



LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES



summer 2020



PRESTONWOOD
STUDENTS

HIS STORY



Essential Doctrine

Sanctification | As you look at the whole book of James, you can get lost in the many ways to live as a mature follower of Christ. If you zoom out and take a look at the whole book though, you see something that brings everything together into one word: sanctification. This is the process by which we are all growing in our faith and maturing in our likeness to Christ. Sanctify means “to set apart.” Once we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, we move from being lost to being a child of God. Then we are on the journey of sanctification until either we die, or Christ comes back again.



† Christ Connection

The whole book of James is a Christ-connection, if we are being honest. James wrote this book because he wanted his readers to mature in their faith in Christ by living what they say they believed. Some of the things James asks of them in his letter are hard to hear. They definitely aren't the easy way. However, they are exactly what Jesus taught us during the Sermon on the Mount. James even points us to Christ's Second Coming, which is a big connection. In James 5:7–9, Christians are being urged to endure their trials and suffering in eager anticipation of the “coming of the Lord.” He is coming again to make a new heaven and a new earth!

- When is the last time you read a whole book of the Bible from start to finish? What was the book?
- What passage in James has stood out to you the most in the past?
- Take a moment to have the students skim through the entire book. What jumps out to them? What chapter are they looking forward to reading this week?
- You will apply two questions to your life every day this week as you read through James. The first is, “What does this passage teach you about God?” The second is, “What does this passage encourage you to apply to your life?”
- How would you answer those questions about this morning’s message?
- How do you normally feel and respond when you face trials?
- How did you handle quarantine life? What made it so hard or so easy for you?
- During trials, how can you reach those around you who are having a hard time?
- During quarantine, how did you reach out to those around you?

The Importance of Going

*Genesis 1:28; 11:1-9; 12:1-3; Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 2:11-19;
Romans 9:8; Revelation 7:9-12*

MAIN POINT:

God's Mission is Our
Mission for the
Nations

HIS STORY



Essential Doctrine

The Nations | Isn't it incredible that the world is filled with individuals who are so different from one another. Think about the individuals you interact with every day and make a list of the differences on a sheet of paper. The dissimilarities you listed may span from languages, cultures, religious beliefs, skin color, socio-economic status and yet there's a very significant similarity: God's love. Where humans have created barriers between each other because of differences, God has created highways. He does so by His overwhelming and overreaching love. It's essential to prevent differences between you and those around you from creating barriers. When barriers are up, it becomes extremely difficult to relate with people and share the love of Christ with them.



Christ Connection

In 1 Timothy 2, a very clarifying statement is made about God—It says He “desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2:4). Understanding that God wants all to come to a saving relationship with Him, which includes the nations and those who are different from us. If God desires all to be saved, our part is to tell all about the love of Jesus. There isn't a single person who is out of God's reach.

The Importance of Going

John 3:16; Matthew 22:39; Luke 4:42-43; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-12; Ephesians 3:20-21; John 4:1-26; Luke 8:43-48

HIS STORY

MAIN POINT:

As Christians, we are called to bring the kingdom of God to those around us and share the truth of the Gospel



Essential Doctrine

Kingdom of God | The Bible uses the phrase “the kingdom of God” many times, and it can have three different definitions, but all are connected. One definition is “the rule of Jesus on earth in the future” after the world is redeemed, after the Rapture. Another definition is “the family of God” including all who are Christians – daughters or sons of the King. The last definition is “heaven,” where God reigns today. All three have different meanings, but each definition depends upon where God is – present, future, or in the believer today!



Christ Connection

In order to be like Jesus, and live as He did, we are required to serve in daily life ministry as He did – intentionally – with those around us!



In Defense

When we became a Christian, it was probably because someone around us told us about Jesus, whether it was someone at church, a friend, a family member or a pastor. It was through someone’s being intentional with the Gospel and knowing that the kingdom of God had to be shared. In the Great Commission, we are told to bring the kingdom of God here and be willing to spread the Gospel to people – in our community, our nation or another country. The willingness comes from asking the Holy Spirit to help us to be more like Jesus. Jesus was intentional in His ministry, and He equipped His apostles and challenged them with spreading the Gospel. Those people equipped and challenged more people to spread the Gospel, and now it has come to us. As Christians, we have a duty to live on mission for God. It is lived out through the outward expression of being the Church, through prayer, community and servanthood. Let’s be willing to bring the kingdom of God here and tell people about Jesus!

UNIT 11 | SESSION 1

A SHEPHERD SLAYS A GIANT

1 Samuel 16:7; 17:23, 26, 34-37, 45-51

MAIN POINT:

God is looking for
a king who reflects
His heart and will
fight for His people.

HIS STORY

- What are some expectations our culture usually holds for those who will become effective leaders?
- What are some snap judgments we tend to make about others based on their appearance? How does this account warn us against misjudging others?
- How is the truth that “God looks at the heart” both bad news and good news for you?
- What are some areas where you need to step out and demonstrate your trust in God through action?
- What are some giants in your life right now? How can the work of Christ in your place give you the courage to face them?



Essential Doctrine

Christ as King | God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.



MAIN POINT:

God's people are to trust in Him for justice and show grace to all.

HIS STORY

- **What dangers do we experience if we rely solely or too heavily on circumstances as we make decisions? What can we do to safeguard ourselves?**
- **How can we involve others in the decision-making process to take advantage of their wisdom? Who in your life can you turn to for wisdom?**
- **What are some ways that we tend to handle conflict?**
- **Are there any differences between how Christians generally handle conflict and how the world does? Why?**
- **What are some ways we can shower mercy and grace on others with whom we might find ourselves in conflict?**
- **How should Jesus change our perspective on conflict with others?**



Essential Doctrine

God is Just | God establishes standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).



Christ Connection

David refused to take the life of his rival Saul even when his own life was in peril because he trusted in God for justice. Jesus trusted His Father's plan and laid down His life for His enemies so that they would be spared from death and become part of God's family.

In Defense

If David took an oath not to cut off Saul's descendants, why did he later allow the Gibeonites to kill seven of them? David's agreement was that he would not wipe out Saul's descendants as a way of "cleaning house" when he took over the kingship of Israel. That was the normal practice in the ancient Near East when a ruler established a new dynasty (that is, a ruler of a different family line from the previous king); it was done to eliminate other potential claimants to the throne. David not only kept his agreement, he invited a member of Saul's family line to eat at the royal table and restored a generous inheritance to him (2 Sm 9:1-13).

Saul, in attempting to exterminate the Gibeonites, had brought great guilt on himself by violating the centuries-old agreement in which the Israelites had allowed them to live in the land (Jos 9:3-15; 2 Sm 21:2). Because Saul, as leader, represented all Israel, his guilt led to the spread of famine (2 Sm 21:1). To bring an end to God's judgment, David agreed to let the Gibeonites take limited revenge on the house of Saul. As a remedy for Saul's homicidal actions, this "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" principle (Dt 19:21; cp. Ex 21:24; Lv 24:20) was effective; God lifted His punishment from Israel (2 Sm 21:14).

HEAD

- **Have you ever taken the initiative to reconcile with someone that hurt you? What was that like?**
- **How can being passive allow opportunity for negative feelings to grow within you for that person who hurt you?**

HEART

- **How does this account show us that we always need to check our desires and circumstances against the truth of Scripture?**
- **When have we been guilty of saying something was God's will just because something felt right or the circumstances were lining up?**

HANDS

- **What does this account teach us about the ability to offer forgiveness to others?**
- **How does the gospel equip you to extend forgiveness to others this week?**

HIS STORY

- Why is remembering God's past faithfulness in our lives important when it comes to trusting His faithfulness to us in the future?
- How can we be physically at rest but still spiritually restless?
- What are some of the causes of the restlessness we feel?
- What particular promises of God have you found most helpful during difficult times?
- When have you struggled to believe these promises?



Essential Doctrine

The Church and Kingdom | The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the reign of God in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the full manifestation of God's kingdom in the future. The church's mission is to witness to God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Christ and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.



Christ Connection

God promised David that future kings of Israel would come from his family and that his kingdom would last forever. God kept this promise by sending Jesus as one of David's descendants. All of history is driving toward the day when Jesus, the Son of David, will be recognized as the King whose kingdom is everlasting.



In Defense

This important passage (7:16) is the Bible's earliest full statement about the enduring Davidic dynasty (but cp. Gn 49:10). Did God break His promise when He allowed the Babylonians to conquer Judah in 586 B.C., ending the independent political rule of the Davidic kings? Although the line of David continued during Israel's exile (2 Kg 25:27-30) and afterward (Mt 1:12-16.), the family dropped into obscurity after the governorship of Zerubbabel (Hg 1:1). But this passage can be understood as a messianic prophecy fulfilled by Jesus, who was of the line of David (Mt 1:17; Lk 1:32; Rm 1:3). God had promised through several OT prophets that the line of Davidic kings would one day be reestablished (see Isa 11:1; 9:7; Jr 23:5; 33:15-17; Ezk 34:23-24; 37:25; Hs 3:5; Am 9:11). With the coming of Jesus the Christ (Messiah, "anointed"), the ultimate descendant of David and King of the Jews (Mt 27:11, 37; Mk 15:2, 26; Lk 23:3, 38; Jn 18:33-34; 19:19-22; Rev 17:14; 19:16), God fulfilled His promise eternally.

HEAD



- What dangers come with the faulty mindset that God needs us?
- Why might humility come easier to the person who recognizes that God doesn't need him or her?

HEART



- What are some graces and mercies in your life that stir up gratitude in your heart?
- Why should this gratitude lead you to follow God on mission?

HANDS



- How can we encourage and challenge one another to live with an eye on eternity, rather than merely on today?
- Who do you know who is enduring a time of restlessness? How can you share about the rest provided in Jesus this week?

MAIN POINT:

God's grace through Christ invites us to come sit at His table as His children.

HIS STORY

- What are some ways we can intentionally seek out how to do good for others?
- What wrong motives might guide our good deeds?
- What does it tell us about God that He stoops down to bless us?
- Put yourself in place of Mephibosheth. How would you have reacted had you received the blessings he received?
- Why should God's grace to us motivate us toward greater love and obedience to Him?



Essential Doctrine

Adoption | Adoption into God's family is one the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we pardoned from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of identity—we become children of God (John 1:12; Gal. 4:5). Through adoption our relationship with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now restored, resulting in the benefits of being an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).



Christ Connection

King David extended undeserved and unexpected kindness to Mephibosheth when he restored his lost estate and invited him to eat at the king's table with his own sons. God has extended kindness to us by graciously adopting us into His family as His children through Christ. As God's forgiven children, we look forward to celebrating at His table in His kingdom forever.

HEAD



- What is the connection between grace and obedience?
- How should the grace of God in our lives motivate us to greater obedience to Him?

HEART 



- **What does this story teach us about our motives when it comes to serving others?**
- **How does the gospel challenge any selfish motivations toward giving or serving others?**

HANDS



- **How do our lives imitate Mephibosheth in this story? How should our lives imitate David's actions in this story?**
- **What acts of kindness might you display this week to those who may have physical or mental differences?**

MAIN POINT:

HIS STORY

- **What can we do to keep ourselves from getting too comfortable as Christians?**
- **What are some long-term consequences that sin can bring into our lives? How might you have seen some of these in your life or in someone else's?**
- **How have you seen sin draw you or someone else to deeper sin?**
- **When have you tried to cover up your own wrongdoing? How did events spiral out of control?**
- **What parts of David's confession stand out to you? What parts can you easily identify with?**



Essential Doctrine

Repentance | Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion..



Christ Connection

Even David, the greatest of Israel's kings and the man after God's own heart, was a sinner who needed to repent and be redeemed. In the story of David, we recognize that we all need forgiveness through the sacrifice of a perfect King who would take upon Himself the punishment our sins deserve.

HEAD



- **Why do we often underestimate the power sin can have in our lives if left unchecked?**
- **What are the immediate and long-term dangers of not dealing with the sin in our lives?**

HEART



- **Where does sin usually come from (see James 1:14-15)?**
- **Why is it important to understand where sin originates?**

HANDS



- **Why was genuine repentance in the life of David so important? Why should it be important in our lives today?**
- **What are some sins you need to confess to God and repent of this week?**

MAIN POINT:

The Lord is the Good Shepherd who lovingly cares for His people.

HIS STORY

- What do you think the metaphor of shepherd communicates about God's character? About our relationship to Him?
- Why do we find it difficult to rest in the Lord's provision? What are some ways we can grow in this area?
- How has the Lord rescued you from getting stuck in life?
- How have you seen the Lord guide you away from a wrong path in your life?
- When have you experienced and felt God's love to you in the midst of trouble?



Essential Doctrine

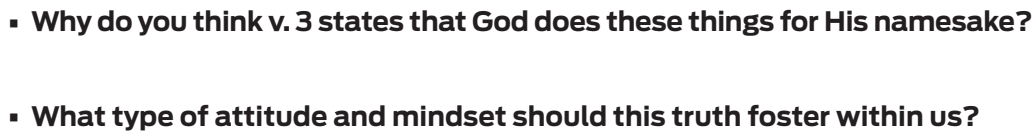
God is Love | To say that God is love is to say that God is the essence of love, or that perfect love both resides and resonates within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God. The greatest act of love by God toward humans isn't the giving of earthly goods but the giving of Himself in Christ so that we might become reconciled to Him.



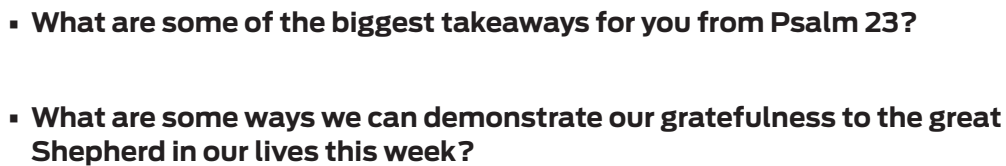
HEAD



HEART



HANDS



HIS STORY



Essential Doctrine

The Resurrection | The Resurrection changed everything. The Resurrection proved to the world that Jesus was not merely a man but was really the Son of God. And today, the Holy Spirit in us (whose indwelling is made possible only because of the Resurrection of Jesus) shows to the world around us that we are not mere men, but we have been changed by the power of Jesus. When we recognize the power and implications of the Resurrection, we are able to understand the things around us more accurately. Not only that, but when we recognize the power of the Resurrection – that we are not limited to our own human power and understanding – and we recognize that we serve a God who has conquered death, we get to walk alongside Him in His power to accomplish the goals He has set for us. Because Jesus was raised to life, we get to live with Him, for Him, and by Him in all things.



Christ Connection

In Philippians 3, Paul makes it clearly known that there is salvation in no one else. If anyone could look to his own works and righteousness and try to claim his own salvation, it would have been Paul. But he, through the saving work of Jesus, came to recognize that even his own righteous efforts could never be enough. In Philippians 3:9–11, Paul says that he does not have a “righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith – that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Paul is telling the church at Philippi – and even us today through the written word of God – that it is faith alone in the life, death and Resurrection of Christ that makes our own resurrection possible.



In Defense

“Did Jesus really rise from the dead?” This question can leave us a little dumbfounded in knowing how to answer it, and the questions that might follow. While you may believe Jesus rose from the dead, would you know how to explain this to someone? While there are tons of research out there seeking to answer this very question, there is just one way you can begin to share this truth with confidence. According to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus rose from the dead. It wasn’t just a spirit, but the very physical body of Jesus that rose from the dead and began to interact with those around Him. The writers of the Gospels claimed this very truth and were willing to risk their lives for it. The veracity of it ultimately landed on their shoulders if it had been proven false. But the disciples were eyewitnesses to the Resurrection and were willing to risk their lives to tell us about it through the Word of God.



James | 1 Week
the book of James

Missions | 2 Weeks
God's heart for the nations

The Great King | 6 Weeks
the life of David

Goal Setting | 1 Week
accomplishing God's best

Claim Your Campus | 1 Week
own and prayer over your school

