had as he stood in the presence of God!

Our justification also means that nothing can separate us from God. We have hope in all things, because we know all things are working together for our good. We can rejoice (worship!) in everything we go through. Even in our suffering we have every reason to celebrate.

God demonstrated his great love in sending his Son to die for us even while we were still sinners rebelling against him. He didn't wait for us to get everything right or make ourselves acceptable in his sight. If he were to do that, he would be waiting forever! He came to us when we didn't deserve it, when we were stuck in the pigsty.

In this passage there is also a powerful argument going from the lesser to the greater that helps grasp what Jesus accomplished for us. If Jesus died for us when we were sinners, how much more, having been justified, will we be saved from him? If he took care of our needs when we had no relationship with nor desire for him, how much more

will he help us now that we are reconciled as friends? We have great reason to celebrate his grace and to go to him in our time of need.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. How do we have peace with God?

2. What does it mean to be justified? When were we justified in Christ?

3. What is the hope justification provides to those who trust in Jesus?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. Boast not in your work but in Jesus's work for you.
2. Justification gives confident hope Jesus will deliver from all things.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. How does justification bring you peace? Why is it important to be justified?

2. How do you see the love and mercy of God in this passage?

3. Why might someone who has been justified through Christ have reasons to worship God even when they are suffering hardships in this life?

E. Guide to the Lesson

This passage provides a clear, concise, and powerful explanation of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. It helps people understand what they have read previously and just how significant the work of Christ is. You might take time to work through what the gospel is. Ask if they understand it or ask them to articulate what the good news is and why it is so important. Ask people about the terms in this passage, like justification, and what they mean, and what we are justified from. Draw people out on the gospel itself. This helps each person know it better. It also gives people a chance to practice telling others the good news!

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

Lesson 12: Revelation 7:9-17 - The End Time Celebration

A. Guide to the Word

This passage in Revelation brings readers to the scene of the end-times celebration that concludes the Bible. Over the last eleven lessons they have covered some high points of the Bible and received a quick overview of some key themes. They are now taken to what lies ahead in the future and both the trials and vindication of God's people. There will be a time of testing to prove who are the faithful followers of Jesus, and it will end in their deliverance and salvation. In the end they are with their God and before his throne.

Just as in Isaiah 6, so too in Revelation there is worship and adoration of God around his throne. Those who are there are experiencing the promised healing and restoration. They find shelter in him and will never hunger, thirst, or mourn. They experience springs of living water and their tears and pain of the previous order are wiped away. The requirement to enter into this celebration is to have washed their robes and made themselves white in the blood of the lamb (v14). The key to experiencing the end-times celebration is to trust in Jesus now.

Through Jesus, salvation is accomplished and the curse is reversed. The world is renewed, sin is removed, and healing is made to flow. It is a glorious ending in which all the loose ends get tied up carefully and completely. God has a purpose in the world. We are part of the story he is telling, and there is nothing that we have been through that is too great or too bad to be fixed by him. His work of salvation leads to his people glorifying and enjoying him for eternity.

One of the deeply encouraging aspects of this passage is how God wipes away the tears of his people. The act of wiping another's tears is deeply intimate and typically something only the closest of relationships allows to happen. It requires vulnerability on the part of both. The fact that God wipes away our tears and heals us of all our hurts brings great hope.

B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What does the posture of the elders and four living creatures around the throne tell you about the nature and character of God (v11-12)?

2. What does it mean to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? What is this a metaphor of?



3. How different is this setting versus the first scene in Genesis 3 of Adam and Eve in a garden alone with God? How has God's unfolding plan enhanced this celebration?

C. Guide to Obeying

1. Live for the day in which you will stand before the throne of God.
2. God deserves our worship and admiration; he will make all things right, even if it doesn't seem so right now.
3. God draws believers into a relationship with him, and that leads to relationships with others.

D. Going Deeper in Obeying

1. There are many comforting words in the last half of this passage. Which is most encouraging to you? What tears do you most long for God to wipe away?

2. What does this show you about the place of being with other believers in a worship community of God's people?

3. How does the victory promised to believers help you to rest in God right now, while in the midst of challenges and tribulation? What specific challenges do you most long to be fixed and healed?

E. Guide to the Lesson

Revelation 7 concludes by giving a powerful glimpse of life with God in the age to come. The story that began with two people in a garden concludes with a countless

multitude worshiping God for what he has done. The effects of the curse are reversed. There is healing, restoration, and hope for all of those who wash themselves clean in the blood of the Lamb. It's the greatest ending to the greatest story ever told! If people want to read more about this, have them read Revelation 21 and 22.

The book of Revelation can be difficult to understand, but the main theme is those who trust in Jesus will be saved. This passage is sandwiched between sections that are highly symbolic. People may have many questions on the surrounding context and you may consider reading some of those. While some future events in Revelation are marked with uncertainty, the end-time victory comes with much clarity. Revelation 7:9-17 depicts that ending (and much of this is stated again in Rev 21 and 22 for additional emphasis) and that is why this journey concludes with this passage.

The hope and healing at the end of this chapter can be powerful for people. Depending on how your group has jelled over the previous weeks, you might consider asking them what tears they most long for God to heal. Or, if that is too deep, perhaps ask what they most look forward to about heaven and what their questions to God will be.

One theme in this journey of worship is that of rest. When we see the end of the story, it's clear we can trust God and rest in him. Talk through ways people can continue putting God first in everything and also making time for God by pausing other parts of life. A key piece of putting God first and resting in him is taking time each day to read his word and pray, and another key piece is giving God one day of the week to go to church and learn more about him. The Sunday gathering of believers to sing and celebrate is a taste of what is to come. Encourage people to continue with these.

After completing this lesson, be sure to return to the overview section at the beginning of this journey and look over your answers on the Introductory Questions. Reflect on what you learned and how you grew over the course of these many weeks. Ask the group to share what they learned and where they saw growth. Also discuss if they want to do another journey together and, if so, when they want to start. Hopefully this increased everyone's appetite to read and know God's word.

Discovery Group Questions

Building Community. What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

Learning God’s Word. What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

Obeying the Lord. In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

Sharing Hope. Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

Praying. How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?
