



Redemptive Story in 10 Images

This study walks through the grand Story of the Bible through a series of powerful images and themes. The Overview section lays out how each image connects and moves the Story forward. While each study can stand alone, our intent is that each study would build on the previous weeks. At the back of the study 10 images are included. We recommend spending a few minutes at the beginning of each Core Group talking through a recap of the Story, using the pictures provided. You may also find it helpful to create a timeline of images to display in your meeting room, or by taping the images on a wall, or using string and clothespins.

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Overview

Have you ever loved a movie so much that you practically had it memorized? Chances are you watched it over and over again, maybe as a kid, or repeatedly during finals week of your first year of college. When certain situations arise in real life that remind you of the movie, quotes leap into your mind and out of your mouth, and you could probably spend hours discussing the intricacies of the show with an equally devoted fan. Every time you watch it (because it never gets old) you know all the scenes by heart (and maybe even all the previews, if you don't skip them). As the music starts, you anticipate the opening sequence, and speak every line along with the characters (hopefully your fellow viewers don't get too annoyed). And if you are like me, individual scenes run through my head as I think about what I have watched. In fact, you are likely to be able to tell the entire story based on its individual scenes, and string it together to form one grand sweeping narrative.

I'd like to analogize this with the greatest story ever told. It's a story much too important and complex to be adequately captured on film (though many have tried). This story is not yet completed but we have an idea of what the ending will be. And it's a story in which every single human being takes part.

It's God's story of the creation and redemption of mankind.



In this study, we would like to provide for you a series of images or scenes that reveal a crucial part of God's story for humanity as described in His written word, the Bible. Though there are many more stories in the Bible that describe God's heart and character and His desires for our lives, too many, in fact, to cover in the span of one semester. However, these few images, when pieced together, should form that grand, sweeping narrative and give you a "big picture" of God's love and design for all of humanity throughout history.

Though you'll delve more in-depth over the next ten weeks, the story that unfolds will read something like this:

In the beginning, God created. He made everything good, and He made mankind in His image as His representatives on earth. They were to live in joyful harmony with God, with each other, and with the creation of which they were stewards. But mankind rebelled against God. As a result, sin entered the world, and death. Enmity arose between humans and God, between people, and between mankind and creation.

God chose a people-group through whom He would reveal His loving nature. This people, the nation of Israel, became enslaved by another nation, the Egyptians, and cried out to God for deliverance. This physical enslavement of the Israelites reflected how all humans had become enslaved to sin and desperately needed a rescuer. God saved the Israelites by bringing judgment against Egypt; He sent death to all the firstborn children of Egypt. In order for the Israelites to escape this same punishment, God required that every family slaughter an innocent lamb and mark their homes with its blood to indicate its substitutionary sacrifice. This foreshadowed that the blood of an innocent and pure substitute would be spilled to pay for the sins of humanity.

God led His people out of Egypt, and established binding agreement, or a covenant, with them, that defined the way they would live and worship. He promised that as long as they kept their agreement to worship Him and serve Him exclusively, He would bless them, and provide for them, and they would experience peace and prosperity. As history progressed, the time came for Israel to build a permanent structure that would serve as the dwelling place of God among His people, the place where they would worship Him.

This foreshadowed the promise that God's Spirit would one day dwell with people personally in their own hearts.

The covenant God made with Israel had not provided an ultimate solution to the problem of sin and death, because rebellion is like a disease in the hearts of people. So God fulfilled the covenant in a most surprising and miraculous way. He came to earth in the form of a man: Jesus Christ.

Jesus lived on earth and proved His authority as the Son of God through miracles and signs. He fulfilled prophecies about God's chosen deliverer, He healed the sick, He even raised people from the dead; and He was completely without sin. In an act of utmost love and self-sacrifice, He became the pure, innocent sacrifice that atoned for sin and delivered humans from sin and death. He died a bloody death on a cross, but then rose from the dead, proving that He had all authority in heaven and on earth, even authority over death.



When Jesus' mission on earth was complete, He returned to heaven. But before He left, He commissioned His followers to love each other as the church community, united by the bond of His Spirit; and to spread the news about His life and death to every people group in the entire world.

As followers of Jesus, we have been given the mission to spread the good news. We anticipate this exciting hope: before Jesus left, He promised to come back. When He comes back, all sin and death and evil will be wiped away from the face of the earth forever. Creation will be made new. We will live with God forever in perfection as He intended, and He will restore us to the place of joyful harmony with God, with other humans, and with the rest of creation.





Week One: Image

Genesis 1:1-2:3, Colossians 1:15-20

Objective

Today, our goal is to learn the beginning of the story, to recognize God as the creator and source of life, and to understand the value and purpose of human beings as the image-bearers of God.

Worship

Read and meditate on Psalms 8, 19, or 139 as a Core Group.

Opening Questions

1. What do you think is your purpose in this life?
2. Who do you most respect? What is it that makes them so worthy of esteem?

Important to Know

Genesis is a book about the beginning. It lays the foundation for the story that is told in the Biblical text, and ultimately throughout all of history. In the first two chapters of the Bible, God reveals His creative nature and shows Himself to be a perfectly wise and loving Father as He crafts the universe with great purpose and attention. The creation account also provides the foundation for our identity as His image-bearers.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3.

Text Questions

1. What does the text reveal about the ultimate origin of the universe?
2. What did God say when He finished each of the individual elements of creation (plants, lights, living creatures)? What did He say after He created mankind and creation was complete (1:31)?
3. What does this account tell us about our worth and value as humans? How is this different from other religions or world views you know about?
4. What tasks does God give to humans in this account? (1:28)
5. Why do you think God gave humans this job? (Ex. We are representatives of God on earth)
6. What does it mean that we are created in God's image? (Ex. God is triune and lives in constant community, so we are called to live in community too)
7. Read Colossians 1:15–16. How is Jesus the ultimate representation of God?

Application Questions

1. How might your self-perception change when you know that you are made in God's image?
2. How will the knowledge that other people are made in God's image change our attitudes and actions towards other people?



Spiritual Exercise

Read Psalms 8, 19, and 139. Spend time outside in nature and think about God and the glory of His creation. Ask God to help you have the perspective that you and every human being on the planet have worth and value as His image-bearers.

Or, put a note on your mirror to remind you of your status as God's image-bearer. "Do I look like God?", or "Bear His image", or "Let them see Jesus in you."





Week Two: Thorns

Genesis 3:1-24, Romans 5:6-8

Objective

To understand how mankind fell from their state of perfect communion with God; to understand how sin, rebellion, and chaos entered the world.

Worship

Sing a few hymns or worship songs, spending time naming and contemplating attributes of God.

Opening Questions

1. What evidence do you see in nature, human interactions, or life in general that leads you to believe things are not as they should be?
2. Have you ever done anything you regret?

Important to Know

In last week's study, we learned about God's masterful work of creating the universe and mankind, to whom he gave special status over the rest of creation. The world was literally perfect! However, when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, sin entered the world, and so did enmity as a result. As a reflection of mankind's rebellion against God in the form of sin, we fell from perfect communion with the earth He created. Only God's grace can save humanity from the deep consequences of sin.

Note: To define it in more comprehensible terms, "sin" means the following: independence from God, selfishness, rebellion against God, choosing evil over good.

Read Genesis 3:1-24.

Text Questions

1. Describe the process that led Adam and Eve to disobey God. What did the snake tell Eve?
2. What did the snake say about God's character and trustworthiness? Was he telling the truth? How do you know?
3. How did Adam and Eve choose to respond to temptation? Why do you think they made those choices?
4. How did God respond to their disobedience (3:9)? How did Adam and Eve then respond to God?
5. What were some of the consequences of their rebellion? (3:7, 15, 16, 17-19, 21, 23)
6. How did Adam and Eve's disobedience affect the relationship between God and mankind?
7. How did it affect their relationship with each other?
8. How did it affect the relationship between humans and the rest of creation?



9. Read Romans 5:6-8. How did God resolve the problem of sin?

Application Questions

1. What are some of the lies you believe which lead you toward sin, and what is the source of those lies?
2. What have been the consequences of sin in your life (both relational and natural consequences)?
3. What is an appropriate response to God in light of the reality of sin in our lives? How do we cultivate a high view of God and a hatred for sin?

Spiritual Exercise

Carry a stone or a small brick everywhere you go this week, contemplating the weight of sin in your life. Read Romans 3:9-22 and think about the cost of sin - your own personal sin as well as the world's. Bring this stone to next week's core group meeting and get rid of it as you learn together about Jesus' perfect sacrifice of atonement for sin.





Week Three: Lamb

Exodus 11, 12:21-42

Objective

To understand the importance of the Passover event as a milestone in Israel's journey toward the Promised Land, and to understand the importance of remembering and celebrating God's mighty acts of grace.

Worship

Sing a few hymns or worship songs.

Opening Questions

1. Have you ever been stuck in a situation where you needed someone to bail you out?
2. What is a personal or historical event that you remember each year?

Important to Know

After the fall, Adam and Eve and their descendants were banished from the Garden. After some time, God chose a people group through whom He would reveal His loving nature. This People, the nation of Israel, became enslaved by another nation, the Egyptians, and cried out to God for deliverance. The physical enslavement of the Israelites reflected how all humans had become enslaved to sin and desperately needed a rescuer. God saved the Israelites by bringing judgment against Egypt; He sent death to all the firstborn children of Egypt. In order for the Israelites to escape this same punishment, God required that every family slaughter an innocent lamb and mark their homes with its blood to indicate its substitutionary sacrifice. This foreshadowed the blood of an innocent and pure substitute that would be spilled to pay for the sins of humanity.

Read Exodus 11, 12:21-42.

Text Questions

1. Describe the final plague of the Egyptians.
2. Why do you think Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go?
3. How did the Israelites escape the deadly plague?
4. How did the Israelites' response to God's command differ from Pharaoh's? What does this say reveal about their view of God?
5. How did God command Israel to remember this event?
6. Why do you think God considered it necessary for Israel to observe a ceremonial Passover in the future?
7. Why do you think Pharaoh finally decided to allow the Israelites to leave?



Application Questions

1. God commanded the Israelites to always remember His act of salvation through the ceremonial Passover festival. In what ways could you remember and celebrate your salvation through Christ on a regular basis? How does remembering as a spiritual discipline strengthen us?
2. In what ways does God's word protect you from destruction today? How could you follow His word more closely?





Week Four: Covenant

Exodus 19:1–6, 20:1–7

Objective

To understand the covenant God made with his people, and how God affirms his love for his people by setting them apart with the law.

Opening Questions

1. What is a covenant?
2. What are some examples of modern-day covenants?

Important to Know

Today's chapter in our story occurs in the Sinai Desert as the Israelites have gathered at the foot of Mt. Sinai at God's command. They are preparing to receive the law. God has delivered them from slavery in Egypt, and led them on a journey through the desert, and Moses has ascended the mountain to receive special instructions from God regarding the Israelites, their status as God's people, and the manner in which they are to live accordingly. Here at Mt. Sinai God enters into a covenant with Israel, the people He has redeemed. A covenant is a legally binding agreement based on the relationship between two parties. Both parties in a covenant agree to uphold certain requirements, regardless of the faithfulness of the other party. There are penalties, however, if one party fails to meet those requirements. In our Biblical context, a covenant is deeper than a mere legal agreement, because it is based on the loving relationship between God and His people. A covenant relationship is also deeper, more personal, and more intimate because it is legally binding. In this week of our study, we'll examine this covenant that God makes with His people, Israel, as He restores them to a place of hope and dignity after 400 years of oppression under the yoke of Egyptian slavery.

Text Questions

Read Exodus 19:1-6.

1. What parts of their history and heritage does God reference in speaking about the Israelites? What has just happened to them?
2. What imagery does God use to describe his deliverance of the Israelites?
3. What requirements of the covenant does God give the Israelites? What must they do?
4. What does God promise to do on his end of the covenant?
5. How does God's treatment of the Israelites contrast with how they were treated in Egypt?
6. In light of their recent enslavement, what might it have meant to Israel to be called God's "treasured possession"?

Read Exodus 20:1-20.

1. What is the first commandment God gives Israel? Why might this commandment be first?



2. What is the theme or focus of the first four commandments? Of the last six?
3. What do these commandments reveal about God's character? What does He value?
4. Why did the Israelites remain at a distance when God was on the mountain?
5. What does Moses tell the people?
6. What is the "fear of God"? How might that keep people from sinning?
7. If the same requirements the Israelites were given at Mt. Sinai were placed on you, would you be able to uphold them? What provision was made for us when we fail to uphold even the most basic of these requirements?

Application Questions

1. In light of the fact that you are also God's treasured possession, what does this say about your worth and value? How do God's specific covenant promises affirm his love for you?
2. How does the fear of God influence your behavior? How does his love for us determine how we should live?

Spiritual Exercise

"A Covenant Relationship." Podcast. Timothy Keller. 10/09/13
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/timothy-keller-podcast/>





Week Five: Temple

1 Kings 8:62-9:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Objective

To understand the value the Israelites placed on the temple, the connection between the temple and God's presence, and that as Christians we house the presence of God.

Worship

Consider lighting a candle in the middle of the room to represent God's presence as you worship. Consider also choosing a song that specifically talks about God being present.

Opening Questions

1. Who is someone you really enjoy being around? Why?
2. What comes to mind when you think of the word "reverent"?

Important to Know

Last week we looked at God's self-revelation through the provision of the Law, and before that, Jesus as our Passover Lamb. After the Passover, Israel left Egypt and went to the desert. For 40 years they wandered in the desert but God's presence never left. During the Exodus, God's presence was marked by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. At Mount Sinai, God ordered the construction of the tabernacle for His place of rest. When Israel settled in the Promised Land, the tabernacle was replaced by a permanent structure - Solomon's Temple.

God's presence among His people in this temple was a shadow of what would be fulfilled by Jesus Christ. In John 1:14, we read that Jesus came to earth to "tabernacle" among us. With His coming, Jesus brought the presence of God to earth in human form. Through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, we now get to experience the presence of God through the filling of the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul points out that we are "the temple of the living God."

In this study, we will look at a passage in 1 Kings where Solomon dedicates the recently completed temple. After an incredible celebration, God speaks to Solomon about Israel's future. Then, we will read in 1 Corinthians about the fact that Christians are modern-day temples of the Holy Spirit.

Text Questions

Read 1 Kings 8:62-9:9.

1. How did Israel celebrate the dedication of the temple?
2. Why did they celebrate so joyfully? What made this event and Solomon's accomplishment so significant?
3. What made the temple different from other buildings?



4. What does it mean that God consecrated the temple?
5. What promises does God make after consecrating the temple?
6. How is God's presence in the temple an indicator of Israel's relationship with God?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

1. According to these verses, what is it that makes us temples of the Holy Spirit?
2. What does Paul mean when he says, "you are not your own"?
3. What activities do you associate with temples? What activities would you be surprised to find taking place inside a temple?
4. Why should we honor God with our bodies?

Application Questions

1. If you are a Christian, God's presence is in you, just like His presence was in the temple. How will this affect how you treat or use your body this week?
2. Though God's presence is always with us, we are not always aware. What are some ways you can experience God's presence more consistently/regularly?

Spiritual Exercise

Practice experiencing God's presence in the ways discussed, and share what happens next week at Core Group.





Week Six: Anointing

Luke 4:14-30

Objective

To see how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies of a messiah who would heal, liberate, and restore joy to his people.

Worship

Sing a few hymns or worship songs, spending time meditating and speaking aloud attributes of God.

Opening Questions

1. Have you ever hoped or waited for something for a long time? Describe how you felt when that desire was fulfilled.
2. Tell a story about a time when you were in a tight spot and someone bailed you out.

Important to Know

In today's study, we are introduced to the hero of our story: Jesus. Jesus came to earth in a humble manner, as a human born to average people of his time. But as we will learn, there was so much more to him than what people saw at first glance. He proved his authority as God by the miracles he performed and the message he proclaimed. In this passage in Luke, Jesus quotes a passage in Isaiah that describes the coming of a glorious messianic Kingdom, which the Jewish people had anticipated for many years. We'll see how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, but not in the way everyone expected. He was the anointed, or chose one who would bring life and light to mankind.

Note: When a person in the Old Testament was affirmed to a particular office or role (usually that of prophet, priest, or king), they were said to be "anointed," which refers to a ritual in which oil is ceremonially poured on the anointed person's head to represent the favor of God and His Holy Spirit resting upon them.

Read Luke 4:14-30.

Text Questions

1. What characterized Jesus' ministry according to vv 14–15? How did people respond to his ministry?
2. Where did Jesus go next? What connection did he have with Nazareth?
3. Why did Jesus go to the synagogue?
4. What passage did Jesus quote in the synagogue? What is this passage about and why is it significant?
5. What commentary did Jesus provide for the Isaiah passage? What do you think he meant by it? What is your initial reaction to that bold of a claim?



6. Who are the “prisoners,” “blind,” and “oppressed” that are spoken of in the Isaiah passage? How did Jesus fulfill this passage?
7. How did the people in Jesus’ hometown react to his message? Why were they offended by what he had to say?

Application Questions

1. What is your response to the anointed one and his message? Do you have an exalted view of Jesus or do you sometimes disbelieve what he says?
2. In what areas of your life do you need Jesus to be the anointed one? Where do you need him to set you free, give you sight, or release you from oppression?

Spiritual Exercise

As people redeemed by Jesus, we share in his ministry. As a core group, practice real responsibility this week & participate in an outreach event on Grounds or in Charlottesville. (For suggestions of outreach events and needs in the community, e-mail serve@xaatuva.com.)





Week Seven: Cross

Mark 15:21-39, Colossians 1:19-23

Objective

To more deeply understand the significance of the atonement and reconciliation offered to us through Jesus' crucifixion.

Opening Questions

1. Describe a time when someone gave you something you did not deserve. How did you respond?
2. Describe a time when you needed somebody to bail you out of a situation. How did it feel to be helpless?

Important to Know

Last week, we discussed the anointing of Jesus as a priest, a prophet and a king. This week, we are studying the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion. His death provided reconciliation to God as well as atonement for our sins, and it was the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' anointing on earth.

Images and descriptions of the cross of Jesus Christ reverberate throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament points to Jesus' atoning sacrifice while the New Testament describes His crucifixion and its immense meaning for those who follow Christ.

The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." The meaning of the cross in our lives has everything to do with our relationship with God. It represents the grace, salvation and forgiveness offered to us. If we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we can experience these things which lead to eternal life (1 John 4:14-15).

Colossians 1 describes some of the implications of Jesus' death and how our lives are different because of it. As you read the texts, contemplate what the passages reveal about the significance of the cross both then and now.

Text Questions

Read Mark 15:21-39.

1. Why was Jesus sentenced to crucifixion? What in the text points you toward that thought?
2. What did Jesus' mockers say to Him from the foot of the cross?
3. Could Jesus have saved himself? Why didn't He?
4. What did Jesus cry out from the cross?
5. What does this indicate about what He endured on the cross?
6. Why did God forsake Jesus?



7. What was the significance of the temple curtain being torn in two after Jesus' death? (See Hebrews 9:1-9 for context)
8. What was it about Jesus' death that you think made the centurion believe?

Read Colossians 1:19-22.

1. What was our status before God prior to the cross?
2. What is our status before God now?

Application Question

1. What is one way your life has changed because of Jesus' sacrifice? How can you respond to that gift this week?

Spiritual Exercise

One appropriate response to Jesus' crucifixion is thanksgiving. Read Isaiah 53, a prophecy about His death, thanking God for His mercy. Spend time contemplating His sacrifice and praising God for His atonement of our sin through the cross of Jesus Christ.







Week Eight: Communion

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Objective

To understand the importance of communion and the fact that it is primarily a community-oriented event.

Worship

Consider doing worship at the end of Core Group after taking communion together. Sing Jesus-focused songs such as “Nothing but the Blood.” Remember to provide lyrics!

Opening Questions

1. If you grew up in a church that took communion, how did you practice it?
2. Do you think of communion primarily as an individual or corporate activity? Why?

Important to Know

Last week we looked at the impact of the cross in our lives. This week we are looking at how the cross should impact our community. In the church age, two images are central to the functioning of God’s people in community: water baptism and communion. Communion came out of the Jewish Passover tradition. On the night Jesus was betrayed, He shared the Passover meal with His disciples and ordered them to take the communion meal as a community until His return.

Communion has taken different forms over the years, and different branches of the church have developed different beliefs about the meaning and handling of communion. We believe that communion is a symbolic act of faith in community, and any group of believers can take communion together.

In today’s Bible study, we discover that the Corinthian church had been mishandling the practice of communion. They were gathering in homes to share a feast as a community, but the poorer members were being denied food and drink, while the more privileged were getting drunk and hoarding the food. Paul is infuriated that such a special meal was being abused, so he corrects the believers and reminds them of the true significance of the event; the communal remembrance of Christ’s death. Paul considers “discerning” (or recognizing) the body of Christ as extremely important. The “body of Christ” refers first to Christ’s sacrifice, but also to the Christian community

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Text Questions

1. According to verses 17-22, what is the problem at the Corinthian church’s gatherings?
2. Why does Paul tell them the meal they are eating is not the Lord’s Supper?
3. What are the essential elements of the Lord’s Supper? What do they represent?



4. How is the Lord's Supper both a past and future-oriented event? Why is this important to remember and proclaim?
5. What would be an unworthy manner in which to take communion? A worthy manner?
6. What are the warnings given in vv. 27–32 regarding communion? Remember that these warnings deal primarily with sins in the community event, not personal sin.
7. In what ways can we examine ourselves (v. 28) before taking the Lord's Supper?

Application Questions

1. How can we make a big deal of one another as we come together in times of communion and community?
2. How can remembering Jesus' death and His future return help you in your day-to-day faith journey?

Spiritual Exercise

This week we recommend taking communion as a Core Group. Prepare the bread and the grape juice (common substitute for wine, which should not be served in Core Group) in advance. We recommend using one loaf of bread, and a common cup. Play a soft worship song and give everybody time to reflect. During the song, begin by reading 1 Corinthians 11:23–24. Pass the bread, say a prayer of thanksgiving for the bread and eat together. Then read 11:25–26. Pray over the cup and then pass the cup around for everyone to drink. Close with worship.





Week Nine: Map

Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 28:16-20

Objective

To realize the universal nature of the hope found in the Gospel and to recognize our role in God's command to proclaim His name across the globe.

Opening Questions

1. Think about someone who has changed your life for the better. What aspects about their life/personality made them stand apart?
2. Have you ever experienced being part of a culture that is different from your own? How did that make you feel? What did you learn?

Important to Know

Last week, we studied the ordinance of Communion and how it reflects and impacts our community. This week, we will be examining God's design and purpose for human communities around the world.

God's desire to be glorified and exalted by every tongue, tribe, and nation is expressed throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, the command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28, Genesis 9:1) is given to God's people as the means of spreading His glorious image to every corner of the world. Then, in Genesis 12, God tells a man named Abram to leave his country and go to a new land, promising him that "all peoples on earth will be blessed" through Abram and his descendants because of his obedience.

Deuteronomy 4:5-6 reveals one of God's purposes for giving us the Ten Commandments: "Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

The New Testament is also full of examples of God's missional purpose and love for the nations. God's gift of salvation and eternal life is for *all* people (John 3:16) and is universal in nature. Matthew 28:18-20 is known as the "Great Commission": the call to spread this message to every people group across the globe. He calls us to action through His Word, revealing His desire for us to move from adoration to proclamation so that He can receive the utmost glory through worship from every nation of the world.

Read Matthew 9:35-38.

Text Questions

1. Why does Jesus have compassion on the people He sees in the towns and villages?
2. What does Jesus tell His disciples to do? Why?
3. What, or who, is the "harvest" Jesus speaks of?
4. Who are the "workers"?



5. What is an appropriate response to Jesus' recognition that "the harvest is plenty, but the workers are few"?

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

1. Why did the disciples go to the mountain in Galilee? What does this say about how they viewed Jesus? (Read Matthew 28:5-7 for context)
2. What were the three action points Jesus laid out for His disciples in this passage?
3. Which would you consider to be the most important? The most difficult?
4. What is Jesus' role in the Great Commission? What assurance does Jesus' presence provide?
5. What does the context of this passage (after Jesus' resurrection from the dead, before His ascension into heaven, and His last words to the disciples) say about the importance of these words?
6. What would have happened if the disciples had not followed through in obedience?

Application Questions

1. Do you react with the same compassion as Jesus when you interact with people who do not know Him? What are some things that hinder that compassion? How can you grow it?
2. What are some ways you can be involved in sharing the gospel with people of all nations?
Leaders: Think through the categories of Praying, Giving, Going, and Welcoming (ex. Internationals).

Spiritual Exercise

During your Core Group meeting, use the model of Acts 1:8 to pray. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Pray for people in your city or community (Jerusalem), your state or region (Judea), your nation (Samaria), and around the world (the ends of the earth).

This week, pray and ask God how you can serve in fulfilling the Great Commission. Think through the categories of going, giving, praying, and welcoming.

Going: Pray for the lost places to bring in the harvest. Giving: Pray about financially supporting the workers bringing in the harvest. Praying: Commit to praying for a "field" of the harvest. Welcoming: Pray for international students who are studying here.







Week Ten: Tree

Revelation 21:1-7, 22:1-6.

Objective

To understand the end of The Story, its implications for our lives, and how it should motivate us to live a life of purpose and worship while we wait for Christ's return.

Opening Questions

1. What things in life remind you of "perfection"?
2. What comes to mind when you think of heaven? What do you think it might be like?

Important to Know

Last week we discussed the importance of gospel proclamation that all nations might come to know and worship Jesus. This week, we focus on the end result and the fulfillment of God's kingdom. This is represented by our final image, the Tree of Life.

In the beginning, God created humans and placed them in the Garden with two trees: the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They were forbidden to eat from the second tree, but Adam and Eve disobeyed and were cast out of the Garden. They were cut off from the Tree of Life so that they might not eat of it and live forever in sin, but God always had a plan to restore humans to eternal life in His glorious presence.

Text Questions

Read Revelation 21:1-7.

1. What will our relationship with God be like in the new heavens and earth?
2. What is the "old order" of things that will pass away?
3. How will our lives be different from what they are now? What will we no longer experience in heaven that we experience now?
4. What does God promise to him who overcomes?

Read Revelation 22:1-6.

1. How is heaven portrayed in this passage?
2. What stands on either side of the river of life? What are we told about the tree of life and its fruit and purpose?
3. What curse will no longer be there?
4. How will we experience restoration of what was in the beginning?
5. When are we told that these things will take place?



Application Questions

1. In what areas of your life do you need to remember the hope of Revelation 21:4?
2. How does the knowledge of heaven change your attitude about evangelism?

Spiritual Exercise

Sing some songs that declare God's glory and the hope we have for His return. Consider planting a tree somewhere (with the property manager's permission) as a symbol of our hope and anticipation of the return of Jesus.

