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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 36 | SEPTEMBER 6-10



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S


## LET'S TALK – SEXUAL IMMORALITY

James 4:1–4; Romans 7:18–19; Romans 1:21–28; Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31–32; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:18–20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7


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**main point**  We are all created equal and equally created by God.

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**essential doctrine**  **Equality**  
All of humanity can trace their roots back to two people ... Adam and Eve. We were created in the image of *one* God, not in the images of *multiple* gods. God made each of us to be unique and uniquely designed, but He made us all to be in His image. Therefore we must treat everyone with dignity and respect, no matter their skin color, hair color, belief set, convictions, etc. We should love exactly how God called us to love one another – just as Christ loved the Church.

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**Christ Connection**  Jesus came to the earth to be a sacrifice for all mankind. He didn't come to die for a segment of people or a finite group of individuals. He came to die for all and because of this, we can all live forgiven lives. We have the chance to share this message with everyone around us.

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## devotional questions



- Will you draw a line in the sand and do what is required of the Lord?
- Instead of looking at the differences in others, how can you start looking at the similarities that make us all who God says we are?
- Do you get caught up in race sometimes? Is this beneficial or harmful to your relationship with God?
- Have you talked to family and friends about sin lately? How can discussing sin help others be reconciled to God?
- Make a list of ways you can build unity at home and school. How do you react when someone mistreats you?
- As many new people groups move into our communities, we have a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus with them. Devise a plan (with your family/friends) to go out and share the Gospel with people living on your street. Pray and ask God to make you bold and courageous enough to share Him with others.

## discussion questions



- What do you think racism is?
- What has been your experience with racial tensions over the past 12 months?
- How do you think Christians should address the issue of racism?
- What does the Bible teach us about racial issues?
- How does the Bible tell us to act when it comes to racial issues?
- How do you feel when people stereotype you or discriminate against you?
- In what ways have you seen yourself being prejudiced, biased or even racist?

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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 37 | SEPTEMBER 13-17

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S



## LET'S TALK – RACIAL TENSION

Deuteronomy 32:4; James 4:12; Psalm 19:7–9; Psalm 103:19; Genesis 1:27; Acts 17:26; Romans 5:12; Romans 3:22–24; Revelation 7:9–10; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:10–22; Matthew 28:18–20; Jeremiah 22:3; Galatians 6:10; Leviticus 19:34

### main point



God defines justice for us and gives us a constant and trustworthy measurement by which to live our lives. True biblical justice always advances the Gospel.

### essential doctrine



**God is just. God's Word calls for us to "do justice."**

*Biblical justice seeks to protect individual liberty while promoting personal responsibility. It is the equitable and impartial application of the rule of God's moral law in society. There is no clear and right definition of justice that excludes God. So, to grasp justice, we must go to God's Word. The Bible condemns injustice because God is just. As the ultimate lawgiver, He strongly opposes injustice. His laws are righteous and must be applied without partiality because justice identifies the moral standard by which God measures human conduct. —Dr. Tony Evans, Senior Pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*

We seek God's will daily through His Word to know what he is calling us to in regard to biblical justice.

*God created both soul and body, and the resurrection of Jesus shows that he is going to redeem both the spiritual and the material. Therefore, God is concerned not only for the salvation of souls but also for the relief of poverty, hunger, and injustice. The gospel opens our eyes to the fact that all our wealth (even wealth for which we worked hard) is ultimately an unmerited gift from God. Therefore, the person who does not generously give away his or her wealth to others is not merely lacking in compassion, but is unjust. Christ wins our salvation through losing, achieves power through weakness and service, and comes to wealth through giving all away. Those who receive his salvation are not the strong and accomplished but those who admit they are weak and lost. We cannot look at the poor and the oppressed and callously call them to pull themselves out of their own difficulty. Jesus did not treat us that way. The gospel replaces superiority toward the poor with mercy and compassion. Christian churches must work for justice and peace in their neighborhoods through service even as they call individuals to conversion and the new birth. We must work for the eternal and common good and show our neighbors we love them sacrificially whether they believe as we do or not. Indifference to the poor and disadvantaged means there has not been a true grasp of our salvation by sheer grace. —The Gospel Coalition Theological Vision for Ministry document*

The more we seek the Lord, the more we will be his hands and feet to a lost and

hurting world. We will seek to meet both physical and spiritual needs.

*Justice is, first and foremost, a relational term — people living in right relationship with God, one another, and the natural creation. From a scriptural point of view, justice means loving our neighbor as we love ourselves and is rooted in the character and nature of God. As God is just and loving, so we are called to do justice and live in love. —World Vision*

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### Christ Connection



*Thankfully, God had a solution to the injustice of humanity. By sending Jesus to take the punishment for the sins of the guilty, God made it so that all people can stand righteous before him. Having been given this gift, it is now our commission to go out into the world and give this same gift to others by showing them the righteousness and justice that God has shown us. —The Bible Project*

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### In Defense



For further study for your LifeGroup: <https://bibleproject.com/learn/justice/>

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### devotional questions



- How would you define justice?
- Why do you think it is vital for God's Word to be the lens through which we look at justice?
- What does God's Word define as biblically just?
- Why do you think it is dangerous to be driven by social justice instead of biblical justice?
- Which do you struggle with more? Sharing the Gospel or seeking justice?
- How are you going to seek to be more like Jesus this week in how you advance the Gospel as you stand for biblical justice?
- How does understanding God's view of justice encourage and empower you as a follower of Christ to stand up for biblical Justice?
- What are some action steps you are going to take this week?

### discussion questions



- What is the relationship between the Gospel and justice?
- Discuss how the world can misconstrue this, and what our role is as believers?
- German theologian Martin Luther says, "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." What acts flow from a heart that has been saved by faith?
- In what ways does the Gospel call us to sympathize with another's pain?
- How does injustice threaten our communities and churches?
- Can you think of a someone in your life who has experienced, or is experiencing, pain because of an unjust situation in his or her life? Have you listened to him or her tell you about it? How can you love him or her in this situation? How do you share the Gospel and show Jesus in this moment?

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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 38 | SEPTEMBER 20-24


P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S




## LET'S TALK – BIBLICAL JUSTICE VS. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Deuteronomy 10:17–18; 32:4; Psalm 89:14; Psalm 82:3–4; James 1:27; Psalm 146; Micah 9:1–8; Proverbs 28:5; Isaiah 1:23; Isaiah 61:1–2; Luke 4:18–19; Romans 1:16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4; Mark 2:1–12; Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; Deuteronomy 16:20; Proverbs 2:6–11


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**main point**  If there are passions at war within us, we must rely on God's Word – and not culture – to direct us to the truth.

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**essential doctrine**  **Purity**  
Throughout Scripture, we see that we are commanded to live pure lives. Purity has become a very big keyword within Christian culture, especially within student ministries. However, while we are teaching students about it, our culture continues to degrade and diminish what purity really is. As TV shows and movies become more and more explicit in content and language, we must remind ourselves that the source of truth – whether it is 1,000 years ago or 1,000 years in the future – is God's Word. It transcends time and societal norms.

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**Christ Connection**  Given all the questions our students have today about gender identity, homosexual relationships, premarital sex, etc., it's great to know there is a place to find all the answers. It's not on their newsfeed; it's not on TikTok; it's not on social media platforms; and it's definitely not on Google. We find all the answers in God's holy Word. He doesn't leave us wondering. He directly sets up His expectations and His designs. The answer to our broken world's version of sexuality is the freedom we find in a relationship with Christ. He is the answer we need. Only He can be the answer we must trust.

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devotional  
questions



- Is any desire competing for your attention and distracting you from your relationship with God? What can you do this week to make God your biggest priority?
- Why do you think people choose to do something they know is wrong?
- How would you defend what the Bible says about homosexuality?
- What sexual sin do you need to confess to God today?
- What does it mean that you are not your own? How does knowing that you belong to God change your life daily?
- Do you struggle with sin that you are too ashamed to speak about to anyone? Who is a trusted adult you can talk to about this struggle?
- What is the greatest challenge ahead of you as you pursue holiness?

discussion  
questions



- Have you experienced any of the issues talked about this morning at school or work?
- How have you responded as a Christian? Do you think you responded well or poorly?
- Why should we believe that any of this is a big deal? Why should it be a focus for our spiritual lives to avoid any kind of sexual immorality?
- A struggle in this area can be very private, but God tells us to bring sin out into the light. Is there anything you need to talk about or confess this morning so we can help and pray for you?
- What can I do as a LifeGroup leader to help you fight the battle of temptation and sin when it comes to any of this?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 39 | SEPTEMBER 27-31

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S



## THE PEOPLE RESTORED – ESTHER

Esther 4:6–16; 7:3-6; 7:10–8:2

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**main point** >> God is at work even when we cannot see His plan.

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**essential doctrine** >> **God's Plan and Human Action**  
God's sovereignty over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the Lord's decree will prevail." In ways we are unable to comprehend fully, the Lord's plan goes forward through the choices of human beings as moral agents. Even freely chosen sinful actions are factored into God's overarching plan, as is the case with the crucifixion of Jesus — an event both purposed by God through foreknowledge and yet also carried out by the wicked decisions of human beings (Acts 2:23). Knowing that God is working all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28), we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

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**Christ Connection** >> The command to kill all the Jews threatened the fulfillment of God's promise of a Messiah King who would bring the blessing given to Abraham to the world. God brought salvation to His people through Esther, who interceded for them at great risk to her own life. God would provide a greater salvation – from sin and death – through Jesus who interceded for us and laid down His life on our behalf.

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## devotional questions



- How is God's past faithfulness cultivating present patience in your life?
- How can you focus on the goodness of God and cultivate present faithfulness in light of His sovereignty?
- How can you better identify with the people on whose behalf you are interceding?
- In what ways might God be positioning you to intercede for others through prayer and sharing the gospel?
- In what situations do you actively need to place faith in the person of Jesus to experience God's perfect peace?

## discussion questions



- What is the difference between a healthy and unhealthy risk? Give an example.
- Why do you think some people are prone to avoid all types of risks? Why is this impossible to actually achieve?
- What are some examples of people taking risks to follow Christ? When have you had to risk your own welfare in doing what God called you to do?
- How have you seen God's wisdom, rule, and care displayed in the circumstances of your life?
- How have you been blessed by the grace of God for the benefit of others?
- How does Esther's story strengthen your confidence that God is near and cares for you?
- When have you felt like you were put somewhere "for such a time as this" to do God's will?
- What does Esther's story teach us about waiting patiently?
- What does waiting patiently say about our faith?
- How might the story of Esther challenge the way you live this week?
- Like Esther and Mordecai, how will you take risks in your own life for God's glory and the good of others?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 40 | OCTOBER 4-8


P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S




## THE PEOPLE RESTORED – NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah 1:1–4; 2:11–18; 4:11–14


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**main point**  God calls us to lead in the strength He provides.

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**essential doctrine**  **Body of Christ**  
The New Testament describes the Church as the body of Christ. The Church lives and operates as Christ's representative here on earth, with Christ as its head (Colossians 1:18). This means that the Church is an extension of Christ's ministry, carrying out His work by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). In addition, the picture of the Church as the body of Christ shows us the interconnectedness of individual Christians, with each member dependent upon one another for growth and sanctification (1 Corinthians 12).

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**Christ Connection**  Nehemiah led the people to join together to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem and protect the city from their enemies, but that protection was not permanent. Through Jesus' death and Resurrection, He made a way for His people to be protected from the enemies of sin and death forever.

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## devotional questions



- How are you cultivating a growing view of God as your Father in heaven?
- Where in your life do you currently need the grace-filled hand of God to strengthen you?
- What parts of your heart do you withhold from God in prayer?
- In what areas of your community are people crying out for justice from their oppression?
- How do you need to trust God's sovereign power as you share the Gospel in the world?

## discussion questions



- Why is prayer the best next step once we have a burden to act for God's glory and the good of others?
- What are some reasons people choose not to pray about their burdens and circumstances in life?
- What are some ways your strength and work as a student are connected to God and His Gospel mission?
- How have you been encouraged by remembering the great and awe-inspiring Lord?
- What are the "wise" aspects you see in Nehemiah's response to the opposition he faced? What would have been an unwise response?
- What does this account in Nehemiah teach us about God's character?
- What are some ways the story of Nehemiah points to Jesus?
- What is the difference between humble confidence in God and confidence in ourselves?
- Why is confidence in God more helpful and satisfying than confidence in self?
- How does this story challenge the perception that Christianity is merely a set of beliefs to be held and not a life to be lived?
- How does this story encourage us with the truth that God is with us as we seek to live out our Christian beliefs?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 41 | OCTOBER 11-15

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S







## THE PEOPLE RESTORED – NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah 7:73b; 8:1-6; 9:1-5; 10:28-29


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**main point**  God's Word draws us toward unity and repentance.

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**essential doctrine**  **Preservation of Scripture**  
God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through the text of Scripture, having inspired it and directed it to be free from error. God has also acted providentially throughout the course of history to ensure the biblical text is faithfully preserved for future generations. Our belief in the preservation of Scripture is supported by investigation into how the canon of Scripture was formed and how manuscripts were faithfully transmitted throughout the centuries.

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**Christ Connection**  When God's people heard the reading of His Word, they responded by confessing their sins and committing to obey God's law. They would later fail to obey God as they had promised. Jesus is the Word of God who takes away our sin, gives us His righteousness, and changes our hearts so we can obey God.

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## devotional questions



- What rhythms do you have in your life for personal, intentional and thoughtful interaction with the Scriptures?
- How does Scripture ground your requests before God?
- What are some reasons you resist obedience to God, and how can you grow in your faith to obey from duty and delight?
- How are you being called to obey in ways you may not want to?
- How does the Gospel of Jesus Christ figure into our favor with God?

## discussion questions



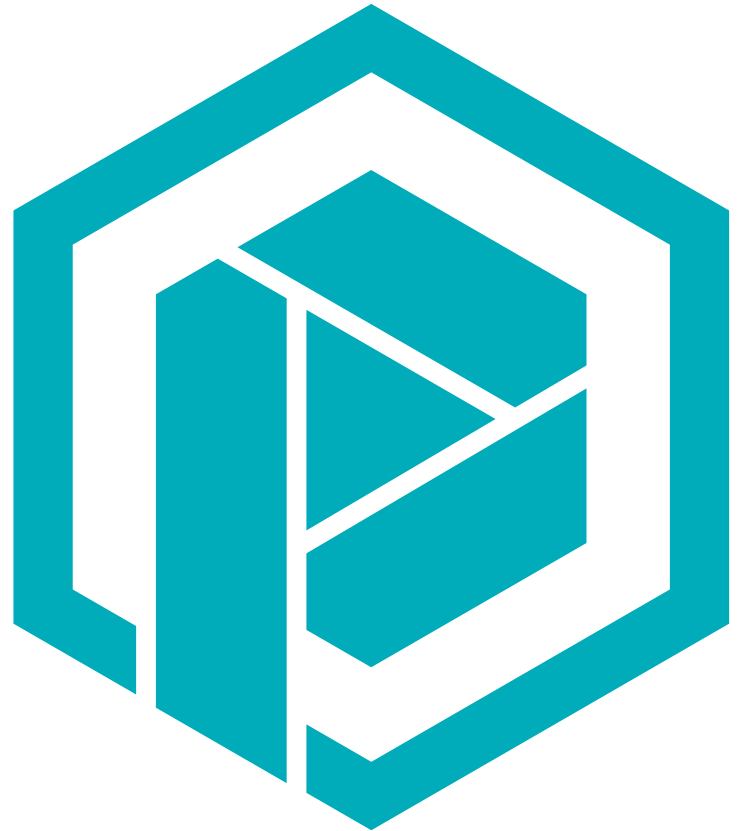
- How can you tell if a church is centered on the proclamation of God's Word or centered on something else? Why is gathering to hear God's Word so important for believers?
- What things may be filling up your heart and life and preventing you from having a hunger and thirst for God's Word?
- What is our individual responsibility to confess sin? What is our corporate responsibility as a church? What might each of these look like?
- What are some common ways we make God out to be more restrictive than He actually is?
- What are the ways we can help one another shoulder the weight of commitment in our local church, families, or communities?
- Why do we so often fail to crave God's Word as we should?
- What are some ways we can increase our desire to read and listen to God's Word?
- Why do you think God chose His Word to be the main source for bringing revival?
- What areas in your life need to be reprioritized this week in order to experience real community and accountability this week?
- When has someone helped you understand something difficult in Scripture?
- How can you be active in your church in helping the next generation understand the truths of the Bible?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 42 | OCTOBER 18-22




P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S


## THE PEOPLE RESTORED – MALACHI

Malachi 1:6–10; 3:8–15


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**main point**  God is worthy of our best and most sincere worship.

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**essential doctrine**  **God's Glory**  
The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect character through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent beauty of God, the unbearable brightness and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having “fallen short” of God’s glory (Romans 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us – to glorify Him.

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**Christ Connection**  After Malachi, the prophetic word of God went silent for 400 hundred years. But Malachi prophesied about a messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah, the one who would bring God’s kingdom. Centuries later, John the Baptist arrived as the messenger who prepared the way for Jesus. The last word of the Old Testament is “curse,” a reminder of the consequence of our sin. But in the New Testament, one of the first words we hear from Jesus is “blessing.” The One who bears our curse is the One who brings us blessing.

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## devotional questions



- How does God's love in Jesus help us to see God rightly?
- What are some circumstances that challenge your faithfulness to the Lord, and how does the Gospel help steer your heart for God's honor?
- How has the generosity of God emboldened you to pray and freed you to give?
- What are some ways you will serve the Lord in faith because of who He is and what He has done and will do?
- How will you love others with the love God has shown you in Jesus Christ?

## discussion questions



- In what ways do people "despise" God's name today? How can you guard against this in your life?
- What does our view of finances tell us about our values and beliefs?
- How does this passage relate to Jesus' words about our hearts being where our treasure is?
- What are some things that contribute to the appeal of disobedience?
- In what ways or areas have your affections for God diminished?
- What are some of the causes that lead to lukewarm worship?
- What are some of the ways you can guard against going through the motions in your walk with Jesus?
- What are some areas of life where you need to begin to give God your very best?
- What should be our motivation for giving God our very best in every area?
- How should Christians understand the promise that God would bless Israel if they obey? How might this be misunderstood and misapplied?
- What are some ways you are intentionally seeking to bless others with your time, talents and treasures?

FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 43 | OCTOBER 25-29

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S


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## FAMILY – GOD’S DESIGN

Genesis 2:23–24; Mark 10:6–9; Ephesians 5:22–33; Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4; Mark 7:20–23; Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1–3; James 1:27


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**main point**  No matter what relationships we find ourselves in, we are to honor God through them all - living a pure and holy life.

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**essential doctrine**  As Christians, our love for Christ and what He has done on the Cross for us should compel us to be the hands and feet of Jesus - loving and honoring those around us.

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**Christ Connection**  Christ is the One who has demonstrated ultimate love and honor for us through the Cross.

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devotional  
questions



- How can you align your heart with God's heart today?
- How can you reflect God and who He is today?
- In what areas of your life are you not fully trusting God, not allowing Him to fully complete you?
- How can we show love and respect to those around us?
- Is there any sexual immorality that you need to confess to the Lord?
- How can you live your life as a "living sacrifice" today?
- How can you show honor to your parents (caregiver) today?
- What can you do today to love and care for those without a family?

discussion  
questions



- Can you recall a time when you did not honor/give respect to your parents/people around you?
- What does it mean to honor your parents? Give some examples.
- Why would God place this kind of value on parents?
- Have you ever considered that we are supposed to love and care for those around us?
- How can you align your heart with God's heart today?
- How can you reflect God and who He is today?
- What areas of your life are you not fully trusting God, not allowing Him to fully complete you?
- How can you live as a "living sacrifice" today? What does this look like in your life each day?



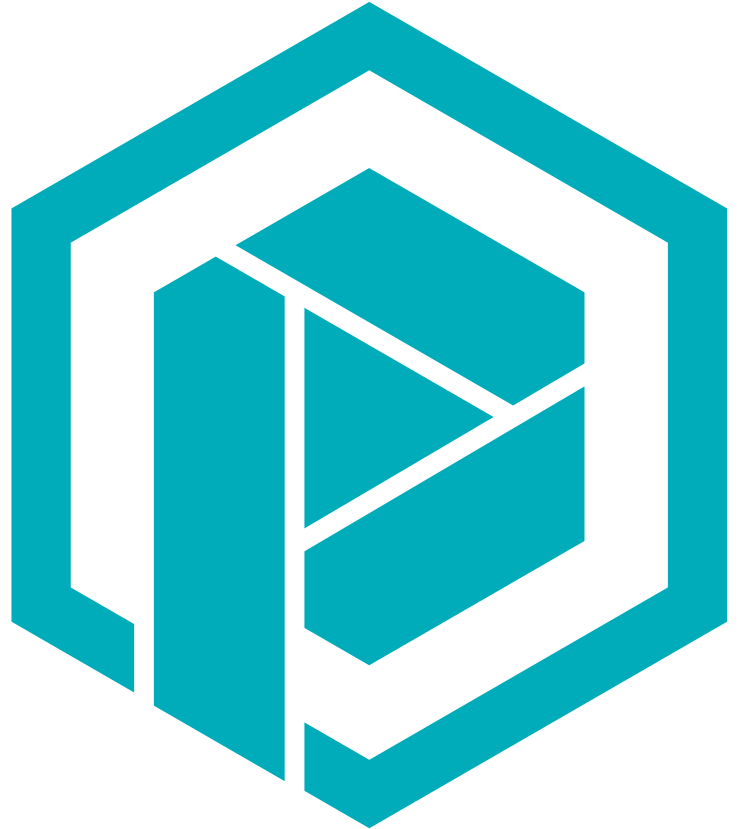
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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 44 | NOVEMBER 1-5

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S



## FAMILY – BROKENNESS

Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18, 24; Ephesians 6:1, 4; Colossians 3:20–21; Ephesians 5:15–21; Genesis 16:3–6; 37:3–4; 2 Samuel 12:16–19; Psalm 68:5; Romans 5:8; Psalm 31:7; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Matthew 5:23–24; Matthew 18:21–35

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**main point** >> The Gospel provides healing to broken relationships.

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**essential doctrine** >> Through man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, sin entered the world and man's relationship with God was broken. We are still experiencing the results of the fall of man even today, and often the pain of brokenness hurts the most when we experience brokenness within our own family. However, the doctrine of reconciliation that is found in Scripture states that when we place our faith in Jesus and His sacrifice on the Cross, we are reconciled back to God and our relationship with Him is restored.

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**Christ Connection** >> No family is perfect. In fact, many families have experienced the brokenness of this world played out within their family through divorce, fighting, children disobeying parents, siblings fighting with siblings – the list goes on and on. However, the brokenness of this world caused by sin is the reason Jesus came to this earth and died on the Cross! He took the penalty for our sin so that we can be reconciled to God and can be reconciled to others. Jesus is in the business of healing what is broken.

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**In Defense** >> There has been much debate in recent years about the design and purpose of the family unit. The definition of marriage, reproductive issues and gender identity are only a few of the debates surrounding what families look like and how they should operate. However, our source of truth and meaning does not come from our feelings, emotions or our cultural trends – as they are all constantly changing. Our only source of truth is God's Word, which we live by faith. Anything taught outside of God's Word is sinful and outside of His design for our lives. However, the Good News of the Gospel is that through faith in Christ, we can all be reconciled to God and adopted into His eternal family.

## devotional questions



- What false messages is the world spreading about the purpose of marriage? What does the Bible say about marriage?
- What are some of the ways you struggle to submit to authority? Take time to pray and ask God to help you respect authority and obey.
- Do you ever feel that you are too messed up or broken to be saved? Now that you know God can redeem anyone, how does that change your view of yourself?
- What areas of your life do you need to trust God with today?
- Who is someone in your life you need to forgive and reconcile with?

## discussion questions



- What does your family dynamic look like? How many siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles do you have?
- When you have conflict within your family, is there a usual cause?
- How often do you reconcile that conflict with your family?
- If you have not reconciled conflict with your family, considering the lesson today, what is holding you back from doing so?
- How does knowing how much God has forgiven and reconciled with you help you in reconciling conflict with your family?
- Considering the lesson today, if a friend approached you with a conflict in his or her family, how would you help that friend?
- What major lessons do you feel you have learned from your parents? What lessons do you plan to pass on to your kids some day?
- It's not wise to assume that people know you love and appreciate them. What can you do to show love and appreciation to your family today?

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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 45 | NOVEMBER 8-12


P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S




## FAMILY – ADOPTION

Galatians 4:4–7; Ephesians 1:3–7; Ephesians 1:11–14; Romans 5:1–4; Ephesians 4:1–3, 24–32


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**main point**  We have been adopted as sons and daughters as a means of reconciling the brokenness of sin and separation.

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**essential doctrine**  Paul uses the analogy of adoption to show how we join God’s family. That is partly because adoption involves choice – God chose us. The word *predestine* means “to decide beforehand,” and when it is being used with God, it means that the decision will stand until eternity. Therefore, God has decided that His adopted children will be part of His family forever. You see, God had a choice. He decided to choose us and make us part of His family even before He created the world; but we didn’t deserve to be chosen. However, He chose us anyway.

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**Christ Connection**  It is because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross that we can be adopted into the family of God. God made the choice to send His Son to be the sacrifice in our place; and because of that action, we have a way to mend the broken relationship between humanity and God. If it weren’t for Christ, we would not have the chance to be adopted as sons and daughters.

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## devotional questions



- Consider how amazing it is that God would adopt us as sons and daughters. Do you find your true identity as God's child?
- Do your daily actions and attitude reflect a grateful heart, knowing that in the midst of your sin, He calls you His child?
- Do you have confidence that you are dearly loved and forgiven?
- What lies does the Enemy feed you to make you think otherwise?
- Do you ask the Holy Spirit for help in your daily struggles?
- Are you using the power of the Holy Spirit to love others the way Jesus loves you?
- What struggles are facing you today?
- Spend time praying and thinking about what God could be doing through your struggles. Is He rooting out sin or pushing you to depend on Him more? Or perhaps He is using them so you can be a light to others?
- Just as children mimic things their parents do, would people know you are God's child by the things you say and do?
- Do you spend enough time with Him in His Word, in prayer, and at church so you know how to reflect Him in all situations?

## discussion questions



- How does it affect your view of yourself and your view of God when you consider that He chose you?
- How would you explain the truth that you are adopted by God to others; that they are chosen and loved by God?
- What emotions and struggles do you think adopted children experience? (If you are adopted, what emotions and struggles did you experience before and after your adoption?)
- What does it mean for you to be adopted into God's family, and how should that affect your daily life?
- Do you find it difficult to feel as though you belong? How does being a part of God's family fulfill that longing for you?
- How can you start to change your mind set about who you are in the family of God?

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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 46 | NOVEMBER 15-19


P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S




## FAMILY – SON/DAUGHTER

Luke 15:11–32; John 1:12; 1 John 5:1–2; John 3:16–17; 1 John 3:6–10; Ephesians 2:10; 5:1–2; John 1:10–11; John 15:18–19; John 16:33; 1 John 5:4; Philippians 2:14–16; Matthew 5:14–16; Matthew 28:19–20


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**main point**  Becoming a child of God changes our identity.

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**essential doctrine**  When people decide to profess Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and turn over control of their lives to God, they become children of God. Within this transformation is a change from the old sinful self to a completely new identity founded in Jesus. They now belong to God and are counted as heirs to the fortune of eternal life in heaven. There is nothing better!

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**Christ Connection**  Jesus is the One through whom we are made children of God. It is through Him that we are found blameless and without sin. If we want to be children of God, we must surrender our lives to God. You cannot be a child of God without admitting sin, confessing a need for forgiveness, and believing in Christ as your personal Savior.

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devotional  
questions



- Do you find yourself to be more like the younger brother or the older brother?
- How can you make sure you are continually turning to God to have an unceasing relationship with Him?
- If you are a believer in Christ, don't be afraid to go out and share with others how they can become a child of God.
- Has your faith in Jesus Christ resulted in good works for the kingdom of Christ? Why or why not?
- How will the world respond to the children of God? How do we handle that?
- What is your purpose? How do you sense God's calling you to live that out?

discussion  
questions



- When you hear the word *son* or *daughter*, what comes to mind? Is it good or bad?
- When we enter a relationship with Christ, how does our life change?
- What do you think of when you hear that you are a child of God? What comes to mind?
- Why doesn't the world recognize the children of God?
- What is the difference between the world and the children of God?
- If you are a child of God, how has your life changed?

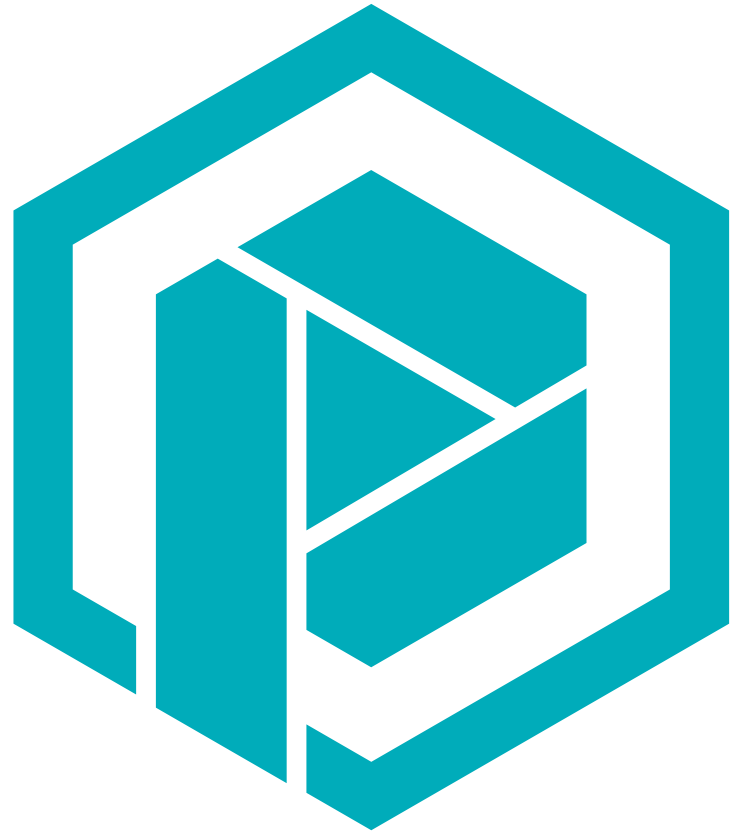
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FALL 2021

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 47 | NOVEMBER 22-26

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S



## THE BLANK PAGE

Micah 4; Daniel 7; John 19:20; Matthew 1

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**main point** >> Even though the gap between the Old Testament and New Testament is called the “Silent Years,” God was still at work and is still at work.

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**essential doctrine** >> God is working even when we don’t see or hear from Him. J.N. Darby, an Anglican priest in Ireland in the 1800s, said, “God’s ways are behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes that He is behind. He’s backstage setting things up for His Son.” Just because there are no prophets, poets, or seers declaring the very words of God doesn’t mean God is not at work. It doesn’t mean God is absent. It doesn’t mean God has abandoned His people. It simply means God is behind the scenes working on His great masterpiece and storyline.

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**Christ Connection** >> The entire story of Scripture points to Jesus. This time between the Old and New Testament does the same thing. Historically speaking, it sets the tone for much of what we read about in the life and ministry of Jesus – from the Sadducees/Pharisees to the synagogue to the translation of the Old Testament into a new language. Much of what we read in the New Testament makes sense when we understand what happens politically, culturally and religiously during this gap. However, working in all of this is the God of the universe as He sets the table for the arrival of His One and only Son.

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**In Defense** >> Many people will reference the Apocrypha as books that were written in the intertestamental period. However, these books are filled with contrary and nonbiblical themes. This is the reason they are not included in the Bible. We also must consider these 400 years as a glimpse of how God orchestrated history. Daniel 7 displays the foreknowledge of God in all things as He gives a vision about the world powers, and then we see it come to pass during this gap of time. We must be careful what we trust as God’s Word and make sure all things line up with truth.

## devotional questions



- Why do you often feel that God is silent in your life? What can you do to reach out to Him and communicate with Him?
- How has the world changed from the end of the New Testament until now? What are the political differences we see every day?
- How has the world changed from the end of the New Testament until now? What are the cultural differences we see every day (especially in our area of North Texas)?
- How has the world changed from the end of the New Testament until now? What are the religious differences we see every day (especially in our area of North Texas)?
- How are you going to look for and participate in God's story TODAY?

## discussion questions



- Do you understand the parallel between Daniel 7 and the 400-year gap? If not, how can I help you understand it?
- Has there been a time in your life when you have felt that God was absent? Explain why you felt He wasn't there.
- In what ways do you see God most often working in your life?
- When you feel God is distant, what can you do to remind yourself that He is still there? What can you do to reconnect with God, to know He is there?
- After this lesson, what questions do you have about this period in history that are unanswered?
- How are the differences between the politics, culture and religion of Old Testament and New Testament similar to the differences between the New Testament and now?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 48 | NOV. 29–DEC. 3


P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S




## INTO THE WORLD – THE LAST ADAM

Luke 3:23,38; Romans 5:12–21


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**main point**  The Son of God came to bring those spiritually dead to life.

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**essential doctrine**  **Imputation**  
When God pardoned sinners at the Cross, our sins were imputed or transferred to Christ, who became sin on our behalf. Our sin was imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness was imputed to us (Romans 5:17; 1 Corinthians 1:30). When God the Father looks at those who have trusted in Christ, He does not see their sins but the righteousness of Christ as belonging to them (Romans 4:6).

---

**Christ Connection**  The first Adam's transgression brought sin, death, and condemnation upon the world. Jesus is the last Adam, the long-promised offspring who overcame Adam's transgression through His life of perfect obedience and His payment for sin on the cross. Through Jesus we have life and are declared righteous before God.

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## devotional questions



- In what area of your life are you struggling to trust God? How can you better defend against Satan's attacks against your view of God's goodness?
- Who in your life needs to hear about the truth of who Jesus is?
- Do you see your sin as a small blemish? Do you tend to compare your sin to the standards of those around you or to the standard of our perfect God?
- How can you express praise and thankfulness to God right now for His rescuing you from condemnation and declaring you to be righteous in Christ?
- Do you intentionally flee from sin or do you tend to creep up as close as you can to it? Why?

## discussion questions



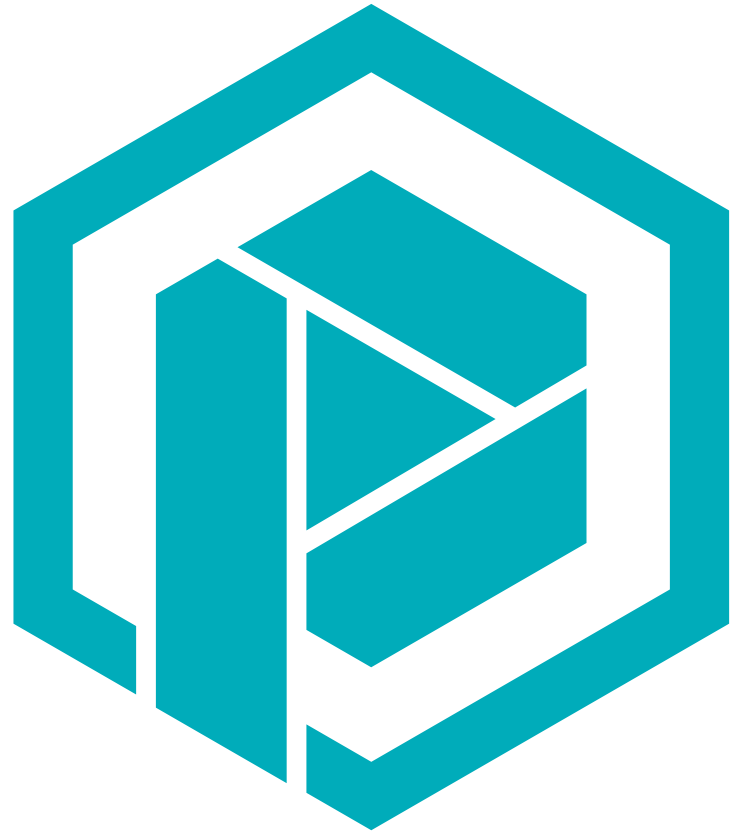
- Why do you think we have a tendency to think this way about sin?
- If you were in Adam's shoes, do you think you would have chosen differently? Why or why not?
- Share a time you experienced or witnessed injustice. How did that lack of justice make you feel?
- Why would it be wrong of God to not respond appropriately to sin (injustice)?
- Why can't one have sanctification without justification? Why are both important when thinking about our salvation in Christ?
- How would you feel if you were forced to take on someone else's guilt?
- Do you truly believe that you have been made righteous before God, through Christ? Or are you still trying to prove yourself good enough for God?
- How might you explain the Good News of salvation to someone interested in learning what Christianity teaches?
- How would you explain the similarities and differences between justification and sanctification?
- Using Romans 5, how would you describe the problem of humanity to someone?
- How would you describe to that same person the promise of hope that also exists for those who trust in Jesus?
- Why do you think people tend to keep their beliefs about God and Jesus private? Why does it go against Christianity to keep our beliefs private?
- What are some ways you can intentionally reflect the righteousness of Christ in your attitudes and actions this week to those who don't know Him?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 49 | DECEMBER 6-10




P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S




## INTO THE WORLD – JOHN

Luke 1:59–73a,76–79


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**main point**  Like John, God calls all Christians to point to Jesus' arrival.

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**essential doctrine**  **Angels**  
Besides the creation of humanity and animals, the Bible also speaks of other beings that God created – angels, who are also referred to in Scripture as “sons of God,” “holy ones,” “spirits,” “principalities” and “powers.” In the original languages of the Bible, the word *angel* carries the meaning of a messenger, which indicates one of their primary reasons for existence. Angels carry out a number of other functions throughout Scripture: bringing God glory, carrying out God’s plans and purpose, and reminding humanity that the unseen world is real.

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**Christ Connection**  When Zechariah trusted God’s Word concerning his son, his tongue was free to speak words of praise. Zechariah spoke of how his son, John, would be the herald pointing God’s people to the Savior who had been promised throughout the Old Testament. Jesus is the Word of God, the Savior to which John’s ministry pointed.

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## devotional questions



- In what ways are you allowing the Holy Spirit to fill and influence every part of your life? In what ways are you holding Him back from certain areas of your life?
- Do you think you are characterized more as one who walks in the way of the world or the way of obedience? Spend some time in prayer, asking the Spirit to help you make choices of obedience today.
- What past failures are holding you back from serving God? How can you trust in the work of Christ to cover your guilt and redeem your past?
- What might it look like to “decrease” this week so that the presence and glory of Christ might increase in your life?
- How do you tend to handle seasons of waiting? With doubt? With confidence? Pray and ask God to strengthen your view of Him and His perfect plan for your life.

## discussion questions



- What actions can we take this week to move away from a “flaky” faith toward a full-assurance faith?
- How would Jesus’ experience of humanity have changed if Jesus had been born into royalty instead of poverty?
- How would you summarize your salvation story (or part of it) in a few sentences?
- When was a time in your life you can look back and see that God was preparing you to receive either good or bad news?
- What are you doing to proclaim the truth about who Jesus is to the lost world around you?
- Read Luke 1:26–38. What contrasts do you see here between Zechariah’s response to Gabriel and Mary’s response?
- What are some ways we can help ourselves and others to respond in faith to situations in life?
- What can we learn about dealing with doubt in our lives by looking at Zechariah’s response in Luke 1?
- Why do we often give into the thought that God can do miracles in other people’s lives but not our own?
- How is John’s calling to point to Jesus similar or different from the calling of all Christians?
- What are some areas of your life where you have the opportunity to reflect Jesus to others?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 50 | DECEMBER 13-17

P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S



## INTO THE WORLD – BIRTH

Luke 1:26–33,51–55; 2:4–7

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**main point** >> God's long-awaited Savior and Messiah is born – and His name is Jesus!

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**essential doctrine** >> **Christ's Humiliation**  
Although God the Son was equal with God and worthy of all the glory God receives, He chose to humble Himself by taking on human flesh. He left His glorious state and came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), and He experienced a humiliating death on a Cross (Phillipians 2:6-8) by becoming sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

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**Christ Connection** >> The birth of Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament promises concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus was born in humble circumstances to be the Suffering Servant who would lay down His life to be our mighty Savior. One day, Jesus will return as our eternal King.

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**In Defense** >> “Some argue that Bethlehem would not have had an inn since it was not on any major road, and that this story is therefore fictitious. But attempting to claim the nonexistence of an inn in Bethlehem is mere conjecture, and besides, the Greek term translated ‘inn’ (*kataluma*) simply means ‘lodging’ and can refer to a guest room in a private home. Animal stalls, with their mangers, were normally located inside the one-room residence of peasant families. Animals were sometimes kept in caves, and an early Christian tradition places the birth of Jesus in a cave. —Alan Hultberg, “Luke,” *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007), 1514, n. 2:7.ION.

## devotional questions



- Spend some time looking back on your life, looking for the evidence of God's gracious hand on your life. What ministry do you think He has handpicked you for?
- How would you describe your posture toward the Word of God in comparison to Mary's response to God's call on her life? Pray to the Lord today, asking Him for the grace to respond like Mary did to whatever call He extends today.
- Are you trusting in God as your faithful provider, regardless of what your current reality may be?
- What has God showed you in the past year that helps you to trust in His goodness and character?
- What aspects of our culture make you worry the most and in what ways can you overcome worry by trusting God's sovereignty and wisdom?

## discussion questions



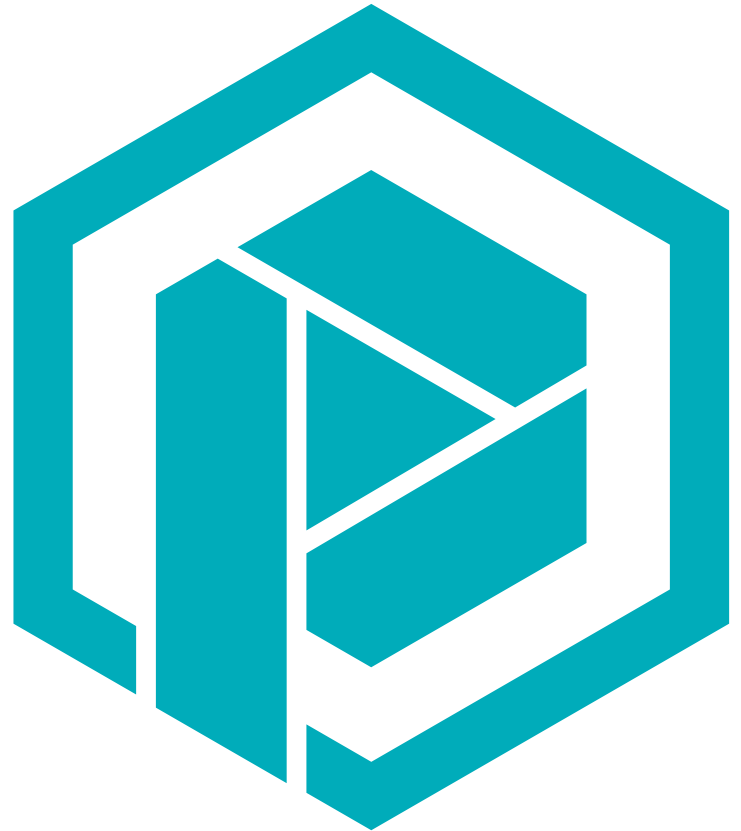
- Mary didn't fully know God's plan, but was willing to fully trust in God's character to work all things for good. How can we apply the same principle in our own lives?
- Name two or three of your favorite songs that magnify the Lord for His goodness and mercy. Why do these songs resonate with you? What aspects of God's character do they celebrate?
- Have you seen evidence of God's upside-down kingdom in your own life? does your church display an upside-down kingdom?
- When have you given up a privilege for the sake of others? How did that make you feel?
- What keeps you from surrendering all of your life to God?
- Given how God orchestrated the birth of Christ at just the right time yet through unlikely means, how does this help you remember that God's plan is always perfectly at work?
- How can we better follow in the humble footsteps of Christ today?
- How does Mary's faith as a young teenager encourage you in your own obedience to God?
- If you were to compose your own song of thankfulness to God for His mercy in your life, what themes would you use and why?
- In what ways has your relationship with Jesus changed your life?
- How can our willingness to share Christ with others serve as a type of spiritual thermometer in our relationship with Him?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 51 | DECEMBER 20-24



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S

## INTO THE WORLD – DEDICATION

Luke 2:21–38

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**main point** >> Jesus is God's promise of hope to the nations.

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**essential doctrine** >> **God is Faithful**  
God's faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:13; 1 Peter 4:19). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of "faithful" to God's coming through on His word: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

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**Christ Connection** >> Simeon praised God when he saw Jesus, recognizing Him as the consolation of Israel for which he had longed. Simeon also prophesied that many would oppose Jesus. Jesus came to His own, however, His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God (John 1:11–12).

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**In Defense** >> "The title 'Lord Jesus Christ' summarizes all of His redemptive work. 'Lord' describes His sovereign deity; 'Jesus' (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name *Yeshua*; "God Saves") describes His saving death and Resurrection; 'Christ' ("anointed one") describes Him as the King who will defeat God's enemies and rule over the redeemed earth and the eternal state." —John MacArthur, *2 Corinthians*, Moody Publishers, 2003, 19.

## devotional questions



- In what ways has believing the Gospel moved you from fear to joy?
- How does the birth of Jesus the Messiah shape and influence the way we see world leaders and events today?
- How does Luke's recording of details like Jesus' circumcision instill confidence in you about the reliability and historicity of Luke's Gospel?
- In what ways should our longing for salvation be similar to Simeon's?
- How will we face division with the culture on some level with respect to who Jesus is and what we believe about Him?

## discussion questions



- What does it say about God's character that He kept His promise to Abraham after all of those years?
- How do you think Simeon felt during this moment?
- Recall how you were led by God's providence and Spirit to come to faith in Jesus. How did the Holy Spirit open your eyes and heart to Jesus??
- What are some areas in your life where you tend to forget that the purpose is to bring God glory? What usually happens when we forget that each aspect of life is worship?
- If the aim and focus of worship is God, how does this change the way we worship God with others through song at church?
- How do you think Mary and Joseph felt after hearing Simeon's words regarding the future ministry of Jesus?
- What should our response be when we can't fully understand all that God is doing through the circumstances of our lives?
- What was the connection between Anna's heart for God and her actions of telling others about the Messiah?
- If speaking truth into the lives of others is an indication of our love for God, what does this say about your own life? Does something need to change?
- Why should we be comforted by the fact that our efforts in sharing Jesus with others is ultimately dependent on the power and will of God?
- Who has God brought in your life for the purpose of evangelism? Would you commit to share the joy of Christ with this person or group of people in the next few weeks?



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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 52 | DECEMBER 27-31



P R E S T O N W O O D S T U D E N T S


## INTO THE WORLD – THE TEMPLE

Luke 2:40–52


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**main point**  Jesus is God's promise of hope to the nations.

---

**essential doctrine**  **Jesus' Humanity**  
In addition to being fully divine, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is fully human. Not only does the Old Testament affirm that the Promised One (Messiah) would be a man (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:3), but the New Testament also affirms that Jesus' earthly life bore all the marks of being a human. He experienced the circumstances common to living as a human being, such as hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (Matthew 8:24), sorrow (John 11:35), and pain (the Crucifixion).

---

**Christ Connection**  As Jesus grew, He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with people. Each step of His life prepared Him to implement the eternal mission His Father had given Him: to live a life of complete obedience, die on the Cross for our sins, and rise again in victory.

---

## devotional questions



- What are some ways we can be involved in bringing those far away closer to God?
- How does God's control over historical events as depicted in the Bible encourage you in your personal relationship with Him?
- What feelings emerge within you as you read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' childhood knowing He later became our Passover lamb?
- How have you seen your pursuit of God's mission lead to tension with others, family or friends?
- How does our experience as middle and high school students teach us about our responsibility to submit to personal authority over us, especially God's?

## discussion questions



- What can we learn from Jesus, the Son of God, listening to and asking questions of the teachers in the temple?
- What are some ways your church cultivates a love of learning when it comes to God's Word?
- At this stage of Jesus' life, what do you think it meant for Jesus to say He was involved in His Father's work? How does our involvement in our Father's work grow as we mature physically and spiritually?
- How does being reminded of Jesus' identity and purpose help us strengthen our faith in Him?
- Like Jesus, what qualities should we want God to cultivate in us in order to grow in favor with those around us?
- Why is it important for churches to learn from the Scriptures together?
- When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation about the Bible with someone in a different age group within your church? What are some ways you can begin to have more of them?
- What can we learn from Jesus in regards to taking our relationship with God and knowledge of His Word seriously as a young person?
- Who are some people in your own life that have encouraged you to take ownership of your faith? What has that encouragement looked like?
- When is it difficult for you to show honor to those in authority over you? How can Jesus' example encourage you during those difficult times?
- How is our honor for those in authority a demonstration of our honor toward God?