



# **BIBLE STUDY SERIES**

### 1 Our Purpose

7 The Word of God

Goal: To answer these questions:

- Why did God create us?
- What is our purpose in life?

### 3 The Kingdom

Goal: To understand the role of the church within the Kingdom of God.

## 5 Finding the Core

to Grace

Goal:

## Repentance: Our Response

Goal: To help produce godly sorrow and transformation as a response to God's grace.

Goal: To come to a mutual understanding that we must completely surrender to the Word of

#### The Problem of Sin

God as the truth.

Goal: To understand the role of the church within the Kingdom of God.

### 6 The Grace of God

Goal: To grasp the power of Jesus' sacrifice and our desperate need for God's grace.

### 8 Discipleship

Goal: To make clear what it means for us to surrender to Jesus's Lordship and live as authentic followers of Jesus.

### A New Creation

Goal: To understand how people move from dark to light, with an emphasis on teaching about baptism.

# PURPOSE STUDY

Why did God create us? What is our purpose in life?

#### AT A GLANCE

#### Scriptures:

- 1. Genesis 1:26-27
- 2. Psalm 103:8-14
- 3. Micah 6:6-8
- 4. Matthew 22:34-40
- 5. Matthew 7:7-11
- 6. Acts 17:22-28

#### **Next Steps:**

- Begin praying daily to draw nearer to God- learn how to express yourself to him and become more comfortable talking with him.
- Begin reading in the Gospel of John and write down any questions you have.
- Set the time for your next study

#### **GENESIS 1:26-27**

- What does it mean to be an "image-bearer" of God?
- We were specially designed for the purpose of bearing God's image.
- Like a tool designed for a specific purpose- so were we designed to be like God, to think like him, act like him, communicate like him and feel like him

If God created us to reflect his image, we must learn what God is like: Psalm 103 will give us insights into a healthy, clear image of who God is and what he feels for us.

#### PSALM 103:8-14

- He is our Father- and like children we are made in his image as objects of his love.
- Some people view God differently than this verse tells us- as an absent Father, a boss, or maybe even a dictator.
- If we don't admire God, we won't want to be like him.
- Do you think of God as a loving Father?
- If not, then how do you view Him? Why?



#### MICAH 6:6-8

- This scripture makes it clear that God doesn't desire our work or our money or our sacrificelike a boss would expect from an employee. God wants us to walk with him.
- What does it mean to walk with God?
- <u>Is that something you've experienced?</u>

#### MATTHEW 22:34-40

God wants us to love him more than anything else in life.

- What does it mean to love God like this?
- What does it look like?

We can conclude from these verses that our purpose in life is: **To know, and to love, and to walk with God** 

• How do you feel about God's purpose for your life?
Our response ought to be to seek a relationship with God.

#### **MATTHEW 7:7-11**

- God is a good Father- we can be confident he will draw near to us if we attempt to draw near to him.
- How do you feel about beginning to draw near to God?

#### ACTS 17:22-28

- God wants us to reach out to him, and he assures us that when we reach out we will find him.
- <u>Do you feel ready to learn to love God and seek after a relationship with him?</u>

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Begin praying daily to draw nearer to God-learn how to express yourself to him and become more comfortable talking with him.
- Begin reading in the Gospel of John and write down any questions you have.
- Set the time for your next study

# WORD OF GOD STUDY

To come to a mutual understanding that we must completely surrender to the Word of God as the truth.

#### AT A GLANCE

#### **Scriptures:**

- 1. 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- 2. John 7:16-17
- 3. John 8:31-32
- 4. James 1:22-25
- 5. Hebrews 4:12-13
- 6. John 12:47-50
- 7. Psalm 1

#### **Next Steps:**

 Read the Bible everyday beginning in the book of Mark or John

#### 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

- Scripture was written by God through man.
- Do you believe the scriptures are from God?
- If not, what are your doubts?

#### JOHN 7:16-17

- Doubts are healthy, and it is okay to have intelligent questions and concerns about how we can trust the Bible's validity.
- There is much evidence to build our faith, but based on this scripture, the greatest way to build our faith is simply doing the will of God.
- By choosing to live the Word of God, we will come to greater faith.
  - Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing the Word."

#### JOHN 8:31-32

- Jesus calls us to HOLD to his teachings if we really claim to be his followers.
- If we do this, we can know the truth, and this will set us free from sin.
- The Bible calls us to do more than just know it but to hold to it!
- · What does it mean to hold to his teachings?



#### JAMES 1:22-25

- The Bible is like a mirror, it will be honest with us and show us the things in our lives that we need to change, our job is then to respond and do those things.
- How do you feel about the bible challenging your way of life?

#### **HEBREWS 4:12-13**

- The Bible cuts, convicts and is relevant to our everyday life
- Nothing is hidden from God and everything we do we must give an account of one day.

#### JOHN 12:47-50

• Jesus came to save the world, but His words are what will be the standard by which God will judge us.

#### BUILDING OUR OWN MORALITY:

- It is common for humanity to define right and wrong for themselves- this is precisely what Adam and Eve did in the garden.
- They wanted the knowledge of good and evil- they wanted to determine their own morality.
- Most of humanity in today's culture build their own moral code like a served-to-order meal, with everything they want and nothing they don't.
  - Our standard for right and wrong tends to be determined by the following things:
    - What our parent/parent-figures taught us
    - What life has taught us
    - What we feel is right

But Jesus tells us that our morality must be built off of his words- those must act as the standard for our lives.

#### PSALM 1

• We should be reading the Bible daily and making this an active part of our life.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

 Read the bible everyday beginning in the book of Mark or John.

# THE KINGDOM STUDY

To understand the role of the church within the Kingdom of God

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

#### AT A GLANCE

#### Scriptures:

- 1. Mark 1:14-15
- 2. Luke 4:17-21
- 3. Colossians 1:15-18
- 4.1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- 5. Acts 2:42-47
- 6.2 Timothy 4:3-4

#### **Next Steps:**

• Devote yourself to the church

#### MARK 1:14-15

- Jesus came proclaiming that the "Kingdom of God is near."
- WHAT IS A KINGDOM? (LEADER'S NOTE)
- All Kingdoms have four defining qualities:
  - A leader who has absolute authority
  - People living under the authority of the leader
  - A code of law the people submit to
  - A territory with boundaries
- WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD? (LEADER'S NOTE)
- God is the king, and he reigns with absolute authority
- Followers of Jesus are citizens of his Kingdom
- The Bible is our law code, our standard for living The Kingdom doesn't have boundaries like a human Kingdom does. Anywhere God reigns is the Kingdom of God
  - The Kingdom of God is found in the individual heart of a Jesus-follower, as well as the collective heart of a Jesus- following church.
- What is it like to live in the kingdom of God?
- The church should be the truest representation of the kingdom here on earth. As citizens of another kingdom, we are foreigners here on earth, but the church is our home away from home.
- · What are you thoughts on this?

**TRANSITION NOTE** 



#### COLOSSIANS 1:15-18

- What is the church?
- The church is not a building or an event, the church is the people of God- we are the church, and Jesus leads the church

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

- We are the body of Christ, each one of us plays a meaningful role in it.
- When the physical body is properly connected, it experiences life as a single unit.
- Example: If I injure a certain part of my body, the rest of my body will react to that. While I feel the pain in a particular place, my entire body is affected.
  - In the same way, the church must be deeply connected, suffering with one another, rejoicing together.
  - This experience with the church can only be realized with a sincere and deep devotion to the body of Christ

#### ACTS 2:42-47

- · What has your experience with church been in your life?
- . How often should we "go" to church?
- If we wish to experience the fullness of what God wants for us and the church, it will require our devotion to the church.
- When the body meets together, we should make every effort to be present.

## 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4 (LEADER'S

#### NOTE)

- While there is only one body- there are many churches, and not all these churches are teaching or living according to the standard of Jesus.
  - We must be very thoughtful and prayerful when considering which church community we will devote ourselves to.
- What should you look for (or be careful to avoid) when deciding which church community to devote yourself to?
  - It is essential to be united in our core beliefs and practices

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

• Devote yourself to the church.

# THE PROBLEM OF SIN

How would you describe sin?

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

#### AT A GLANCE

#### **Scriptures:**

- 1. Isaiah 59:1-3
- 2. Genesis 4:2-7
- 3. James 1:13-15
- 4. Genesis 6:5-6
- 5. Luke 7:36-50
- 6. James 5:16
- 7. Galatians 5:16-23/2 Timothy 3:1-5

#### **Next Steps:**

- Examine Galatians 5:19-21 & 2 Timothy 3:1-
- Identify your core sins AND motivations
- Next week we will spend some time talking through what we've learned about ourselves and what the next steps are

#### ISAIAH 59:1-3

- What impact does sin have on our relationships? (especially our relationship with God)
- Sin separates us from God- it has great destructive relational power
- Sin distorts our picture of God- at times even hiding his face from us
  - "Without holiness no one will see God" (Hebrews 12:14)
  - When we choose a life of sin, we are unable to understand who God is, and following him becomes increasingly less attractive.
  - We invite doubt into our lives, we become confused on what is right and wrong, our morality mutates to validate our feelings and natural desires rather than God's will.

#### GENESIS 4:2-7

- Sin is like a wild animal- and the more we let it control us, the more beastly (like a wild animal) we become
- When we sin, we become less human, but true humanity is found in holiness, which is separation from sin.



#### **JAMES 1:13-15**

- Sin grows like a virus- sin multiplied is the source of all great evil- wars, sexual violence, genocide, all forms of abuse and injustice are all examples of the terrible destructive power of sin when it grows.
- "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)
  - What does it mean that sin leads to death?
- Sin desensitizes us, it grows, like cancer, sears our conscious, and twists our understanding of right and wrong.

#### **GENESIS 6:5-6**

- Sin grieves God, it has emotional impact on him because it is destructive to our relationship with him and others.
- · What are your thoughts on this?

IT IS VITAL THAT WE SEE OUR PROBLEM.

#### LUKE 7:36-50 (LEADER'S NOTE)

- This woman saw her sin, the Pharisee did not
- Our love and gratitude toward God is directly proportional to how forgiven we believe we are, and self-awareness is key for this.
- If we do not believe we are "that bad" or we tend to compare ourselves to others to feel better about ourselves- we are just like Simon.
- And if we act this way we will never see our need for Jesus, we will never see our need for forgiveness nor be motivated by love and gratitude.

#### **JAMES 5:16**

- Confession is vital to healing and repentance.
- Confession invites both personal and communal accountability and is a necessary step in our journey toward God.

# PREP FOR NEXT STUDY (LEADER'S NOTE)

• Explain the concept of core sin and motivation

#### GALATIANS 5:16-23/2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

#### (LEADER'S NOTE)

- When considering what our core sins may be, we are asking the question:
- What sins are most likely to turn us away from God?

# HELPFUL QUESTIONS PRIOR TO CONFESSION STUDY:

- Have you ever confessed your sins to someone before?
- How do you feel about confessing your sins?
- Are there are areas where you fear judgment? How can we help you feel understood and not judged?
- Are there any specific things that you are unsure if they are sin or not?

**HELPFUL GRAPHICS:** 

# FINDING THE CORE

<u>Goal:</u> To draw closer to God and people by bringing to light our past and sin through confession.

# **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**



#### AT A GLANCE

#### **Scriptures:**

1.1 John 1:5-10 2. Mark 7:20-23

#### **Next Steps:**

 To prepare for next week's bible study, watch the Passion of the Christ

#### 1 JOHN 1:5-10

- Confession of our sin to other spiritual people is a step towards healing and forgiveness (James 5:16), and it is how we draw close to God and people (1 John 1:7)
- If we hide our sins, we are lying to others and deceiving ourselves and cannot sincerely draw close to God.

#### MARK 7:20-23

- Jesus makes it clear that our sin is simply the fruit of something deeply rooted in our heart.
- If we only acknowledge and address our bad behavior but do not dig deeper and address our character and motivation, we will be frustrated by our inability to repent.

#### TIME OF CONFESSION

- There are a few key components to sharing our lives
  - Share honestly, authentically, and vulnerably
  - Dig deep past simple behavior into what motivates that way of life
  - Identify the core motivations and sin that have fueled our lives up to this point so we can work toward repentance

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

• To prepare for next week's bible study, watch the Passion of the Christ

# THE GRACE OF GOD

Goal: To grasp the power of Jesus' sacrifice and our desperate need for God's grace

# **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

#### AT A GLANCE

#### Scriptures:

- 1. Ephesians 2:1-3
- 2. Ephesians 2:4-10
- 3.2 Corinthians 5:21
- 4.2 Samuel 9:1-10
- 5. Matthew 26:36-46
- 6. Matthew 26:47-56
- 7. Matthew 26:57-68
- 8. Matthew 26:69-75
- 9. Matthew 27:26-44
- 10. Isaiah 53:4-6

#### **Next Steps:**

 Spend time re-reading the story of Jesus's death and resurrection in the gospels and praying to connect to his sacrifice on the cross.

#### WHAT IS GRACE?

 Unmerited favor: God's gift of mercy and forgiveness given to a humanity that doesn't deserve it and could never earn it by their own work or effort.

#### EPHESIANS 2:1-3

- Enemies of God, 'dead in our sins'
- When we live for ourselves, we are enemies of God, and sin always separates us from God.
- God's perfect justice dictates that our sin makes us 'deserving of his wrath.'
- God's qualities are immutable (they do not change) and perfect, he is both perfectly loving and perfectly just.
- His 'justice' requires that all sin is punished, if he did not punish sin- he would not be just.
- Analogy of a an unjust judge (LEADER'S NOTE)



#### WHY DO WE NEED GRACE?

#### **EPHESIANS 2:4-10**

- (Reference: Romans 3:22-24)
- We are saved not by our own effort, but by the love and mercy of God through Jesus.
- All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God
- All humanity is spiritually bankrupt- totally unable to save ourselves spiritually- our sin has irrevocably separated us from God, and we have no way of earning our way back into his presence.
- A life of sin sucks us in a whirlpool of death, like a ship spiraling down into the maw of a monster, sin puts us in a cycle of destruction.
- We cannot climb out ourselves, Jesus must save us.
  - Earning our way to heaven is like trying to jump across the Grand Canyon
  - No matter how far you can jump- whether 10 feet or 30 feet...you won't get close to crossing the 47,520 feet to get from one side to the other.
  - Our efforts to 'earn' our salvation are meager at bestthe cost of sin is far too high, and we cannot afford itwe don't have the right currency, we need divine help.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

- God knew when he created mankind we would rebel, and he knew what it would cost him to save us.
- God is just, a price is demanded for our sin, and only Jesus could pay that price.
- Jesus lived a perfect life, and he offered that life to God in place of ours, he switched his record with ours and was punished for our sin while we enjoy the fruits of his perfect life.
- Analogy: Courtroom (LEADER'S NOTE)

#### A HELPFUL PICTURE OF GOD'S GRACE

#### 2 SAMUEL 9:1-10

- Mephibosheth was worth nothing in his culture, just a destitute, crippled man of a disgraced house.
- We are like Mephibosheth, spiritually crippled, destitute, unable to help ourselves.
- God shows us kindness, love and grace because of Jesusjust as David showed Mephibosheth kindness, love and grace because of Jonathan.

# What do you think about this? Is it hard for you to accept how badly you need God's grace?

#### THE COST OF GOD'S GRACE WAS THE SUFFERING OF JESUS.

#### THE EMOTIONAL SUFFERING

MATTHEW 26:36-46

• His friends weren't there for him when he was overwhelmed with sorrow

MATTHEW 26:47-56

• He was betrayed by Judas and abandoned by his disciples

MATTHEW 26:57-68

• He was falsely accused by his enemies, mocked, spat on and beaten

MATTHEW 26:69-75

• Was denied by his close friend Peter

#### THE PHYSICAL SUFFERING

MATTHEW 27:26-44

· Jesus was tortured by being flogged, beaten, mocked, and crucified

#### THE SPIRITUAL SUFFERING

**ISAIAH 53:4-6** 

- Jesus carried the burden and punishment for our sin
- He felt the full weight of the consequences of our sin so that we didn't have to- he paid our price while we receive his reward

How do you feel about what Jesus went through for us?

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

• Spend time re-reading the story of Jesus's death and resurrection in the gospels and praying to connect to his sacrifice on the cross.

# REPENTANCE: OUR RESPONSE TO GRACE

Goal: To help produce godly sorrow and transformation as a response to God's grace

#### AT A GLANCE

#### Scriptures:

- 1. Romans 12:1-2
- 2. Acts 3:19
- 3.2 Corinthians 7:8-11
- 4. Luke 19:1-10
- 5. Matthew 5:29-30

#### **Next Steps:**

• Come up with a plan of repentance

#### WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

#### **ROMANS 12:1-2**

- Repentance is a transformation of heart and mind
- It is the choice to not "conform to the pattern of this world" and instead be transformed by a transformation of our mind that leads to a change in our actions.
  - Repentance is a co-working
  - We choose to change our behavior, and through prayer God changes our hearts and minds

#### **ACTS 3:19**

 Repentance brings times of refreshing and is a key step to receiving salvation

# WHAT DOES REPENTANCE LOOK LIKE?

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-11

There are two types of 'sorrow: Godly and Worldly



- Godly sorrow produces life, while worldly sorrow brings death
- Godly sorrow is characterized by eagerness to change, alarm at our sin, concern for our righteousness and a desire to transform evidenced by our action
- Worldly sorrow is feeling bad without change, it is selfpity, it is guilt with no action.

#### **MATTHEW 5:29-30**

- Repentance often requires radical action
- Share personally about a time when you took radical action to repent in your life

#### LUKE 19:1-10

- · Zacchaeus displayed Godly sorrow
- He was ready to make things right, he responded immediately, and gave back several times what he took
- His repentance was radical.
- His repentance was directly correlated to his idols- he sacrificed them for God.

# Take some time and talk specifically about the core sins they have previously identified

- Are they willing to make effort to repent of those sins?
- Do they have a plan for their repentance?
- Identify specific scriptures that apply to their core sin and areas of needed change

Godly Sorrow	Worldly Sorrow
produces life, eagerness to change, alarm at sin, concern for righteousness, desire to transform with action	brings death, feeling bad without change, self-pity, guilt with no action

# DISCIPLESHIP

Goal: To make clear what it means for us to surrender to Jesus's Lordship and live as authentic followers of Jesus

# **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

#### AT A GLANCE

#### Scriptures:

- 1. Acts 11:25-26
- 2. Matthew 22:34-37
- 3. John 13:34-35
- 4. Luke 14:25-27
- 5. Luke 14:28-33
- 6. Mark 10:17-31
- 7. Matthew 24:31-46
- 8. Mark 1:16-20
- 9. Matthew 28:18-20

#### **Key Questions to Ask:**

- Do you understand what a disciple of Jesus is?
- Upon reflection- do you believe you are a disciple of Jesus?
- If not, do you want to become one?

#### ACTS 11:25-26

 There is no distinction between a disciple or a Christian in the Bible.

#### MATTHEW 22:34-37

- The most important thing in life is to love God with everything you have.
- To become a disciple, we must first learn to love God with all our heart.
- What do you think it means to love God like this?

#### LUKE 14:25-27

- If we are to become disciples, we must love God more than anything in our lives.
  - We love many things, people, possessions, ideas...we can only know how much we love something by considering how much we prioritize that thing.
    - Love is not a feeling, it is a choice
  - Everything has a place on our "love scale," and it is all about priorities
- Up to this point in your life where is God on your "love scale"?

#### LEADER'S NOTE



#### LUKE 14:28-33

- We must consider what it will cost us to surrender to Jesus
- We must be willing to surrender anything, to pay any cost to follow Jesus.
- · What might it cost you to follow Jesus?

#### MARK 10:17-31

- Though we are called to give up everything, God tells us that he will give us one hundred times as much.
- God gives us family in the church, meaning and purpose, eternal life, an answer to the deepest questions in life and more.
- · How do you feel about this promise?

#### **LUKE 10:8-9**

- A part of being a disciple is about caring for the vulnerable.
- When we love the poor, we love God
- · Has this been a part of your life?
- How do you feel about this mission?

#### MARK 1:16-20

- Being a disciple is all about helping other people follow Jesus.
- We become "fishers of men" when we become disciples.
- Being a "fisher of men" is all about learning to "Fish for people." This is all about spreading the gospel of Jesus.
- Practically speaking, it means loving people into beliefbefriending people, talking about faith, not arguing people into the faith- but loving them, letting them into your life, caring for them and eventually inviting them to learn more about the gospel of Jesus

#### MATTHEW 28:18-20

- There is a very practical aspect to spreading the gospel- it is called evangelism- sharing our faith.
- We need to be in the habit of inviting people to church and into our lives
- · Has this been a part of your life?
- How do you feel about this mission?

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Do you understand what a disciple of Jesus is?
- Upon reflection- do you believe you are a disciple of Jesus?
- If not, do you want to become one?

# NEW CREATION

Goal: To understand how people move from dark to light, with an emphasis on teaching about baptism

#### AT A GLANCE

#### Scriptures:

- 1.1 Peter 2:9-10
- 2. Ephesians 2:8-9
- 3. Acts 2:36-41
- 4. John 3:1-7
- 5. Romans 6:1-8
- 6.1 Peter 3:18-21

#### **Additional Scriptures:**

- Colossians 2:9-14
- Galatians 3:26-29
- Acts 8:26-40
- Acts 16:13-15
- Acts 22:1-16

#### HOW CAN PEOPLE BE SAVED?

#### 1 PETER 2:9-10

- This scripture illustrates that we are either in the dark or the light, there is no 'gray/ in between' when it comes to salvation.
- At some point, each person must move from the dark to the light- from unforgiven to forgiven, from not being a people to becoming the people of God.
- At this point in your life, would you say you are in the dark or the light spiritually? Why?

#### **EPHESIANS 2:8-9**

- We are saved by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Jesus
- We are not saved because of what we do, we cannot earn our salvation
- · What is your understanding of baptism?



#### ACTS 2:36-41

 When the people asked what they needed to do- Peter was very clear, they needed to believe in Jesus, repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and they would then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

#### JOHN 3:1-7

- Jesus made clear to this teacher that no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and Spirit.
- The concept of ceremonial washing would have been very familiar to a Jewish teacher, as it was a significant part of the Jewish journey to God.
- The idea of being washed to purify our sins goes all the way back to the law of Moses.
- Jesus is tying in our spiritual 'rebirth' to our baptism

#### **ROMANS 6:1-8**

- When we are baptized, we symbolically identify with Christ's death but literally die to our old lives
- We crucify our old lives and rise to live a new life.
- Just as Jesus died, was buried, and rose again- so we too in baptism die to ourselves, are buried under the water, and rise to live a new life.
- Baptism is just like a wedding

#### 1 PETER 3:18-21

- In the story of Noah, the wickedness of the earth is washed away by the flood waters sent from God.
- In our modern-day story, our sins and wickedness are washed away by the waters of baptism.
- Baptism is God's chosen vessel for us to accept God's grace and mark the beginning of our new life in Christ.
- Sometimes people need to be reminded that the act of baptism is only powerful because of our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus and God's mercy.

DO YOU WANT TO BE BAPTIZED?

### **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:**

#### COLOSSIANS 2:9-14

- Baptism is directly related to circumcision.
- In circumcision, flesh is cut away from the body; and in baptism, our sin (flesh) is cut away from our body

#### **GALATIANS 3:26-29**

• When we are baptized, we become part of the family of God

#### ACTS 16:13-15

• Lydia, a worshipper of God, was baptized after hearing the gospel along with her whole household

#### ACTS 8:26-40

- The story of the apostle Philip baptizing the Ethiopian official
- This story is especially relevant for helping people see their urgent need for salvation and the acceptance of God's grace through baptism

#### ACTS 22:1-16

- Paul's retelling of his conversion story
- Ananias says to him "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."



# LEADERS GUIDE

# ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

- 1. Don't ramble on terminate your sentences with a question mark.
  - a. Don't use twenty words when ten will do just fine.
- 2. Get comfortable with silence give people time to process.
- 3. Don't fish for an answer, open-ended questions teach you a lot about people.
  - a. Don't give people multiple choice questions unless they really need it.
  - b. People feel manipulated when you ask "fishing" questions.
- 4. Start questions with "who, what, why, how, where, when" and you will get more meaningful answers.
  - a. Avoid questions starting with "should, are, do you think, is..."
  - b. Sometimes these are exactly what is needed- when you need a "yes" or "no" response go for it- but get used to following up these questions with "why?"
- 5. If you don't understand don't act like you do don't move on until you get it.
  - a. Pride sometimes keeps us from admitting ignorance- this is foolish and means we will remain ignorant!
  - b. If you don't understand someone's story, then ask as many clarifying questions as you can until you truly understand so you can help them.
- 6. Don't settle for shallow answers encourage people to look deeper.
  - a. You aren't just looking for the "right answer"- you are looking for their answer.
- 7. Don't be afraid to be direct people appreciate it and you won't accomplish anything if you are roundabout.
  - a. Sometimes we want people to figure out what we are getting at without saying it, it is better just to be direct.
- 8. While being direct is a commendable quality make sure to choose the right moments for difficult questions.
  - a. We cannot always be direct, make sure you've built up enough trust so that when you are to the point on sensitive issues you won't run people off.
- 9. Don't be afraid to interject with questions to redirect the course of a conversation especially with a rambler.
  - a. Mature people won't be upset by polite interruptions- in fact, it often makes them feel like they are being listened to.



# THE PROBLEM OF SIN LEADER'S NOTES

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- The focus of this study is to connect the seeker with how sin impacts their life and their walk with God.
- This study is designed as a foundation to build toward the following study in which the focus will be confession of sin, but first we must establish a biblical theology of sin
- It is crucial in this study that we clearly communicate the destructive nature of sin.
  - It distorts our view of God
  - It mutates our understanding of the truth
  - It confuses us and brings doubts
  - It is subtle like a slow acting, lethal poison
  - It leads to spiritual relational and sometimes even physical death
- If we can clearly communicate the destructive nature of sin, it will go a long way to the success of the next study in which we will take time to confess.

### **LEADER'S NOTE #1: LUKE 7:36-50**

- This story is longer than what we usually read so after reading through it I will go back and briefly explain the story.
- The focus is on the brief parable in verses 41-42. To help them understand the story and the implication- I will give them a modern-day interpretation- it may go something like this.
  - (When I share my modern-day parable, I often will make one of the characters the person I am studying with, but for this example I will make up some random people.)
  - Two men (Caleb & Josh) were in debt to a lender named Tom. Caleb owed Tom \$50 while Josh owed him \$50,000. Tom decided to forgive them both their debt
    - Caleb is grateful and the appropriate expression of gratitude is perhaps a big hug or a grateful phone call.
    - But Josh' gratitude far exceeds Caleb's because he owed 1,000x more money than Caleb!

- Josh can't even think of how to thank Caleb, there seems to be no way to properly thank him for the enormity of the forgiveness he has received, a life changing amount of money.
- At this stage I like to point out that we've already learned the wages of sin is death and that none of us deserve God's mercy.
- When we are truly connected to the true cost and consequence of sin, and we are aware of our own sin and how much we owe to God- we realize it is an unpayable debt.
- THE POINT: The more aware we are of our sinful nature, the more grateful we are to be forgiven.

#### **LEADER'S NOTE #2: CORE SIN & MOTIVATION**

- All of us have sinned in many ways, and next week we'll have a chance to be open and confess.
- The focus should be on discovering our core sin and motivation
- Core sins are the primary sins that hinder our relationship with God, the greatest temptations, the most destructive habits & addictions. Those sins that hold us in bondage.
  - For some this might be sexual in nature, a bitterness & resentment, a selfish ambition, or idolatry.
  - You'll want to encourage them to take special note of the those "core sins" in their life as they study Galatians 5 & 2 Timothy 3.
- Not only is it important to talk about those core sins, but it is also vital to take it a step further into why do they commit that sin?
  - It isn't enough to simply say what the sin is, we must identify what motivates that behavior so we can root it out at the source.
    - We find root causes by starting at the fruit and asking the question "why" until we discover the root.
  - o Often at the root of sin we will find the following motivators:
    - Fear, Insecurity, Pride, Selfishness, Laziness, Idolatry.
    - Encourage them to look for these within themselves.

#### LEADER'S NOTE #3: GALATIANS 5 & 2 TIMOTHY 3

- If time permits you can read through these, but you can also simply reference them and have them read it before your next study
- Encourage them as they read through the passages to look up any words they do not understand or ask the people studying with them.



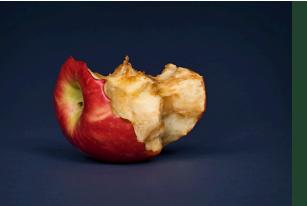
# FINDING THE CORE LEADER'S NOTES

### THERE ARE A FEW KEY COMPONENTS TO SHARING OUR LIVES:

- 1. Begin by personally sharing honestly, authentically, and vulnerably
  - a. The example the leader sets is crucial, be sure to spend time talking not simply about the sinful thing you've done, but also what motivated those actions. Finding the root causes is what this study is all about.
- 2.Once you've shared, give them a chance to share- they may need some encouragement to know where to start. Feel free to prompt them gently with questions about their life and past if needed.
  - a.For some people, their past is quite painful. If someone is not ready to share do not push them. At most a gentle and insightful question or pausing to talk about what they are feeling is appropriate.
  - b. You cannot force people into vulnerability and transparency, we must lovingly lead them into it.
    - i. "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has understanding draws them out." (Proverbs 20:5)
- 3.Dig deeper past the behavior they share to discover character and motivation
  - a.It is often true that the people we are studying with won't know what motivated their sinful behavior. At these times our ability to draw out the heart is critical.
  - b. The key to this is learning to ask questions that take them deeper.
  - c.See here for a document on asking helpful questions

#### What do we do after we've all shared?

 After I've asked my questions and we've discovered some core sin and motivation, I will make a few comments and observations in an attempt to clarify and help them understand their own sinful nature



# FINDING THE CORE LEADER'S NOTES

#### • For example:

- John, (a fictional person) has shared that he is always chasing after relationships, but they often end in bitterness and resentment. After digging down deeper we learn that his desire for a romantic relationship is rooted in his insecurity, which also leads to his pride manifesting in a variety of ways (perhaps a lack of compassion, selfrighteousness and judgmentalism, lying, etc...)
- He may not realize it yet, but what he is describing is idolatry. When
  first reading through the text in Galatians 5 he likely didn't know what
  the word 'idolatry' meant, but now we can help name his sin. We can
  help him see that the fulfillment he is longing for can only be found in
  God.
- By identifying the sin we give John a critical insight and help him face his sinful nature and hopefully pave the way for him to embrace God's grace in a more powerful way.



# THE KINGDOM LEADER'S NOTES

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- This Bible study is attempting to cover a massive and complex topic in an extremely concise form. We are melding the larger, overarching concept of the Kingdom of God with the smaller and more practical concern of the Church.
  - For this reason, it is important that you are comfortable enough about the concept of the Kingdom of God to be able to adequately expound on the study notes provided.
- It would be a mistake to feel the pressure to get them to grasp the
  entirety of what the Kingdom of God is with a few scriptures- your goal
  is simply to introduce them to the idea of the Kingdom and the reality
  that it exists.
  - Having even a simple understanding of the Kingdom of God is an important first step to properly internalizing the importance of the church in our personal lives.

#### **LEADER'S NOTE #1: WHAT IS A KINGDOM?**

- Before we can have a conversation about what the Kingdom of God is, it
  is important to establish that they understand on a basic level what a
  "kingdom" is.
- These four defining qualities of a kingdom are not an exhaustive list of everything that is true of a kingdom, but they are a good starting point and will help us connect dots later.

#### LEADER'S NOTE #2: WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

 It is simple to make the connection about an earthly kingdom and God's Kingdom when considering the first three qualities- a ruler, a people, and a law code. But it is a bit more difficult to connect the "territory with boundaries," since the Kingdom has no boundaries. The following analogy is helpful:

- Candle Analogy:
  - The Kingdom of God doesn't have physical borders like an earthly kingdom, it is present anywhere God's authority is being upheld, but how brightly the Kingdom's light shines is determined by the source.
    - If you place one lit candle in a dark room it shines a light, but the darkness closes in around it, muting its power.
      - The Kingdom is present even when one follower of Jesus is present, but because they are alone the light is muted.
    - If you place many candles in a room their combined light illuminates much more, it is a greater source of light and power.
      - When two or more followers of Jesus gather, our light shines brighter and the Kingdom is more evident.
    - When you step outside into the bright sunshine everything is illuminated
      - The truest expression of the Kingdom will be in Heaven when there is no more darkness to fight against.
  - o Therefore, we say the Kingdom is "both now and not yet."
    - We can shine the Kingdom light now, but it's truest form will be when we enter eternal life with God in Heaven.

#### **TRANSITION NOTE**

- It is helpful to offer context before you read the verse. This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he is declaring that the Kingdom of God is upon them, and this verse from Isaiah is a description of what the Kingdom is like and how you know it is here.
- Jesus mentions the following characteristics of the Kingdom
  - o Good news proclaimed to the poor
  - o Freedom for the prisoners
  - Recovery of sight for the blind
  - o The oppressed being set free
- All four of these are both literal and figurative examples of Kingdom living
  - In the Kingdom of God, there are no poor people, they have all they need (we take care of one another, are thoughtful about each other's needs, etc...)
    - But he is also talking about the spiritually poor, those that are lost, depressed, anxiety-ridden, and emotionally wounded- God fulfills their desires, heals them, cares for them.
  - The points about freedom for the prisoners and the oppressed being set free are a matched set. The Jews in Jesus' time were literally oppressed by both the Romans and the Jewish religious leaders.

## **LEADER'S NOTE #3 LUKE 4:16-21**

- It is helpful to offer context before you read the verse. This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he is declaring that the Kingdom of God is upon them, and this verse from Isaiah is a description of what the Kingdom is like and how you know it is here.
- Jesus mentions the following characteristics of the Kingdom
  - Good news proclaimed to the poor
  - Freedom for the prisoners
  - Recovery of sight for the blind
  - The oppressed being set free
- All four of these are both literal and figurative examples of Kingdom living
  - In the Kingdom of God, there are no poor people, they have all they need (we take care of one another, are thoughtful about each other's needs, etc...)
    - But he is also talking about the spiritually poor, those that are lost, depressed, anxiety-ridden, and emotionally wounded- God fulfills their desires, heals them, cares for them.
  - The points about freedom for the prisoners and the oppressed being set free are a matched set. The Jews in Jesus' time were literally oppressed by both the Romans and the Jewish religious leaders.
  - Jesus is saying that there is no oppression in the Kingdom of God, no crime, no conflict, no prejudice, no division.
  - He is also saying that we will be set free from the spiritual enslavement to sin, addictions, unwanted desires, etc....
  - The blind will see. Jesus is referring to the literal healing he will do while on earth, but also to the spiritual awakening that happens when we enter the Kingdom.
  - Our eyes are opened to the truth about life, death, sin, righteousness, and truth.
  - All these qualities should exist in the individual life of a follower of Jesus, and in a Jesus-following community- the church.



# THE GRACE OF GOD LEADER'S NOTES

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- This study is two concepts combined into one, you are teaching them what grace is and why we need it, but you are also teaching them what Jesus went through on the cross, and how the pain he endured, emotionally, physically, and spiritually all point to his great love for us.
  - It is difficult to accomplish both tasks in one study (unless you go for 3 hours)
- We suggest you do one of the following:
  - At the end of the "Confession Study" when you've shared your lives with one another - as homework give them the task of reading through the account of the crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 26-28) and have them watch the Passion of Christ.
    - This way, once you begin the study on Grace, they've already absorbed the reality of the crucifixion- which adds great power to the study.
  - o Divide the Grace topic into two separate meetings
    - Example:
      - Part I: What is grace and why do we need it? (Start at the beginning of the study and end at 2 Samuel 9)
      - Part II: Read through the narrative together of Jesus's death explaining what he went through along the way.

### THE UNJUST JUDGE ANALOGY

- Imagine someone breaks into another person's home and sets their house on fire. The family gets out safely but everything they own has been lost.
- When the arsonist is caught, he is put on trial and brought before the judge. The lawyers have discovered that there is irrefutable evidence this man has done this to at least five other families in the last year.
- The criminal asks for mercy, he says he is very sorry, and he will try not to do this again.

- The judge considers him for a minute, while also looking toward the family whose lives this criminal has made miserable, and decides to let the man get off free, with no repercussions whatsoever.
- The entire courtroom erupts in a frenzy, yelling at the top of their lungs "We want justice! This man has done a terrible thing and there must be consequences! What is to stop him from doing this again?!"
  - The judge looks at the room full of people and says- well, everyone wants me to be a loving, merciful and kind judge- so I am going to choose to be kind today.
- In this circumstance we feel that for justice to be served and balance reestablished, the criminal must be convicted and sentenced. We acknowledge that the judge can be both kind and just at the same time
- We all want God to be loving, but if we really think about it, we want him
  to be just as well, because so many horrible crimes against humanity
  are committed.
  - We all want God to punish the evildoer, to balance the scales, but we do not like applying that same standard to ourselves.
  - We don't like the reality that we have also done moral wrong, and that each sin bears a consequence.
    - As the scriptures say "The wages of sin is death."
    - Therefore, because God is a just God- we need mercy.

### **COURTROOM ANALOGY**

- Imagine that you are on trial for all the sins you've committed. Every moral crime, every careless word, every lustful thought, every prideful moment, etc... Everything you've ever done has been recorded in a book that is placed in front of you on the table.
- You have no lawyer, and the judge who is given the task of sentencing you is not only the judge, but he is also an eyewitness to every crime you've committed. (In this case the judge is God)
- You know that you do not have any defense, sure you've also done good things in your life, but the good we do does not erase the sin we've committed. That sin still stands as evidence against us. We know we deserve whatever sentence God chooses, because he is perfectly fair and just. We also know that the consequence for sin is death (As stated in Romans 3:23 & Romans 6:23).
- Before the sentence is declared God calls in Jesus, who volunteers as our defense lawyer. Jesus knows that he cannot argue away our sentence, because all sin must be paid (that is what perfect justice is).
- To save us, Jesus takes out a piece of paper that represents every sin he ever committed. The page is blank, there are no recorded crimes because Jesus never sinned.

- Jesus asks the judge to switch your records saying "God, please allow me to switch our records, treat them as my life and record deserve, and treat me as their life and sin deserve.
  - "Give them the reward I've earned while I take the punishment they've earned."
  - And God says "yes"
- This was always God's plan- he knew what it would cost him to create humanity- and he chose to do it anyway.
  - We are saved by the perfect life and sacrificial death of Jesus.



# DISCIPLESHIP LEADER'S NOTES

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- This study is about the purpose and mission of a disciple.
- The primary goal of this study is to determine to the best of your ability if the person being studied with is a true disciple of Jesus.
  - By this point the hope is that you're well into the bible studies and have had great time to share about their life. You should have a good idea about how they live, what they believe and what they want. Understanding these things aspects of their life goes a long way in helping them evaluate if they are a disciple
- If the person you are studying with is from a religious background this is an especially important study. Many religious people have never examined whether they are true followers of Jesus (2 Cor. 13:5). This study is designed to help people honestly evaluate if they are a true disciple of Jesus or just cultural "Christians."

### LEADER'S NOTE #1

The love scale analogy

- To make this point, ask the person "What is something you love?"
  - Normally people will choose something simple, perhaps a type of food or a hobby they enjoy.
  - I have them create an imaginary scale of 1-100, in which a lower number indicates less love, and the higher number represents more love.
  - I ask them to assign a number to a food or hobby they love toperhaps they choose pizza- and they love it 65.
  - From there I ask them to tell me a person they love, and I ask them to assign that person a number- maybe it's their mom, and she's an 85.
- Then I ask them 'how can we know that they actually love this thing or this person? How do we know it isn't just lip-service?
  - The answer is that it should be easily proven if someone loves something because it is evident in their life and choices.
    - If I love a sport I play it, if I love a food I eat it, if I love a person I sacrifice for them.

- Then I ask, "up to this point in your life, where do you think God has been on this scale?"
  - I often will reiterate in this moment that obviously we all know where God is supposed to be, but we want an honest answer from them on where they really think God has been on their "love scale."
- The point of this analogy is to help them come to grips with whether their actions up to this point in their life have displayed a genuine love for God above all other things.
  - Remember- in this scripture Jesus declares that if we love anything more than God, then that thing becomes an idol, and if we've lived like this it is evidence against our authentic discipleship.
  - What do we do if the person claims that indeed they do put God first in their lives?
    - If you feel that the evidence of their life claims they are not a disciple, then you must be honest with them about your opinion. Be humble and gentle but honest, not making assumptions but presenting the facts.
    - If the evidence of their life indicates a genuine faith and a lifestyle of discipleship, then perhaps you have stumbled upon a faithful follower of Jesus. In this case rejoice!
  - It requires wisdom to evaluate the authenticity of someone else's faith. It is important to remember that we do not decide who is saved or not saved- only God has that authority.
    - However, part of the responsibility of the leaders & shepherds in the church is indeed to act as a kind of gatekeeper to the church. Our evaluation of a seeker's faith is vital to them being able to draw close to our community in true unity in both life and doctrine.