

## WEEK 1

This week as we meet for the first time we will discuss *Discover*, *Nurture*, and *Act* (see 1 page handout you can give to participants)

Take the time to look at the handout together and see if there are any questions. Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Begin with prayer before opening scripture. Ask these questions to prepare people.

- \* What keeps you from digging into the Bible to discover God's character?
- \* When you read the Bible do you have a method you use to study it?
- \* What would most encourage your heart tonight as you open the Bible?

1. **Discover** - Read Ephesians 1:1-2:10 (Consider using handout for all three steps)

A. Jot down your observations here:

If there's still time...

2. **Nurture** - As you read the passage and discussed it, what stuck out? How did it connect to your life this week? Focus in on a smaller piece of the passage like Ephesians 1:3-8 or 2:8-10.

A. Does this passage bring to mind any sin you've committed? Or any lie you've been believing?

3. **Act** - Which part of the passage did you *most* need to hear? How might the Spirit of God be encouraging you to respond to His words tonight?

## WEEK 2

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Begin with prayer before opening scripture. Maybe ask - "What is the gospel? How would you describe it to someone who has no context or background?" Good dialogue like this will enhance one's engagement for the time.

### 1. Discover - Read Luke 15:11-32 (Consider using handout for all three steps)

A. Jot down your observations here:

### 2. Nurture - As you read the passage and discussed it, what stuck out? How did it connect to your life this week? Focus on either the younger or older son. What do both of their actions say about their father? Here are some questions to guide the heart focused time:

- A. What do you think the younger son really wants in life?
- B. Think about the older son's conversation with the father. He says, "I've been slaving for you all these years. Where's my party?!" If he considered his work to be like slavery, why do you think he kept at it? What do you think he wanted in life?
- C. Do you think either son truly loved the father and wanted to be with him?
- D. Their actions look very different, but explain how both sons' hearts are very similar.
- E. After this story return to what the Gospel is. How would you answer that now?

### 3. Act -

- A. Which son do you identify with? How is God inviting you to respond?
- B. What is a specific way you can "enter the feast" of the Father's grace this week?

### WEEK 3

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Take a few moments to simply check in. "How has your week been? Has God been speaking to you from the word last gathering? How?" Don't use all your time here though.

1. **Discover** - Read I Corinthians 15:1-11 (Consider using handout for all three steps)

- A. Jot down your observations here: (read article on the next page "What is the Gospel?")

2. **Nurture** -

- A. How do you understand (or have you understood) *how* you are saved? Furthermore, *why* does God save?
- B. Partnership with God in restorative work is our call in making disciples. What do you think when you hear that phrase, "making disciples?" Is this you?
- C. Can you think of other people you would like to help experience the Gospel in this way as well? Write down their names here: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- D. How is community important for your understanding of the Gospel?

3. **Act** -

- A. Considering the last two gatherings, how would you describe the Gospel to a family member, friend, or neighbor if they asked you? (Maybe write it down in a journal or note in your phone).
- B. Take the names you listed above and spend just 1 minute each day this week praying for those people.

## What is the Gospel: Understanding Two Perspectives

The gospel is called the “good news,” and it is particularly good news about our sin problem. In a nutshell, we can sum it up this way:

The gospel is that God Himself has come to rescue and restore creation in and through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Why does creation (which includes me) need rescuing? Because of sin.

Sin is living for my fame and glory instead of God’s. Sin is living life my way, for me, instead of living life, God’s way, for God. We have all sinned and really need the gospel we desperately need Jesus to rescue us from the penalty and effects of sin, which the Bible teaches is ultimate and eternal separation from God. When we repent (change our mind about who is really God in our lives) and by faith we believe that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection has secured our rescue and restored us to a right relationship with God the Father, then this good news is true for us! We also have been sent out to proclaim this same gospel of restoration to the entire world.

### **Understanding Two Gospel Perspectives**

We can read the Bible across the grain (thematically), and we can read it with the grain (as a story). Both are necessary, and each one leads to a different way of seeing the gospel. It takes both perspectives to understand and engage the gospel fully.

#### **1. Thematically**

The gospel power. We understand the means of salvation.

God—eternal, all-powerful, creator of everything.

Sin—humanity has all chosen self-rule over submission in relationship to God; the penalty for sin is death

Jesus—God incarnate came to die as a substitute for the penalty of humanity’s sins

Faith—by faith in what Jesus did, not by any effort of our own, we are saved from our sins.

In this case, the good news is that God is completely aware of our sin problem and in and through the work of Jesus Christ accepts us AND changes us by the power of His Spirit. We have been saved from the penalty of sin (*justification*), are being saved from the power of sin (*sanctification*), and will be saved from the presence of sin. This means the same power that saved us from the penalty for sin also helps us obey God now.

This results in my understanding that . . . I am more broken and sinful than I ever dared believe, and at the same time I am *more loved* and *accepted* than I ever dared hope because of Jesus.

## **2. As a Story**

The gospel purpose. Here we come to know the reason for salvation. We can look at the gospel through the lens of a story.

### ***Creation > Fall > Redemption > Restoration***

In this case, the good news is that God sent His Son to redeem the world from the effects of sin and create a new humanity. Eventually the whole world will be renewed to the way God originally created it. Rebellion, death, decay, injustice, and suffering will all be removed. When everything is restored, God will be seen by all for who He truly is—He will be glorified.

How does this happen? Jesus helped clarify how we accomplish the purpose of the gospel by giving us His mission: “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). A disciple of Jesus is someone who is learning to apply the gospel to absolutely every part of life. As the arts, industry, politics, families—all areas of culture—are being filled with Jesus’ disciples bringing about His gospel restoration, the earth is being filled with His glory! That is the point of the restoration of all things—that God would be glorified!

The gospel is not just about my individual happiness or God’s plan for my life. The gospel is about God’s plan for the world.

Good News!

When we repent of our sin (view it as God does) and receive the forgiveness and new life that Jesus has offered us, we begin a journey of restoration inside and out as disciples of Jesus. Being a disciple is not primarily learning a bunch of information or maintaining certain spiritual disciplines. Discipleship is not a class or a program you go through. Becoming like Jesus is all about the gospel. A disciple of Jesus is someone who is learning to apply the gospel to absolutely every part of life. The life of a disciple requires allowing the truth of the gospel to sink deep into our hearts, transforming our passions and motivations that in turn radically rearranges how we live. Although we have a role to play, the Holy Spirit is the one who does this transforming work.

This gospel restoration happens in us in the context of a community on Jesus’ mission, and it’s not just for us—but for the entire world!