

Bible Basics

Course by Community Christian Church (www.communitychristian.org),
a member of the NewThing Network (www.newthing.org)

Crash Course on the Bible

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Overview of Study:

On a plane, Hank, a Christ-following guy, and Karen, a young woman who is really confused about her faith journey, discuss faith and religion.

Hank is sharing about the Christian faith when Karen says, “Other religions have been around so much longer than Christianity. I mean, it only started 2,000 years ago; why shouldn’t I believe in something that has been around longer than your religion?”

Hank replies, “Wait, I think you’ve misunderstood the Christian story. The story of Christianity didn’t begin 2,000 years ago with Christ; the Christian story started long before any other world religion, because Christianity is about what God has been doing since the beginning of time.”

“I don’t understand what you mean,” replied Karen.

“Let me help you understand this timeless story a little better,” says Hank.

That’s the conversation we’re going to have in this series. We are going to answer the question, “How has God been working since the beginning of time, and how does that lead us to where we are today?”

The journey is long and hard for many people, but what we want to understand with this series is that the redeeming journey started at the beginning of time. God continues to work for the same purpose today that he had in the beginning: to restore community between God and mankind. We want to explain this story of God’s relationship with people through the story that we find in the Bible.

In this series, we’re going to help people become more comfortable, knowledgeable, and interested in the Bible. We are going to explore what we need to know about the story, and how God wants to use his story to change our lives. The Bible is not simply a rulebook, a history text, or a collection of spiritual stories with nice morals. The Bible is God’s written revelation of himself. We’ll approach it as one continuous story, divided into parts based on main characters that represent key parts of the storyline. Understand the characters, and you understand the story. From then on, anything you ever read in the Bible can be understood better because you know how the characters fit into God’s continuous plan.

The Story Unfolds...

Session 1: The Beginning of Time

- God created the world and everything in it, including Adam and Eve. Through Adam and Eve’s disobedience, sin entered the world, altering the perfect communion between God and mankind.
- Noah and the flood
- The Tower of Babel—God creates distinct languages, causing people to disperse throughout the earth.



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Session 2: 2100 B.C.

- God promised Abraham many descendants. Abraham lived around 2100 BC in what is now Iraq. God told him to move to Canaan, which later became Israel. Unlike many people, Abraham believed in the one true God. God rewarded Abraham's faith, making him the father of a great nation (Israel) and promising him great things.
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph

Session 3: 1446 B.C.

- Moses led the Hebrew people's exodus to the "Promised Land" of Canaan, after they had been slaves for 400 years in Egypt. God gave Moses the law to teach and guide his people.
- The 10 Commandments and golden calf
- 40 years in the desert and the tabernacle
- Joshua and the conquering of the land of Canaan (the Promised Land)
- The Judges Deborah, Gideon, and Samson
- Israel's first human king, Saul

Session 4: 1010 B.C.

- David becomes King of Israel about 1010 BC and reigns for 40 years. David, unlike his predecessor Saul, follows the commands of God. He makes mistakes, but repents for them. He seeks to please God, and God promises David that his heir will sit on a throne forever.
- King Solomon
- The divided kingdom (Israel & Judah)
- The Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, et al.)
- God's people sent into captivity (Babylon & Assyrian Empires)
- God's people return from captivity (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)
- Persian supremacy, Alexander the Great
- 400 years of silence, Roman occupation of Israel



Session 5: Year 0 (Jesus' birth) to 30 AD (Jesus' Resurrection & Ascension)

- Jesus is born in the town of Bethlehem. The apostle Matthew later points out that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfilled a prophecy delivered by the prophet Micah, about 700 years beforehand (Micah 5:2). Jesus brings us back to God; he is our savior from sin and bondage.
- Pentecost—the Holy Spirit empowers the early church
- The church of Jesus spreads throughout the Mediterranean area (Asia Minor)
- Persecution of the early church

Session 6: The Present—The Work Continues

- After the establishment of the church, we continue the ongoing work and ministry of Christ through the empowerment of his Holy Spirit. We live lives dedicated to Jesus.



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Bible Basics

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 1

Adam & Eve

*Adam and Eve demonstrate the beginning of
God's relationship with mankind.*

In the beginning God created a perfect community, beginning with Adam and Eve, the supreme accomplishments of his creation. Then Adam and Eve sinned and distorted God's perfect creation, sending God on a mission to restore this fallen community back to perfection.

Lesson #1

Scripture:

Genesis 1:26–31; 3:1–24

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

The story of Adam and Eve is the story of creation. Creation might seem like a small part of the Bible. After all, it's only a handful of chapters. But these chapters are foundational to the whole of the Bible, and what we learn in the story of Adam and Eve echoes throughout the rest of the Bible.

The Bible begins with God speaking as "we," and so the story of Adam being created is the story of a creature created by a God who was never alone, a God who is both "I" and "We," a being in community within himself—a being who is community. God has never been truly alone, even before there was a single entity other than him. The story of the creation of the world starts with a fundamentally, profoundly relational God reaching out into nothing at all to call into being something that will become an extension and reflection of his nature as a being in community.

The Garden of Eden and the world as it was when Adam and Eve first lived in it is not just a prologue or a pipedream. It is the real world—the real original, the true prototype. It's not a fantasy, a fiction, a wish, or a longing. It is where we came from—a world where everything is harmonious and together—people with themselves, people with the world, people with each other, and people with God. As one author likes to put it, "Remember: our address once was Paradise." The point is not that everything was good and wonderful and there was no pain. The point is that all of existence was one community that was a reflection and extension of the perfect unity and relatedness within the being of God himself. Paradise was a community of complete oneness.

So, what happened? Sin happened, in a way that altered the course of human history for all time.

Discussion starter:

[Q] Tell of a time when you've worked on or made something that was ruined. Maybe you knitted a magnificent sweater that the dog chewed to pieces, or produced a complex spreadsheet at work that was accidentally deleted.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God established a relationship with mankind at Creation.

Adam and Eve demonstrate the beginning of God's relationship with mankind. Their story also relates the beginning of sin and the distortion of that perfect community relationship between God and us.

Read Genesis 1:26–31.



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- [Q] The story of creation implies all sorts of things about the perfect community between God and humans. What are some of the implications about God and mankind that you can glean from this passage?

Leader's Note: *God is a community himself (v. 26). He cares about his world. He is the creator of all life. He created life out of nothing.*

Human beings were originally good and the highest expression of God's creative genius. You matter because God made you, the most complex and like him of all his creations. We were meant to have value and worth simply because he made us. Human beings are inextricably linked to each other.

- [Q] What are some things that this passage indicates about creation and mankind's perfect relationship to creation?

Leader's Note: *The world was originally good. Work was originally good. Humans have always worked and have always been meant to work side-by-side with God. The world and human beings are inextricably linked. We were given stewardship over this world, and that stewardship continues and will one day be fully restored.*

- [Q] How does the story of Christianity begin here at creation?

Leader's Note: *God begins to interact with human beings. Christ's purpose in this world was to reconcile the relationship between God and man, and that original, blissful relationship began here.*

- [Q] Do you believe that this story of creation is how God really created the earth? Why or why not?

- Does taking a different position on creation (evolution, the big bang) jeopardize the way we understand God's perfect community? What other positions are there, and what are the implications to the Christian story?

Leader's Note: *There are different beliefs, even among Christians, about creation, but even if God chose to create the world differently than we have traditionally understood it, his purpose of bringing mankind back into relationship with him is still central.*

Teaching point two: Humans marred their relationship with God by sinning.

G. K. Chesterton begins his book *Orthodoxy* by saying, "Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian doctrine which can really be proved."

Read Genesis 3:1–24.

- [Q] When was the first time that you can remember feeling ashamed for doing something wrong?

- [Q] What does it mean that they would be like God, knowing good and evil (v. 5)?

Leader's Note: *To be like God means that they would gain a different moral perspective that was independent from God. They did have life and morality that came*



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from God when he created them, but they lost their innocence. They were not like God, because they became susceptible to death and sin.

- [Q]** Adam and Eve could eat from any tree in the garden except one. God wants us to enjoy and take pleasure in all of his creation. Why is it so hard for humans to enjoy the pleasures God has provided for us and say no to the limitations?

Leader's Note: *Our depravity steers us toward desiring what we can't have—the "forbidden fruit" syndrome.*

- [Q]** Excuses, excuses! Adam immediately tried to lay the blame for his failure on Eve. Why is taking responsibility for our sins so difficult?

Leader's Note: *We don't want to face the fact that we are wrong. It's easier to blame others, because then we don't have to change.*

Optional Activity: *In a perfect community, life looked one way, but since sin entered the world, life looks another way. As a group, see if you can figure out the way life looks in a fallen world as opposed to life lived in perfect godly community.*

<i>Perfect Community</i>	<i>After the Fall</i>
<i>Trust</i>	
<i>Obedience</i>	
<i>Openness</i>	
<i>Ownership</i>	
<i>Blessing</i>	
<i>Fellowship</i>	
<i>Work</i>	
<i>Life</i>	

- [Q]** After sin entered the world, the relationship between God and man changed, but it didn't end. What does this tell you about God's desire and love for us?

Leader's Note: *It tells us that God has a love that is indescribably wonderful. God's love is unimaginably incomprehensible.*



PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Author Glenn Stanton says, “We serve a God who created our humanity, weeps at the fall of our humanity, became our humanity, and is redeeming our humanity.”

If you are following Christ, there may be days that seem to be full of ordinary circumstances, but theologically and truthfully, every day with Christ is an extraordinary day. Right now, you're part of God's redeeming story that is constantly bringing you closer to the perfection you will one day experience with Christ and all the other Christ-followers. Does this truth honestly shake you? It should.

Action Plan: How will you let this truth change your attitude about your week?



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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 1

Adam & Eve

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PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God established a relationship with mankind at Creation.

Teaching point two: Humans marred their relationship with God by sinning.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

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Bible Basics

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 2

Abraham & Sarah

God began to restore his community by calling Abram and his wife Sarai (later renamed Abraham and Sarah) to follow him by faith.

Through faith, Abraham worshiped and served an unknown God. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be God's people for all time, thus promising to restore that broken fellowship created with Adam and Eve.

Lesson #2

Scripture:

Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-6; 16:1-2; 17:1-8; Philippians 4:6-7

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Think about a good friendship you've had that fell apart. It may have been a childhood friendship that you outgrew, or it could have been lost because of poor decisions or thoughtless behavior on one or both of your parts.

Perhaps you now think of that friendship wistfully, wishing that it could be restored. Or maybe you think about it with anger, glad that it's over. Then again, maybe you realize it was your fault and you need to seek out your friend's forgiveness. If you choose to ask forgiveness, your friend doesn't have to forgive you and restore your relationship. If he or she does, that is a gift. Your friend might be perfectly justified to say, "Forget you." But if, instead, that person chooses to redeem the relationship, it is because that person has faith in you that you are sincere and mean what you say.

Faith knowingly steps into risky business. That's what your friend would have to do—take a chance on a proven failure. Without faith, the redemption of that relationship couldn't happen. God is in the business of redeeming. But if we want to be part of the story, we must put our faith in a trustworthy God who longs to redeem the broken relationship between himself and man.

Discussion starter:

[Q] Tell of a time when you had to wait a long time for something that seemed impossible to live without. Maybe you had to put that banana-seat bicycle on layaway when you were a kid, or waited for your father to take you to the zoo. Or perhaps you had to wait for your son to come home from war, or your wife to be released from the hospital.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God began to restore his broken community through his covenant with Abraham.

Read Genesis 12:1–4.

With Abraham, God started to rebuild his broken community. He began relating personally to human beings who had been worshiping false gods. God promised that through Abraham he would bless the entire world. What is that blessing about? It began an eventual return to the community between God and mankind that once was in Eden. The God who called Adam and Eve to work by his side now called Abraham to work with him to begin undoing all the damage that had been done. God doesn't give up on restoration, because it reflects who he really is.

So God made a covenant with Abraham and Abraham believed him. It looks like an exclusive thing: that Abraham and only Abraham's descendants will know God and have him on their side. But that's not what God said: "I will bless you and you will be a blessing ... and all peoples



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of the earth will be blessed through you.” God is re-creating his community for all mankind through his covenant relationship with the ones who have faith in him. This covenant relationship starts with God and is based on faith. People of faith will reflect to the world who God is. (See Genesis 15 for the covenant God establishes.) Abraham and his descendants (Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) are called to be a community-on-the-move to bring God’s blessing back to the world. This is a calling that the people of God repeatedly responded to and then drifted away from for hundreds of years, until the people of God seemed lost and failed as slaves in Egypt.

[Q] How is faith demonstrated in the account of Abram in Genesis 12?

Leader’s Note: *Abraham demonstrated faith by packing up everything he had and heading out in obedience.*

[Q] The nation was the Hebrew people; the land was Israel; but how has God blessed the whole world through Abraham and his descendants?

Leader’s Note: *This blessing ultimately refers to Christ coming through the offspring of one of Abraham’s sons. Christ, and our redemption through Christ, is the blessing.*

[Q] What if God said the same thing to you that he commanded Abram (v. 1)? What would your response be?

- Have you ever made a decision that required great faith? Explain.
- If God clearly called you to be a missionary to Rwanda, would you go? Do you even consider these types of promptings as possibilities in your life, or do you have clear boundaries that you won’t allow God to challenge? God always calls us to move to where his Spirit is leading and where he wants us to play a part.

[Q] God is ultimately the chief builder and restorer of community, but God enlisted Abraham to help him. What does God need from people in order to use them for his community?

Leader’s Note: *God requires our faith, willingness, submission, hearts, and actions to join him in expanding his kingdom.*

Teaching point two: God gave Abraham a promise, but he and Sarah took matters into their own hands.

Abraham and Sarah grew impatient for God to do what he promised, so Sarah came up with the bright idea of Abraham having a child through her servant. Abraham readily agreed. Read Genesis 15:1–6 and 16:1–2.

In Genesis 15, God promised Abram a child and Abram believed him. In chapter 16, we see that, although Abram sincerely believed God’s promise, he tried to fulfill it by his own means.

[Q] Why do you think Abram tried to have a child through his servant instead of waiting on God?

[Q] Have you ever forgotten God’s promises and therefore compromised what you knew was right? Tell us about it.



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[Q] Abram was distressed about not having an heir to his line. What is something that has caused you distress and kept you from trusting God?

[Q] What causes you to worry, be anxious, or be impatient?

Optional Activity: *Thinking of what Abraham did wrong, consider the following situations where people are tempted to make the same mistake. Which of God's promises apply to these circumstances, and how would you encourage each person to make the right choice?*

- *Janine, who keeps her company's books, works hard but can never get ahead. When she sees all the money that her company has, she is tempted to siphon some off for herself.*
- *Roger is in an unhappy marriage. A woman at work has paid a lot of attention to him and makes him feel great about himself. He's looking for ways to spend more time with her.*
- *Mary hates a local politician. As a reporter for the newspaper, she is tempted to fabricate a story that would ruin him.*

Teaching point three: God always keeps his promises.

A typical covenant contains three elements: terms, parties, and a promise. A covenant is a type of oath or legal obligation, involving two or more parties, that has sanctions around it. In Genesis 15, God established a covenant with Abram, and in chapter 17 he reaffirmed the covenant. Read Genesis 17:1–8.

[Q] What do you think a covenant is, and what does God promise to Abram through his covenant?

Leader's Note: *nation, land, blessing.*

[Q] Name some examples of covenants from contemporary times.

Leader's Note: *Any sort of contract that you sign: marriages, loans, leases, cell phone contracts.*

[Q] A covenant involves multiple parties meeting the terms of the agreement. God's covenant with Abram is a little different though—it can be called a unilateral or unequal covenant. Why is this so?

Leader's Note: *God's covenant with Abraham is a unilateral (one way) covenant. God's promise to Abraham is not contingent upon Abraham's response. Even though God will punish those who do not comply with his terms, God will still keep his promise regardless of people's actions. This demonstrates that God has a relentless passion to restore community and that nothing will stop him.*



PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Faith is essential to restoring community, but often we experience our deepest need for faith in the midst of trials. Read Philippians 4:6–7, which talks about how to bring peace to our lives when we need to keep the faith.

Action Plan: Abraham, by faith, followed God into unknown territory and even risked his own son, Isaac, eventually blessing the whole world. How does God use your faith and actions to bless the world around you?

Is there any way that God wants to use your faith and actions to bless those around you in which you are not cooperating right now? If so, tell the group what it is and ask them to pray for you in this area.



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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 2

Abraham & Sarah

God began to restore his community by calling Abram and his wife Sarai (later renamed Abraham and Sarah) to follow him by faith.

Through faith, Abraham worshiped and served an unknown God. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be God's people for all time, thus promising to restore that broken fellowship created with Adam and Eve.

Lesson #2

Scripture:

Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-6; 16:1-2; 17:1-8; Philippians 4:6-7

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Faith knowingly steps into risky business. That's what a betrayed friend would have to do—take a chance on a proven failure. Without faith, the redemption of that relationship couldn't happen. God is in the business of redeeming. But if we want to be part of the story, we must put our faith in a trustworthy God who longs to redeem the broken relationship between himself and man.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God began to restore his broken community through his covenant with Abraham.

Teaching point two: God gave Abraham a promise, but he and Sarah took matters into their own hands.

Teaching point three: God always keeps his promises.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Faith is essential to restoring community, but often we experience our deepest need for faith in the midst of trials.



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Bible Basics

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 3

Moses

God called Moses to lead his people out of slavery to the Egyptians.

Abraham's great-grandson rose to a high position in Egypt and brought his family to live there. However, 400 years later, the Israelites had become an enslaved people. God used Moses to free his people from slavery in Egypt. He also gave Moses laws to guide the nation of Israel so they could be God's ambassadors to the world.

Lesson #3

Scripture:

Exodus 19:3–8; 20:8; Galatians 3:19–25; 1 Peter 2:9–10

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

The Lord used Moses to help restore community by fulfilling a long awaited promise (found in the covenant with Abraham) to give the Hebrews a land they could call their own. He also introduced the Law to govern the moral, social, and religious issues of the Hebrew people.

By the time Moses showed up on the scene, God seemed to have been pushed off the face of the earth by everyone, including his own people. But he still didn't give up on the world. He came to Moses at the burning bush and called him to continue the movement of people finding their way back to God. God was being true to his promise to bring his people into a special place where they could reflect and represent who God is to the whole world. Moses was a great liberator, freeing God's people from slavery. He was also a new kind of leader—one who brought a covenant between God and his people based on Law. Though we are used to thinking of laws as things that restrict and restrain us from doing what we want to do, a loving God gave his people the law as a precious gift, so they could understand the God who had rescued them.

This Law is precious. It guides, heals, protects, and liberates. Many of the laws uphold the priority and dignity of God himself. Others laws protect the value and property of people created in God's image. But one thing is certain—this Law is a precious gift that is meant to direct God's people into living lives that are closer to the kingdom of God.

Discussion starter:

[Q] What rule or law annoys you the most, and why?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God is relentless in pursuing a relationship with his people.

When God blessed Abraham, he predicted that people who opposed God and wanted to continue in the sinful path that led out of Eden would rise up against God's people. So when Moses led God's people out of slavery homeward to the land promised to Abraham, there was terrific opposition. There was war and battle. There was carnage and slaughter. Much of the time it's hard for us to understand, because the people of God are doing the slaughtering at God's direction. This is no easy thing to grasp, but the trajectory of the story is clear: God is building relationships with those who will come into relationship with him through faith. And those who refuse this kind of relationship rise up against God's people.

God's struggle is not just with the people who refuse to recognize him and reject him. God's own people are stiff-necked and uncooperative, and though God is relentless in his pursuit of a relationship with them, at times it gets pretty ugly. The same God who wiped out his enemies at times strikes out at his own people who oppose him. But the reason is always the same. As hard as God's means are to understand, the end is to restore people to a relationship with him as



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their provider, protector, and leader. God continued to raise up special leaders like Moses to both rescue the people of God and call them to return to him: people like Joshua, Samson, Deborah, and Gideon. The names are different, but the role is the same—to help the people of God find their way back to him. But the people of God continue to resist becoming who God meant them to be.

Read Exodus 19:3-8.

[Q] In this passage, God clearly told Moses all that the people needed to understand to be considered God's people. Why are God's direct, clear instructions so difficult for us to obey?

Leader's Note: *People often have a hard time following clear simple instructions because they have not changed their way of thinking about a situation. Sometimes people forget that they need to rely on God for his power and not their own. Sometimes we don't follow Christ's rules, because we simply don't make them a priority in our lives. Still other times, though clear and direct, his rules are not so simple because they require life change.*

[Q] This covenant with Moses and God's people is more conditional than the one God made with Abraham. Which promises of God are absolute, and which promises are conditional?

Leader's Note: *Absolute promises are dependent upon God's unchanging nature that flows out in love to us, including eternal salvation for those who trust in Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Conditional promises may depend on our behavior. For example, he will carry our burdens if we cast them upon him, and he will give us his "peace that surpasses understanding" if we trust him.*

[Q] In verses 5 and 6, God told Moses that Israel will be his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. What do these different designations mean?

Leader's Note: *Treasured possession—special to God. Kingdom of priests—people who tell and relay the story of God and do his work. Holy nation—morally holy and set apart as individuals and as a community to represent God to the world.*

In verses 5 and 6, God told Israel that they will be his treasured people, a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests which through the law's boundaries makes them stand out from any other people group in the world. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10, where Peter told his audience the exact same thing.

[Q] What does it take for Christians to stand out in the world, while not retreating from it? Give some examples.

Leader's Note: *As Christians, we must be willing to dialogue with people of different denominations, social classes, and belief systems. We must be strong in our own faith so that we can meet people on their spiritual journey and share with them the journey God has led us on.*

[Q] Read Exodus 19:8 again. Bringing people back to God doesn't happen in a vacuum. Together, the entire nation of Israel spoke their response to God. How does it benefit and



help unite the community when the entire community sticks to the laws or has the same goal in mind?

- What can happen when people in Christian community don't follow the laws of Christ? Can you think of any biblical or personal examples?

Leader's Note: *By sticking to the same laws or goals, Christians can do more work for Christ. By living in harmony, we bring peace and are better equipped to do more work for the kingdom of God. By sinning, love is lost, division occurs, and pride extinguishes humility.*

Teaching point two: The purpose of the law was to reveal the nature of God and lead us to Christ.

The New Testament expands on the purpose of the Old Testament law given to Moses. When Christ came, he clarified much of the purpose of the law for us. Paul explains it for us in the Book of Galatians. Read Galatians 3:19–25.

- [Q] According to verse 19, to what does the promise in the verse refer (think back over the last couple of studies), and who does Paul mean by the “Seed”?

Leader's Note: *This promise is part of the covenant that God made with Abraham—the blessings portion of the promise (Gen 12:3), and the Seed refers to Christ (see Gal. 3:16).*

- [Q] Verse 21 says that the law could not impart life, so why did God set the law in place?

Leader's Note: *The law reveals the awesome character of God. It showed what God expected morally from his people. It also exposed sinful actions and attitudes and their true evil nature.*

- [Q] Verse 24 says that the law was put into place so it could lead us to Christ. When you think of your relationship with Christ, do you think more about rules (laws) or more about grace and faith?

- Do both faith and rules have their place in Christian spirituality? Why or why not?

Leader's Note: *Faith saves, and rules govern our lives. Surprisingly, there are actually more commands in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Just because we are saved by grace through faith does not mean we should partake in any lifestyle we want. We needed faith to be saved, but God wants us to be made holy by obeying him in response to his love.*

- [Q] There is much freedom in being saved by grace and not by laws, but there is also great responsibility to be a positive influence on others. How might you use your freedom for destructive purposes rather than to build others up?

Leader's Note: *For example, I may have no trouble with drinking alcohol, but if my actions cause non-Christians to think less of Jesus, or if my actions specifically cause another brother in Christ to be led into sin, then I have exercised my freedom to enjoy a drink too far.*



New Thing

[Q] How should Christians today think about and respond to Old Testament laws, such as the Ten Commandments, dietary and health related laws, and sacrificial laws?

Leader's Note: *The Laws of the Old Testament are mostly contained in Exodus (Ten Commandments), Leviticus (sacrificial laws, purity laws), Numbers, and Deuteronomy (laws regarding worship, governing, human relationships). The Old Testament contains over six hundred commandments that the Israelites were expected to keep. The Old Testament law is a covenant, which is a binding contract between two parties. All of the Old Testament law is still the Word of God for us even though it is not still the command of God to us. The Bible contains all sorts of commands that God wants us to know about, which are not directed toward us personally. Jesus is the end of the law—he fulfills it. As individuals we need to seek to understand and apply the appropriate commands to our lives today.*

Optional Activity: *Thinking about how to apply Old Testament laws to our lives, take time to discuss what the fourth of the Ten Commandments means to us today. Read Exodus 20:8 and see if the group can come to a consensus as to how we should apply that to our lives. Think about what God might have intended by giving such a command, and what that might mean to us today.*

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

The Law was given by God to the Israelites as a way to distinguish them as God's chosen people. In the same way, Jesus said that the world will know us as his disciples by our love (John 13:35). Discuss how the mutual faith and action of your group or of individuals in your group is helping to represent the love of Jesus Christ to the world around you.

Action Plan: Ask each person in the group to share one strength and one struggle that might communicate to those around them that Jesus Christ lives in them and loves through them.



NewThing

Bible Basics

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 3

Moses

God called Moses to lead his people out of slavery to the Egyptians.

Abraham's great-grandson rose to a high position in Egypt and brought his family to live there. However, 400 years later, the Israelites had become an enslaved people. God used Moses to free his people from slavery in Egypt. He also gave Moses laws to guide the nation of Israel so they could be God's ambassadors to the world.

Lesson #3

Scripture:

Exodus 19:3–8; 20:8; Galatians 3:19–25; 1 Peter 2:9–10

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

The Lord used Moses to help restore community by fulfilling a long awaited promise (found in the covenant with Abraham) to give the Hebrews a land they could call their own. He also introduced the Law to govern the moral, social, and religious issues of the Hebrew people.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God is relentless in pursuing a relationship with his people.

Teaching point two: The purpose of the law was to reveal the nature of God and lead us to Christ.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

The Law was given by God to the Israelites as a way to distinguish them as God's chosen people. In the same way, Jesus said that the world will know us as his disciples by our love (John 13:35). Discuss how the mutual faith and action of your group or of individuals in your group is helping to represent the love of Jesus Christ to the world around you.



NewThing

Bible Basics

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 4

David

God called David as Israel's king because he was a man after God's own heart.

Four hundred years after Moses, God used David to carry on his mission to restore fellowship and community with him. God promised David that he would establish his throne forever. Christ fulfilled that promise.

Lesson #4

Scripture:

1 Samuel 17:20–24, 32–37; 2 Samuel 7:11b–16; 12:7–14

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

David was the best king that Israel ever had. He led courageously, fought bravely, wrote beautifully, and worshiped fervently. He did everything with passion and energy, including his ultimate downfall—lusting after women. Even with his downfall, God declared him a “man after my own heart” and promised him that a king would come from his family line that would sit on the throne forever. This king is the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

David passionately pursued God. He loved God, fought for him, and built a kingdom that centered around him. Through all of David's victories, though, he still bore the mark of humanity. David committed adultery and murder, and tried to cover it up. He also failed as a family man. However, his shortcomings did not stop God from seeing the greatness in him, and also promising to establish a permanent royal line through him. God promised David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam 7:16). Jesus Christ embodied the fulfillment of that promise.

David is not only the greatest king of God's people; he is the forefather of the ultimate savior of God's people. David may not have dreamed that God's promise to him would come in the form of God himself, but nonetheless that's what happened, and we all have the redeeming hope of that promise.

Discussion starter:

[Q] What's the most anticipated promise that anyone has ever made to you?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God wants us to courageously trust him as we battle whatever life throws at us.

Though God had been rebuilding and redeeming his community ever since Adam and Eve, the plan took a turn for the better with David. God promised Abraham that he would bless the entire world through his offspring. God gave Moses the Law that Christ would eventually fulfill, and now God promised David the final plan of redemption—Christ. The life of David, marked by great accomplishment and shame, represents the ongoing calling, conversation, and conflict between God and his people. Kings, boundaries, and circumstances all changed after David, but not the God who with relentless activity and creativity—sometimes tough, sometimes tender—continued to draw people to himself.

But long before David was king, he was a boy who tended his father's sheep. Read 1 Samuel 17:20–24, 32–37.



NewThing

- [Q] Keep in mind that Goliath had been taunting the Israelite army for 40 days, but this was the first time David had seen Goliath. Why do you think David responded differently than the rest of the Israelite army?

Leader's Note: *He was willing to lay his life on the line to honor God's name. He also trusted God with his life.*

- [Q] What do you believe kept King Saul from fighting Goliath himself?

Leader's Note: *Possibly fear, faithlessness, or worry.*

- [Q] According to the passage, what helped prepare young David for this fight with Goliath the Philistine?

Leader's Note: *David had experienced God working in his life beforehand (fighting lions, bears, older brothers, and so on), so he was ready for the challenge.*

- What experiences have you been through that have helped prepare you to follow Jesus on whatever adventure he has for you?

- [Q] David disregarded what everyone told him because he believed that God would help him. Do you trust God to help you fight your battles? If so, how did you come to that point?

Leader's Note: *It seems the more you look for God, the more he shows up to help.*

- [Q] The last thing King Saul said to David was “the Lord be with you.” David helped Saul remember that God really did have the power to help. What helps you remember that the life you're now living is just the beginning of the eternity that is yet to come?

Leader's Note: *It helps to see and hear how God is moving in the lives of other people. We are also reminded through the Bible and our own stories of how God has worked in the past.*

Teaching point two: God always has an eternal plan that was and is fulfilled in Christ.

After David became king, God gradually revealed more of his plan and promise to him. Read 2 Samuel 7:11b–16.

- [Q] Was God talking about David's son Solomon, or was he talking about Jesus in these verses?

Leader's Note: *Both—God was talking about Solomon building the temple, but about Christ in establishing an everlasting kingdom.*



[Q] As Christ-followers, we know that the promise for restored community through and with Christ will happen. What response would best describe the way you feel or think about this fact, and why?

- A. Shocked
- B. Joyful
- C. Speechless
- D. Grateful
- E. Anxious
- F. Comforted
- G. Other

[Q] This promise to David is an unconditional promise (vv. 15–16), just like the one he made to Abraham in their covenant. What does this imply about God's continuing desire to restore perfect fellowship with man?

Leader's Note: *It implies that God's desire is relentless and unstoppable.*

Teaching point three: God never winks at our sin.

God loved David and gave him great honor, but he was also faithful to discipline him as a father would a son. Read 2 Samuel 12:7–14.

[Q] We need courageous people such as Nathan who will confront sin. How can we confront someone in a way that will help to restore rather than alienate them?

Leader's Note: *By being firm, honest, challenging, forgiving, inspiring, loving, and helpful.*

Optional Activity: *Practice confronting in a loving, kind way. Ask for volunteers to role play confronting each of the following people on their sin. Then ask the rest of the group to evaluate whether they think that person's approach would restore or alienate.*

- *Peter, who is married, has started meeting his secretary for dinner outside of work.*
- *Sheila, who is a new Christian, wears low cut blouses and very short skirts.*
- *Mason, who is the church trustee, cares more about the building than the people there.*

[Q] Because David confessed and acknowledged his own sinfulness (v. 13), the Lord forgave his sin. How do confession and forgiveness help establish a restored community?

Leader's Note: *Confession allows us to deal with the sources of our problems. Forgiveness is the result of confession, allowing restoration and community with God and others.*



- [Q] Part of building true community is the practice of truth and confession. How hard or easy is it for you to be honest with others, yourself, and God? Explain your answer.
- [Q] Even though God forgave David's sin, David still had to endure the consequences. How can we deal with the consequences of our sin? What hope does God give us?

Leader's Note: *We know we have God's forgiveness and that he continues to work, even when we've made mistakes. He loves to redeem hopeless situations because it brings him great joy and glory.*

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

David celebrated the life that he had with God. He is known for dancing wildly, making music, and writing emotion-filled psalms. One of the great things about the restored kingdom that comes with Christ is an infinite amount of joy that can begin now, not just when we pass away.

Author Richard Foster says, "Celebration brings us joy, and joy makes us strong."

Action Plan: One way to understand a person's heart is to read something that they have written. King David provided a rich legacy of thoughts in the many Psalms that he wrote. This week read and meditate on some famous psalms of David:

Psalms 23—"The Lord is my shepherd ..."

Psalms 51—"Have mercy on me, O God ...," written after his sin with Bathsheba

Psalms 59—"Deliver me from my enemies ..."

Psalms 63—"My soul thirsts for you in a dry and weary land ..."



New Thing

Bible Basics

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 4

David

God called David as Israel's king because he was a man after God's own heart.

Four hundred years after Moses, God used David to carry on his mission to restore fellowship and community with him. God promised David that he would establish his throne forever. Christ fulfilled that promise.

Lesson #4

Scripture:

1 Samuel 17:20–24, 32–37; 2 Samuel 7:11b–16; 12:7–14

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

David is not only the greatest king of God's people; he is the forefather of the ultimate savior of God's people. David may not have dreamed that God's promise to him would come in the form of God himself, but nonetheless that's what happened, and we all have the redeeming hope of that promise.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God wants us to courageously trust him as we battle whatever life throws at us.

Teaching point two: God always has an eternal plan that was and is fulfilled in Christ.

Teaching point three: God never winks at our sin.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Action Plan: One way to understand a person's heart is to read something that they have written. King David provided a rich legacy of thoughts in the many Psalms that he wrote. This week read and meditate on some famous psalms of David:

Psalms 23—"The Lord is my shepherd ..."

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Psalms 59—"Deliver me from my enemies ..."

Psalms 63—"My soul thirsts for you in a dry and weary land ..."



NewThing

Bible Basics

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 5

Jesus

Jesus Christ fulfills all of God's promises.

Nine hundred and thirty years after David lived, Jesus Christ fulfilled God's promises to Abraham, Moses, his chosen people, and David. God himself, in the man Jesus Christ, came to make perfect community possible through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Lesson #5

Scripture:

John 6:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Jesus' birth opens the final chapter of God's ongoing pursuit of the ones he loves, but who keep turning away from him. Jesus is the beginning of God's final revolution against the sin and suffering of this world. It's a revolution that led him to the cross and to the grave. Jesus defeated the powers of sin and evil that had such a firm grasp on the world since the moment Adam sinned.

The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark Luke, John) all tell narrative stories about the life and work of Christ. The other New Testament letters tell the story of what his followers did and how they followed Christ. The Old Testament prophecies tell about his coming. The Bible is about Jesus.

The four Gospels are the primary part of the Bible that is about Jesus, but in one way or another, Jesus is on every page of the entire book. Jesus is what God has been up to all along, from even before there was sin in the world, because Jesus existed before there even was a world that there could be any sin in. Jesus is the demonstration and ultimate revelation of who God is to people who must choose to either embrace God or continue to reject him. And Jesus is the goal of human history and the history of the universe; in him, all things will be ultimately reconciled to God.

Discussion starter:

[Q] Who is the most powerful or important person that you know personally? What makes them so powerful or important?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Jesus is the way God is bringing the world home to him.

Jesus Christ has many titles, including: Messiah, Prince of Righteousness, Lamb of God, Prince of Peace, Son of Man, Good Shepherd, Lion of Judah, Holy One of Israel, and Son of God.

Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to take away the sins of the world, to make a perfectly restored relationship between God and man possible.

Jesus is God's decisive act of bringing the world home to him. In Jesus, God succeeded in doing what all humans before failed to do: to live like Adam had been created to live. Jesus is fully alive and connected to God, creation, and people. As a human, Jesus was who we were meant to be. As God, Jesus is who we have always failed to recognize and relate to as the ultimate center of our lives. Jesus is the reconciliation between wayward, disobedient humanity and a pursuing, persistent, perfect God.

As the One who is both God and human, Jesus is the one who took all the wrong, sin, suffering, and evil of the world on himself. He absorbs that wrong, strips it of its power, and brings the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God to anyone who will enter into a relationship of love and



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faith with him. Jesus is God opening the door for anyone who wants to walk through it. But just like Adam and Eve, we often reject relationship with God. Yet, Jesus is the way back to God. Jesus is God's decisive act of bringing the world home to him.

The final defeat of evil will be when Christ returns to Earth. Read 1 Corinthians 15:50–58.

[Q] According to this text, what can we expect at the return of Christ?

Leader's Note: *We will be given an imperishable, immortal body because of Christ's victory over death.*

[Q] According to this passage, we will be restored with an imperishable body. What would you want your perfect body to be like? Be creative.

[Q] When you think of Christ, how do you perceive him and why?

[A] Soft, meek, and mild

[B] An intellectual teacher

[C] A friend and comforter

[D] A mighty warrior

[E] A holy savior

[F] Other

[Q] "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Our Lord Jesus stands as the victorious conqueror of evil and restorer of perfection. What does that mean for your daily life now?

[Q] We share in the victory of Christ because we are part of his community. What does that community mean to your daily life?

Teaching point two: Jesus is our only hope for restoration and community with God and each other.

Jesus came to reverse the death and decay that come as a result of people's sin. He wants to be our life and breath—more satisfying than even our daily food and drink. Read John 6:34–43.

[Q] What meal really satisfies you?

[Q] What do people turn to in order to find fulfillment in this world?

➤ What are some things that you turn to that do not satisfy you?

[Q] Jesus called himself "the bread of life" and said that anyone who looks to him will have eternal life. What amazes and satisfies you the most about Christ?

[Q] Jesus says that he will never drive away anyone who turns to him—that his offer is for all people. Are you personally helping or hindering that mission? In other words, do you



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believe that you are helping other people turn toward Jesus or are you pushing people away? Explain.

[Q] What have you been taught about heaven and why do you believe this?

Optional Activity: On a whiteboard or poster board, write down what everyone in the group believes heaven to be like. Look at each item and determine if that is what the Bible says about heaven. If not, where did the idea come from? How might wrong thinking about heaven affect us now? How does right thinking about heaven affect us?

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Oswald Chambers, known for his classical devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest*, says that there is a difference between knowing what Jesus did for you and actually encountering Jesus. The first person understands that Jesus lived, died for the sins of the world, rose, and will return one day. The second person, the one who sees Jesus now, knows what Christ has done, but also sees Christ in everyday life.

[Q] Do you see Christ in your life, in the lives of others, and working in the world around you? How?

Action Plan: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” This is exciting news! Our final restoration in Christ will come at his return, but we don’t need to wait until then to start restoring our lives. The theological word for becoming like Christ during our life is *sanctification*. It’s helpful to take a spiritual inventory once in a while to see how you are doing in that process. You need to understand where you are currently on your journey with Christ, and where you still need to travel. Ask yourself the following questions:

Have I seen God working in my life lately?

How am I seeking Christ in my life?

Am I growing in grace, or am I becoming more legalistic?

Can my friends and family see Christ in me?

Am I keeping a balanced spiritual diet?

When was the last time I shared my faith with anyone?

Am I making an unholy habit of complaining or grumbling?

How is my prayer life going?

What consumes my thoughts and free time?



New Thing

Bible Basics

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 5

Jesus

Jesus Christ fulfills all of God's promises.

Nine hundred and thirty years after David lived, Jesus Christ fulfilled God's promises to Abraham, Moses, his chosen people, and David. God himself, in the man Jesus Christ, came to make perfect community possible through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Lesson #5

Scripture:

John 6:34–43; 1 Corinthians 15:50–58

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Jesus' birth opens the final chapter of God's ongoing pursuit of the ones he loves, but who keep turning away from him. Jesus is the beginning of God's final revolution against the sin and suffering of this world. It's a revolution that led him to the cross and to the grave. Jesus defeated the powers of sin and evil that had such a firm grasp on the world since the moment Adam sinned.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Jesus is the way God is bringing the world home to him.

Teaching point two: Jesus is our only hope for restoration and community with God and each other.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I seen God working in my life lately?
- How am I seeking Christ in my life?
- Am I growing in grace, or am I becoming more legalistic?
- Can my friends and family see Christ in me?
- Am I keeping a balanced spiritual diet?
- When was the last time I shared my faith with anyone?
- Am I making an unholy habit of complaining or grumbling?
- How is my prayer life going?
- What consumes my thoughts and free time?



NewThing

Bible Basics

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 6

Us

We are the hands of God, the recipients of eternal life, and the restored community waiting to be revealed at Christ's return.

Two thousand years have passed since Christ came to Earth, and his church continues to grow throughout the world. The mission that God started with Adam and Eve continues with us today. Restored community is possible for all people, and it's our privilege as Christ-followers to see the vision of God's kingdom, share that good news with the world, and become a part of that mission that culminates in heaven.

Lesson #6

Scripture:

Matthew 9:35–38; 16:24–27; Luke 14:15–23

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Thanks for being part of this journey so far. We have seen God's desire and plan since the beginning of time to restore our relationship with God and others. We've talked about what God covenanted with Abraham, what he gave Moses, what he promised David, and what he fulfilled in Christ, and now we'll see how we are involved in all of it. God continues to bring people back into fellowship with himself, until the ultimate fellowship of heaven is revealed. Then the glory of God will shine on us all.

Have you ever asked yourself the question, *Could I really be a part of that mission of Christ: helping others move along in their journeys with Christ?* Maybe you've asked yourself these other questions, too: *What would my involvement look like? Am I capable of working for God? Do I have what it takes? How could God ever use me?* You can be a part of that mission. There is a place for you in God's plan. Christ has what it takes to help you on this mission. You just need to be willing for him to use you to help restore people to fellowship with him.

Discussion starter:

[Q] What is the most satisfying thing you've ever been a part of, and why?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Embrace the Cross.

Read Matthew 16:24–27.

According to this passage, whoever wants to save their life will lose it; whoever loses their life will find life in Christ. This is a paradox—a seeming contradiction between ideas. Jesus often spoke in paradoxes, challenging us to act against instinct.

[Q] The first part of our journey, and the ongoing goal, is to give ourselves to Christ. When did you realize that you needed Christ more than anything else?

[Q] What does Matthew mean when he says that those who follow Christ must take up their cross, deny themselves, and follow Jesus?

Leader's Note: *Taking up our cross and following Jesus means that Christ becomes the focal point of our life. We can't give up everything that we're doing in life—work, kids, taking care of our homes—but if anything ever comes to the point where it distracts us from our first and ultimate need, Christ, then we must be willing to deny ourselves in order to align our hearts with Christ first.*

[Q] What are some ways that you “deny yourself”?



- How do you keep your life focused and centered on Jesus Christ?

Leader's Note: *Spiritual disciplines such as journaling, studying, fasting, praying, meditating, celebrating, serving, and fellowshiping can help. Lots of what you do can be turned into a spiritual discipline if you use your activity to help you focus on Christ.*

- [Q] Why is it important for your journey with Christ to start with “losing” yourself?

Leader's Note: *Losing yourself means giving yourself over to Christ. Humility before God is one of the most important characteristics any Christ-follower can possess and is more of a journey than a process. To lose yourself to God means that you begin to reorder your life based on what God desires for you and not what you desire for yourself. With humble submission to the will of God, your life can be transformed.*

Teaching point two: Catch a vision for God's kingdom.

There are several ministries that call themselves Acts 29. However, there is not a 29th chapter in the Book of Acts. It stops at chapter 28. So why did a ministry adopt a name from something that does not exist? Because they understand the ongoing mission of all followers of Jesus Christ. We all are moving closer to the restoration of the perfection that is waiting to be revealed to us. Acts 29 is about being restored yourself, seeing the vision of the kingdom of God, and realizing that all followers of Christ are a part of that ongoing mission. We are blessed to help Christ fulfill his mission by bringing people into a journey with him that begins and ends in blissful restoration. Read Luke 14:15–23.

- [Q] In this parable, who do the following characters represent?

- the head of the banquet
- those who wouldn't come
- the crippled
- those in the country lanes

Leader's Note: *The head of the banquet is God. The guests who wouldn't come are the Jewish leaders and others who rejected the invitation. The lame and others out in the country are those who wanted to turn to God.*

- [Q] The invitation to the banquet (eternity with God, heaven) is for all of us, but why did some people decline the invitation?

- Why do people today decline the invitation to be part of God's great banquet?

Leader's Note: *The people in the parable thought they had more important things to do. People today can get caught in the same busyness of life that will distract them from coming to God. Also, other factors like emotional hurt, disbelief in God, poor Christian examples, and confusion in a world with so many spiritual options can contribute to people rejecting God's invitation to the banquet.*

- [Q] After some people declined the invitation, the master ordered his servant to tell everyone about the banquet. Do you really believe, think, and act like God's gift is for everybody? Explain.



Leader's Note: *Often when we find something like great community, we become selfish with it, because we don't want to lose it. We tend to keep out those who don't seem the right fit because they're of a different social class, race, or just seem to be a burden. We need to remember that God's banquet really is for everybody.*

[Q] What keeps you from offering this incredible invitation to people in your life?

Leader's Note: *Time, willingness, selfishness, fear, doubt, uncertainty, or a narrow vision of what God really wants you to be a part of.*

[Q] Name some people you should be inviting into the kingdom.

Teaching point three: Become part of the mission.

Following an Easter service in 2003, a woman approached a pastor and asked, "So what happened with Jesus after the Resurrection?"

"Well, he ascended into heaven and he's still alive," the pastor said.

"I know he was resurrected, but he's alive?" she said.

"Yes, he's alive."

"Alive? ALIVE?! Why didn't you tell me?!"

For the next two weeks, she telephoned everyone she knew and exclaimed, "Jesus is alive! Did you know he's alive?!" [Eric Reed, LEADERSHIP WEEKLY (4-13-04)]

That's the kind of enthusiasm Jesus wants us to spread to those we know and love. Read Matthew 9:35–38.

[Q] What are some ways that you can be a worker for God right where you are?

[Q] Do you see the needs of people the same way that Jesus does? Why or why not?

- Think of someone in your life that is difficult to love. How do your perspective and God's perspective on this person differ?
- If you were to see this person as God does, how would that change your behavior toward that person?

Leader's Note: *You don't have to treat everyone you encounter as a mission with conversion as the goal, but when you see people in the post office, at the gym, or at work, are these just people to you, or are these people who need the love of Christ to enlighten them to a brand new life? Do you ever look at people and reflect on whether they know the living God?*

[Q] Jesus told the disciples to ask God to send out more workers into the harvest field. Are you spending too much of your time in the barn with other Christians? How are you spending your time and talents in the field?



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Optional Activity: Provide everyone with pens and paper. Ask them to list everyone they come into regular contact with who is not a Christian. Next to each name, ask them to write how they might help that person understand who Jesus is by their words and deeds.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

C.S. Lewis wrote the following in *The Last Battle*, the concluding book of his series *The Chronicles of Narnia*:

It was the unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed and then cried: "I have come home at last! This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this."

But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

The characters in this timeless classic finally realized why they loved their own worlds so much, because within their own worlds they caught a faint glimpse of the perfection that came in a land where fellowship had been restored between God and mankind. When the perfect comes, the imperfect will disappear. Thanks be to God for bringing us into this journey of restoration. Come join the celebration of life!

Action Plan: Discuss how you might help those who don't know Christ to catch a glimpse of him in everyday life.



NewThing

Bible Basics

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 6

Us

We are the hands of God, the recipients of eternal life, and the restored community waiting to be revealed at Christ's return.

Two thousand years have passed since Christ came to Earth, and his church continues to grow throughout the world. The mission that God started with Adam and Eve continues with us today. Restored community is possible for all people, and it's our privilege as Christ-followers to see the vision of God's kingdom, share that good news with the world, and become a part of that mission that culminates in heaven.

Lesson #6

Scripture:

Matthew 9:35-38; 16:24-27; Luke 14:15-23

Based On:

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible," by Bill Barton, Big Idea Discussion Guide

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Thanks for being part of this journey so far. We have seen God's desire and plan since the beginning of time to restore our relationship with God and others. We've talked about what God covenanted with Abraham, what he gave Moses, what he promised David, and what he fulfilled in Christ, and now we'll see how we are involved in all of it. God continues to bring people back into fellowship with himself, until the ultimate fellowship of heaven is revealed. Then the glory of God will shine on us all.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Embrace the Cross.

Teaching point two: Catch a vision for God's kingdom.

Teaching point three: Become part of the mission.

PART 3

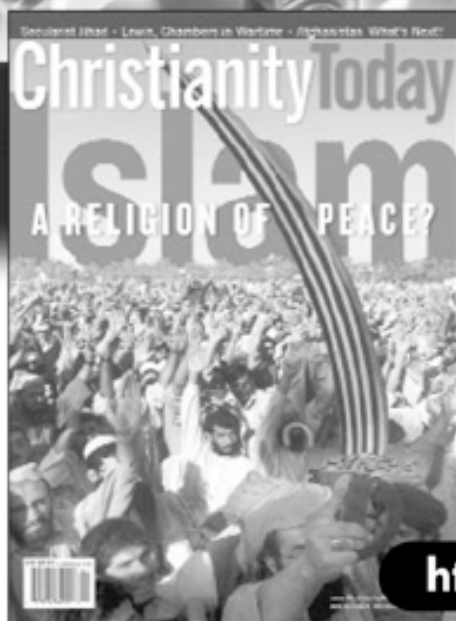
Apply Your Findings

When the perfect comes, the imperfect will disappear. Thanks be to God for bringing us into this journey of restoration. Come join the celebration of life!



NewThing

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