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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 1 | JANUARY 3-7



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

## JESUS IS BAPTIZED

Matthew 3:1–17

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**main point** >> True repentance is necessary for the Christian life.

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**essential doctrine** >> **BAPTISM**  
Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

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**Christ Connection** >> Jesus completely obeyed God and identified with sinners by being baptized like sinners are baptized. His baptism points to His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. For those of us in Christ, the words spoken over Jesus at His baptism are also true of us: we are the Father's beloved children with whom He is pleased.

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## devotional questions



- What would it look like for you to prepare your heart for the Lord today?
- How do you need to change your focus so that abiding in Christ is your primary goal (instead of many of the other good things that often take His place)?
- What part of your identity as God's child and a member of God's family is hardest for you to believe and live out of?
- In what areas of your life might you need to repent in order to live out of your identity, as one who has died to sin?
- In what ways is our identity in God's family different than the one you experience with your earthly family? In what ways is it similar?

## discussion questions



- What is repentance, and why do you think John the Baptist emphasized the need for personal repentance?
- If confession is the bridge to accountability, why do you think it can be so hard for us to genuinely confess to someone?
- What are some areas in your life where you feel genuinely sorry yet you seem to sin regularly anyway? What are some measures you can take to repent more profoundly in these areas?
- Why wasn't it enough for the Pharisees to rely upon the faith of their fathers when it came to their own lives?
- Why do you think it is important for us as Luke's readers to see Jesus' ministry begin with a confirmation of His identity?
- Why do you think repentance begins with a change of mind?
- Why is it necessary to have both an accurate understanding of God as well as an accurate understanding of ourselves in order to experience repentance?
- Why is it important for our actions to match our words? How can we see John's actions and words line up in the way they should?
- What can we learn from the Pharisees when it comes to thinking that going through the religious motions (attending church and so forth) is enough?
- How does Jesus' identifying with us and allowing us to identify with Him change how we see our personal identity?
- What are some ways we can live out Jesus' example of identifying with those who need Him?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 2 | JANUARY 10-14



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

## PRAYER

John 14:14; James 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 22:42; Romans 8:26; James 4:23; James 1:6-8

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### main point



Prayer is not transactional or out of tradition, but a relationship-building tool that transforms our hearts to love God and trust Him more than ourselves.

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### essential doctrine



#### PRAYER

Prayer is an essential piece in our walk with the Lord. It is both a command and a gift given to us so that we can know God more. However, there is a huge issue in the way many Christians pray. As people typically do, we take any opportunity to make something about ourselves, including our prayers. Prayer is often treated as a time to ask God for something. While it isn't wrong to ask God for things, we miss out on all the deep riches that come with prayer when we settle for *just* asking. Prayer is a conversation taking place between you and God; it is an opportunity to get to know Him and be transformed by Him. Prayer isn't supposed to be about us and our agenda, but about God and His will. It also isn't supposed to be about accomplishing your Christian task for the day, but about a relationship with someone whom you can't wait to talk to. Prayer matters. Your relationship with God matters.

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### Christ Connection



For the Christian who has surrendered his/her life to Christ, prayer is a sweet gift in relationship with God. But prayer happens in the context of salvation, just as daily conversations with your best friend happen in the context of friendship. Salvation is a relationship with God, and prayer is a way we can honor and thrive in that relationship. If you would say that you do not have a relationship with God, then the first prayer needs to be one of life surrender.

God made us to be in relationship with Him, in constant prayer with Him. When we sinned, we broke the relationship in distrusting God. But God loved us too much to leave the relationship broken. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die so that we can know Him personally - fixing the relationship that we broke. This gave us the opportunity to go to Him in prayer, asking for that relationship by surrendering our lives to Him and asking for forgiveness.

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devotional  
questions



- What are some ways you can prioritize prayer daily?
- Is your prayer self-focused or God-focused? How can you keep it God-focused?
- How can you practice a posture of prayer today? What posture reflects your heart's attitude in prayer?
- What is an adjective that describes your prayers?

discussion  
questions



- Why did God command us to pray? Why do we pray?
- What should our heart's attitude be when we pray?
- Should prayer be a discipline? What are some ways we can make it more of a discipline?
- What do you look to get out of prayer? Is what you're looking to get self-focused or God-focused?
- Why is it hard to pray sometimes? How can you still prioritize prayer in the middle of it?
- How does this change the way you pray?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 3 | JANUARY 17-21



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


## JESUS IS TEMPTED

Luke 4:1–13


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**main point**  Jesus overcame temptation through the power of God's Word.

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**essential doctrine**  **SINLESSNESS OF JESUS**  
While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

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**Christ Connection**  Jesus stepped into our world and overcame the temptation to which Adam succumbed. Jesus showed He is fully obedient to the Father and He is the worthy One who would undo the consequences of Adam's sin and bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Jesus' life of obedience led Him to the cross, the place where He conquered sin and death as our Savior.

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## devotional questions



- When are you most vulnerable to neglect spiritual priorities?
- What things are you tempted to pursue with a shortcut?
- In what ways are you tempted to think God's goodness and grace are measured in the comforts and earthly gifts He provides?
- How does it make you feel to know that God might lead you into a trial?
- Reflect on a time when you clearly saw God give you a way of escape in the midst of temptation. Or, identify a current temptation you are struggling with and spend time seeking the Lord and asking him to show you what the way of escape is for you today.

## discussion questions



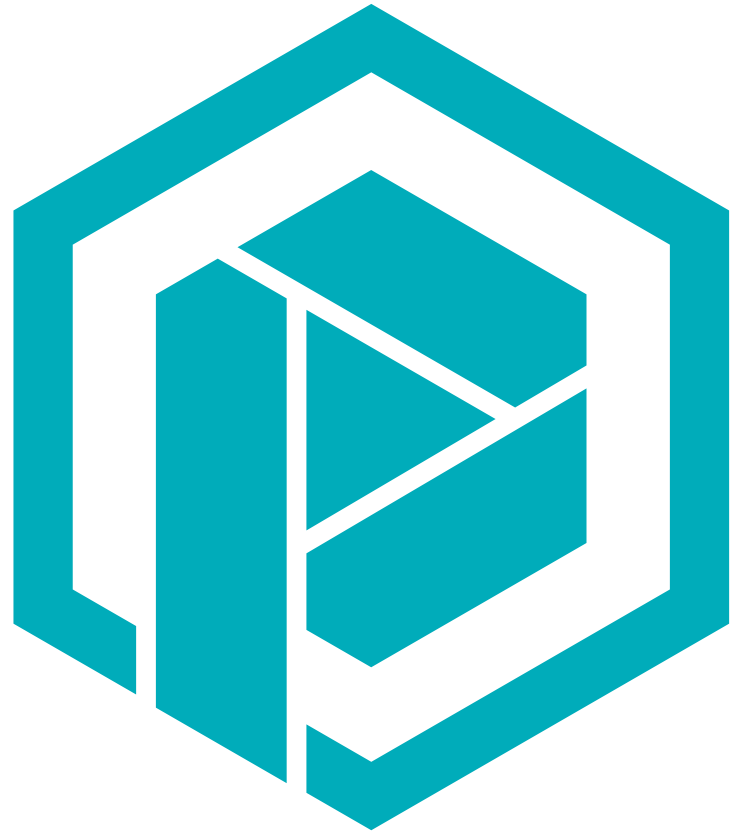
- Why should we always consider that God might be leading us into a trial?
- How might trials be a way of strengthening our faith, knowledge, and trust in God?
- In what ways can we protect ourselves from giving into temptation when we are in a vulnerable place?
- In what areas do you tend to struggle to trust God the most?
- Satan tried to manipulate the meaning of God's Word in his attack on Jesus. What does this teach us about our need to properly understand God's Word?
- What are some things that help you trust God's character even when you can't see or understand His provision?
- What can we learn about being tested in our faith from looking at this account?
- What are some key things to remember when going through temptation?
- What is the appeal to sin? Why do we turn to sin so often?
- What made it possible for Jesus to resist the allure to sin? Why is this important for us?
- What does Jesus' response to Satan teach us about the importance of God's Word?
- What are some ways you can become better equipped to use the weapon of God's Word against your sin this upcoming week?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 4 | JANUARY 24–28




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


## JOHN POINTS TO JESUS

John 1:29–34; 3:25–36


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**main point**  Significance is finding joy in Christ's significance, not our own.

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**essential doctrine**  **CHRIST AS SACRIFICE**  
There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, "once and for all," take away sins. temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

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**Christ Connection**  John the Baptist said he wasn't the groom; he was the friend of the groom. As the friend, it was his responsibility to decrease in stature and take joy in the groom's wedding. Jesus is the groom from above who came to give His life for His bride—those who receive His Word and believe in Him.

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## devotional questions



- In what ways do you feel you've taken the gospel for granted? What does it look like to change that?
- What does it mean and why does it matter that God was able to both demonstrate His own righteousness while also declaring those righteous who have faith in Christ?
- In what ways do you struggle most to find complete joy in being with Jesus—even when that means decreasing in some way? How can you cultivate a deeper love for Jesus today?
- What implications does the exclusivity of Christ (that Jesus is the only way) have on the way you understand the gospel? What implications does it have on how you live your faith?
- What part of these verses most excites you? How could you share that with someone this week?

## discussion questions



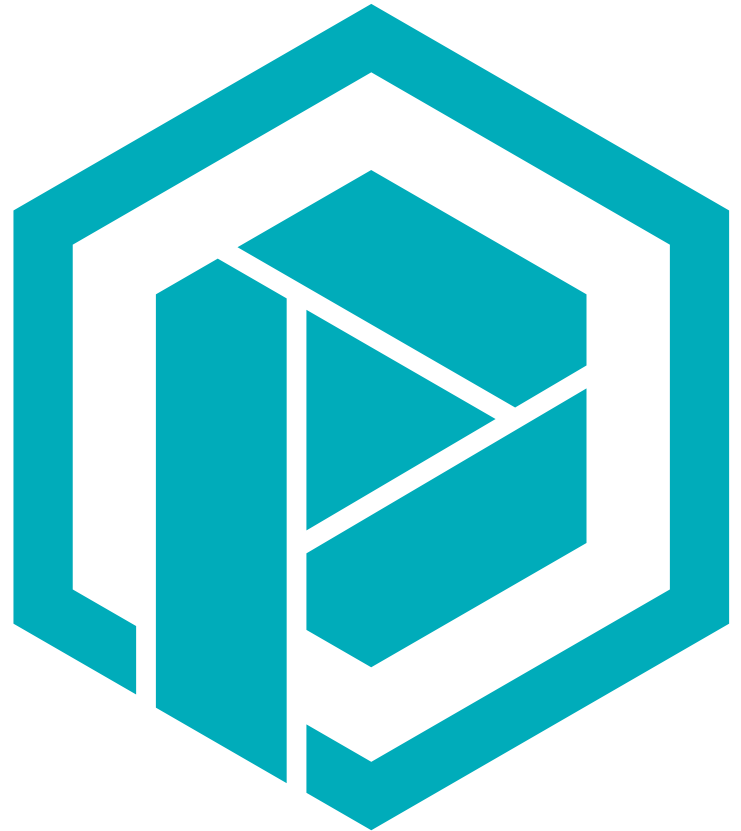
- How does the Old Testament sacrificial system help us understand the penalty of sin and the necessity of Jesus' death?
- How would you describe to someone the power of sin versus the presence of sin?
- How does recognizing who Jesus is bring clarity to your own identity and purpose?
- When have you found yourself to be most delighted in making more of Christ and less of yourself?
- In a culture that thinks all religions are equally valid, how do you feel about the gospel's clear distinction between those who are in Christ and those who are not?
- If you were explaining Christianity to someone, would you focus on what Christians do and don't do? Explain.
- Why is it important to understand and explain the reasons behind why Christians should live a certain way?
- How does the idea that decreasing leads to an increase in joy apply to us today?
- What are some areas where you could decrease to make more of Jesus in your own life? Why will this increase your joy?
- How should our lives today be similar to John's life?
- What are some ways you can intentionally point others to Jesus this week?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 5 | JAN. 31 – FEB. 4




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


## JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

Luke 5:3–11, 27–32

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**main point**  The call to follow Jesus is a call to invite others to do the same.

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**essential doctrine**  **EVANGELISM**

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all thus rests upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle. temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

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**Christ Connection**  Jesus came into the world to call sinners to repentance and to lay down His life on their behalf. Likewise, as His followers, we are to tell others about Jesus and call on them to turn from their sin and trust in Jesus.

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## devotional questions



- What gifts has God given you today? How can you use those gifts to draw you into deeper relationship with God?
- In what ways have you experienced God helping as you struggled through either legalism (thinking that works earn God's love or salvation) or through trusting human rationale more than God's wisdom?
- Which area do you struggle with? (Identifying ways to introduce your friends to Jesus or building relationships with those who don't know Jesus?) How can you take a step toward growth in that area today?
- Who is hardest for you to love? What would it look like to love them in the way God has loved you, not out of an expectation for something in return?
- What fears do you have when it comes to sharing the gospel? Spend some time sharing those fears with the Lord and then ask Him for courage to trust Him and walk through the open doors he puts in front of you.

## discussion questions



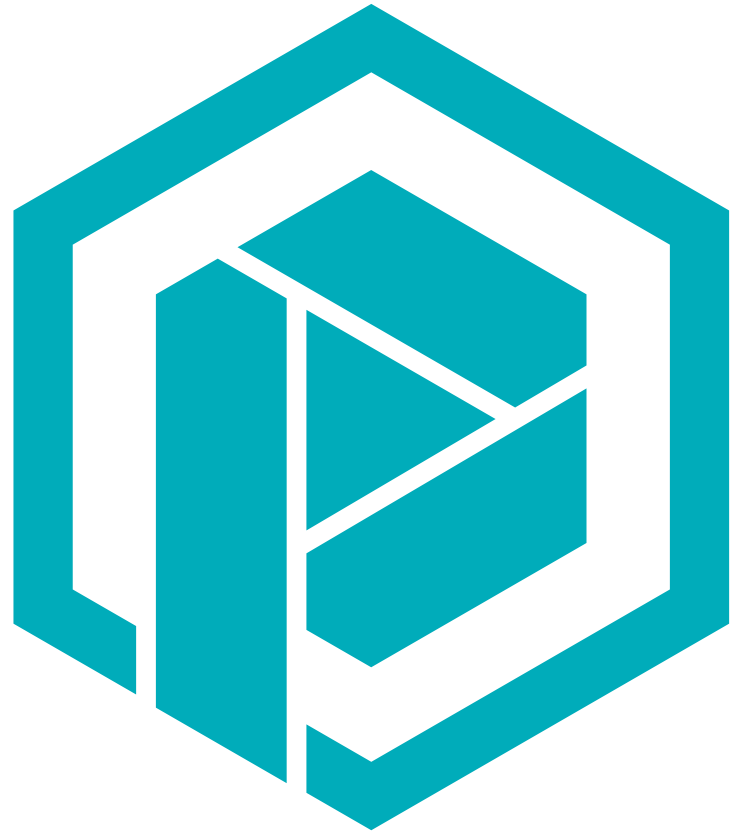
- In what ways have you experienced God's wisdom being different than the conventional wisdom of the world?
- What is an accomplishment in life you knew could not have been carried out in your own strength?
- Often we have a tendency toward being invitational without challenging others or challenging others without inviting them into relationship. Which way do you lean and why?
- Do you believe most churches and student ministries focus on this same aim as Jesus? Why or why not?
- What are some ways you can cultivate relationships with those who are not Christians?
- What does Jesus' ministry to all types of people communicate about His character and calling?
- Why is it both comforting and empowering for believers to know and understand that God calls ordinary people to proclaim His extraordinary gospel?
- When it comes to trusting in God or relying upon our own intuitions or experience, which one should we choose? Why?
- What role does God's Word have in helping us distinguish His voice from all others?
- What are some challenges we face in sharing Jesus' message with others?
- What should our attitude, actions, and mindset be when facing opposition from the culture when sharing the gospel?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 7 | FEBRUARY 14-18




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




## REVELATION

Revelation 6–13


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**main point**  Jesus is worthy of worship and His instruction must be obeyed.

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**essential doctrine**  **SUPREMECY**  
Jesus is supreme. In Colossians 1:15–23, we see Jesus’ resume. He is Creator, Savior, sustainer, and ultimately ruler! In Revelation 1–5, we see Jesus correcting the seven churches, seated in the throne room, and ultimately being worshipped by the elders and the four creatures. Jesus is the only way for salvation. His work on the Cross and ultimate victory through Resurrection makes Him worthy of His name and worthy of worship. No other “god” or “way of thinking” is present in the throne room. It is Jesus being worshipped, and that is it.

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**Christ Connection**  Revelation 5:9–10 is the Gospel. Jesus is worthy of all praise and honor because He was slaughtered and through that, purchased people by His blood. Without the sacrifice of Jesus, we do not have salvation. In return for this salvation that Jesus has given us, we respond like the elders and the four creatures: in worship!

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devotional  
questions



- How does it make you feel knowing that God already knows and has planned what the end will be?
- How does the truth that God has already gone before you give you comfort in uncertain, uncomfortable times?
- Which letter [of Revelation 3] sticks out to you the most and why?
- How can we be like the Church of Philadelphia today?
- How can you worship God today?
- Pause what you are doing right now and worship God with your favorite worship song.
- When you think about Jesus' being worthy of all blessing and honor and glory, what comes to your mind?

discussion  
questions



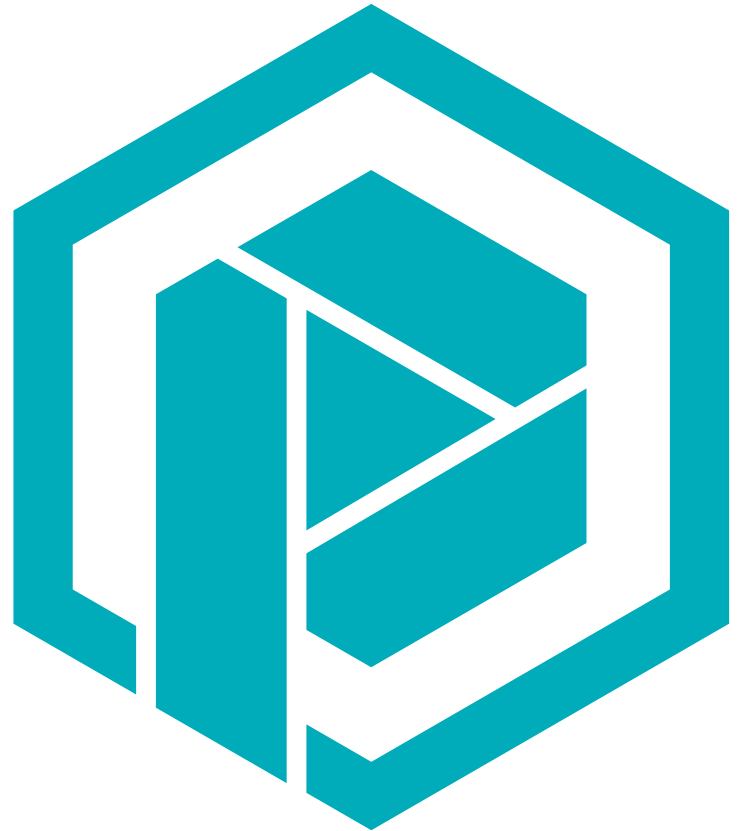
- When you hear about the book of Revelation, what thoughts and emotions come to your mind?
- What is the purpose of the book of Revelation?
- What do the seven letters to the seven churches have to do with 21<sup>st</sup>-century Christians?
- Look at what the four creatures (4:8) and the 24 elders (4:11) say to Jesus. What sticks out to you about their worship?
- What does your weekly worship look like? Both corporately and privately?
- How can you make worship a bigger priority in your week?
- Why is Jesus worthy to take the scroll in Revelation 5 and no one else?
- Read Revelation 5:13. What sticks out to you about this passage. If you lived as though this passage were true in your life, what would it look like?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 8 | FEBRUARY 21–25




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

## REVELATION

Revelation 6–13


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**main point**  Our hope is found in Christ alone, in Him we find hope, peace and victory.

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**essential doctrine**  **CHRIST ALONE**  
Our hope and victory is found in Christ alone. In Him we find hope, peace and victory.

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**Christ Connection**  Christ is at the center of all things in our life, and if we fail to put Him there, then we can very quickly become overwhelmed with everything going on around us. There is victory in Jesus.

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devotional  
questions



- What has the Lord made new in your life?
- Why is it that we, as Christians, can look at this Day of Wrath and Judgment with hope?
- What is your response to the salvation that God has offered you?
- How can you rest in the promise of God when there are so many things that we don't understand?

discussion  
questions



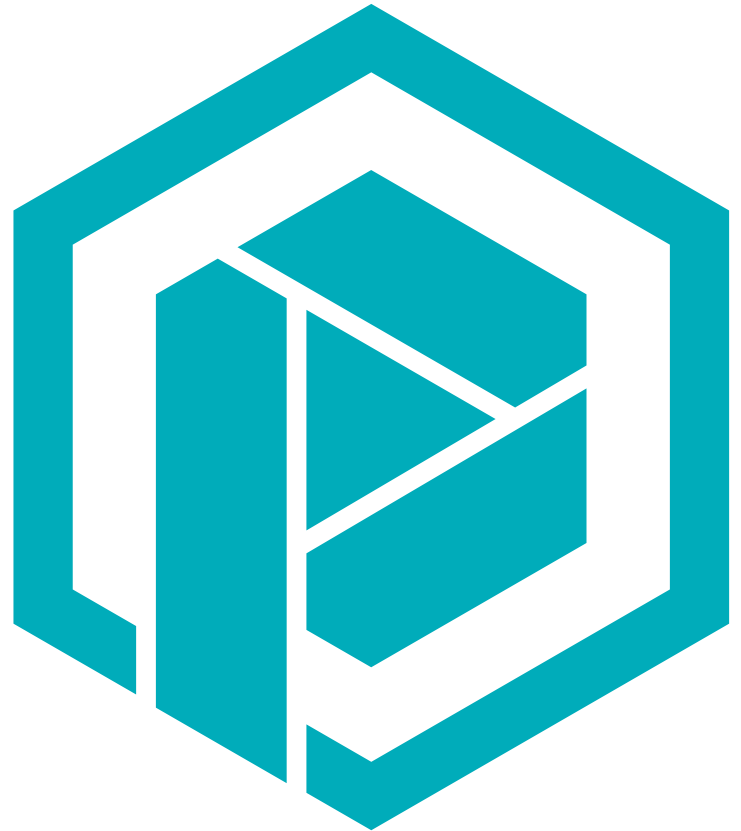
- What stood out most to you from the lesson this morning?
- How does this message apply to your life right now?
- Why is it that Revelation is so fascinating to us?
- When we get worried about the chaos that is all around us, how can we remain calm?
- What can we do to remind ourselves that God wins the battle?
- How does looking at God's wrath being poured out make you view His grace?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 9 | FEB. 28–MARCH 4



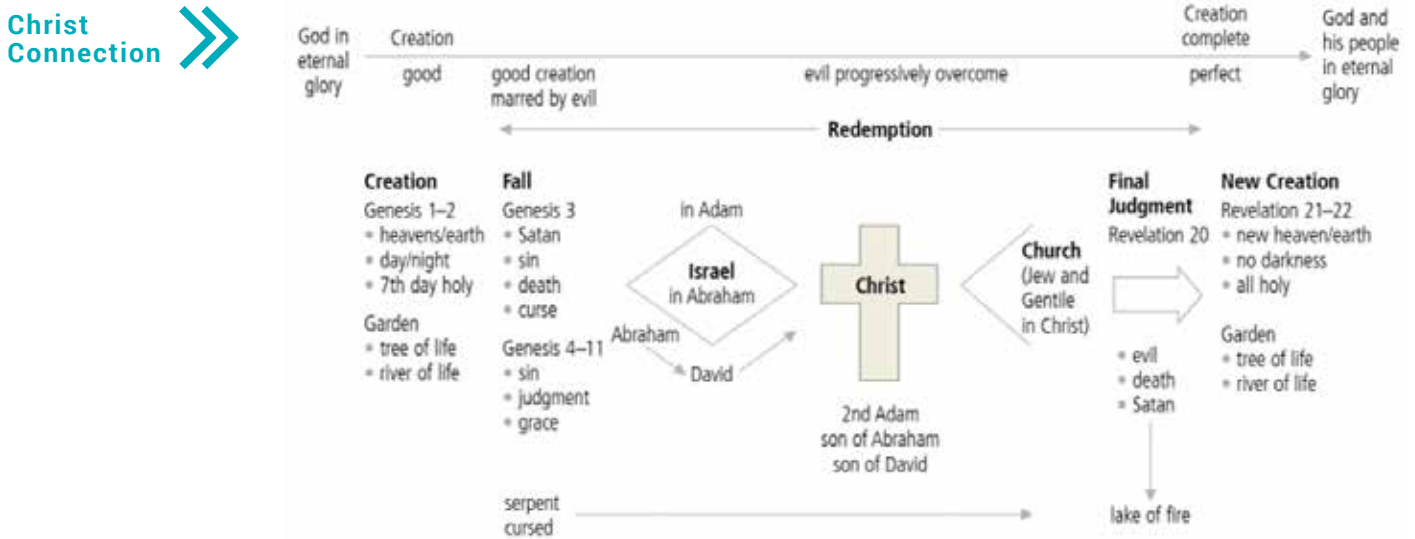
P R E S T O N W O O D   S T U D E N T S

# REVELATION

Revelation 14–22

**main point** ➤ Jesus will return as King to deal with evil and vindicate His followers.

**essential doctrine** ➤ **SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**  
 In the end, Jesus will come back again. He will come back and conquer sin and Satan once and for all. He will restore the world and humanity to perfection. We will be glorified and spend the rest of eternity worshipping and sitting at the feet of God.



devotional  
questions



- Whom are you following: Jesus or your own desire?
- What does it mean to fear God and give Him glory?
- Why is it important to learn about God's wrath and justice?
- What is the distinction between wrath and justice?
- What from the world attracts you? Where do you spend your time and dreams?
- How does knowing that Jesus is coming soon impact evangelism?
- Why is it important that a new heaven and a new earth are created after the events of Revelation?

discussion  
questions



- During the teaching time this morning, use this format to come up with some questions based on what the speaker covers:
  - During the first five minutes, write down one question you can ask your students.
  - During the middle 10 minutes, write down two questions you can ask your students.
  - During the last 10 minutes, write down one question you can ask your students.
- What stood out to you today in our lesson?
- What questions do you have about Revelation that we may not have answered yet?
- Is there anything confusing (there should be) about this book or the chapters we read today?



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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 10 | MARCH 7-11



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

## JESUS REVEALS HIS POWER

Mark 1:21–28, 35–42

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**main point** >> Jesus' teaching and miracles reveal His divinity.

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**essential doctrine** >> **JESUS' DEITY**

Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches He is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (John 1:1–18; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–20; Heb. 1:1–3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that God alone possesses (Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (Mark 2:5–12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (Matt. 26:63–64; John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5).

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**Christ Connection** >> From the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, the people recognized that He was different. Jesus taught with authority and performed miracles to fulfill the purpose of His earthly ministry and show that He is the Son of God, the One who came to proclaim and provide salvation.

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## devotional questions



- How have you marveled at the Scriptures' testimony regarding Jesus, the Son of God?
- How are you serving your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because of His saving work in your life?
- What are some ways you need to prioritize the message of God's Word in your life?
- How have you experienced compassion, even the compassion of Christ, through another person?
- How will your forgiveness in Christ lead you to glorify God in your words and actions?

## discussion questions



- What makes someone recognizable and believable as an authority on a subject?
- What does it mean for you to submit things in your life to Jesus' power?
- What are some things in your life that are easy/difficult to submit to Jesus' power?
- What are some practical things that remind you of your mission to share the gospel with others?
- What are some situations in your school or community that should move you to act with the compassion of Christ?
- What kinds of fears or prejudices might hinder us from being moved with the same compassion of Christ?
- How will you act in faith, in light of the power and compassion of the Son of God?
- Share of a time when you misjudged someone's intentions, or when someone misjudged your own.
- Why should Jesus' singular focus of His life and mission influence the way we think about our own? What are some things that distract us from our true purpose in life?
- What can we learn about compassion from this account?
- Why is it important to have both feelings of compassion as well as actions of compassion?
- What does Jesus' identity as the Son of God influence the way He lives His life?
- How should our identity as adopted sons and daughters of God through Christ change the way we address needs in our schools, neighborhoods, and families?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 11 | MARCH 14-18



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

## JESUS REVEALS HIS MISSION

Luke 4:16–31

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**main point** >> Jesus' mission wasn't without opposition—and neither will ours be.

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**essential doctrine** >> **THE WORLD OPPOSED TO GOD**

There are times in Scripture where the term “world” refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan's control (Eph. 2:2; John 14:30), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found within his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4–5).

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**Christ Connection** >> Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote of God's plan to send someone to bring good news and redeem His captive people. Jesus proclaimed that He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy—the promised Messiah. Jesus was rejected by the people, but it was through that very rejection—the cross—that He provided redemption from sin.

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**In defense** >> The odds that Jesus could have fulfilled all the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament by chance are astronomical. Peter W. Stoner, once the Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College, authored *Science Speaks* in the 1950s, which examines the accuracy of prophecy and of the Bible using scientific methods. In chapter three, Stoner walks through the statistical likelihood that a man could have fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah, including birthplace and death by crucifixion. He concludes that an extremely conservative estimate of the chances of a man fulfilling just eight messianic prophecies is 1 in 1017. Stoner used the following illustration to help readers grasp this number.

“Suppose that we take 1017 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom.”— Peter W. Stoner, “Chapter 3: The Christ of Prophecy,” *Science Speaks*, July 15, 2009, [sciencespeaks.dstoner.net/Christ\\_of\\_Prophecy.html#c9.N](http://sciencespeaks.dstoner.net/Christ_of_Prophecy.html#c9.N)

## devotional questions



- How does reading Isaiah's description of the Messiah and His mission deepen your hope for the future that Jesus purchased for His people?
- How can someone's innate desire for justice play a role in our evangelism and in defending our beliefs to others?
- How can we avoid committing superficial "mic drops" when it comes to speaking to people about the gospel and its serious implications for their lives?
- What are some illegitimate reasons that sometimes make you hesitant to respond in faith and obedience to God's Word?
- How does this passage speak to your biggest fear when it comes to telling others about Jesus?

## discussion questions



- In what ways could the proof of Jesus as the Messiah supported by prophecies impact your life today?
- What are some ways the good news of Jesus addresses the suffering the world experiences today?
- How difficult do you think it was for Jesus, who came to rescue His people, to experience rejection?
- What are some ways we can minister and serve the people on the margins of our community?
- How are you challenged or convicted because Jesus took our rejection upon Himself so we could be accepted by God?
- What does this account teach us about the cost of following Jesus?
- How does this differ from what you have previously thought concerning the life of a Christian?
- How should Christians respond to persecution and rejection?
- In what ways does our endurance in the midst of rejection or opposition strengthen our witness and mission?
- How have you experienced rejection for your faith in Christ?
- What encouraging words would you offer to a young believer facing rejection because of their belief in Jesus?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 12 | MARCH 21–25




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


## JESUS TEACHES ABOUT NEW BIRTH

John 3:3-18


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**main point**  The new birth is God's supernatural transformation in the hearts of people.

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**essential doctrine**  **REGENERATION**  
Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person's life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

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**Christ Connection**  Jesus taught that new birth, not religious activity, was how a person enters the kingdom of God and receives eternal life. New birth is given from God the Father through faith in God the Son as a work of God the Spirit. Because of God's love, we are no longer condemned because of our sin, but we have been given eternal life in Christ.

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## devotional questions



- In what ways do you need to develop a deeper understanding of who Jesus is?
- What are some doctrines or passages that you struggle to understand? Which have you grown to understand better because of the Spirit's guidance?
- How is faith needed in your relationship with Jesus after salvation? What areas of your life do you need to trust Jesus with?
- How do you tend to see salvation: as something that is deserved or as a free gift of God?
- In what ways have you seen your living and thinking change because of the gospel?

## discussion questions



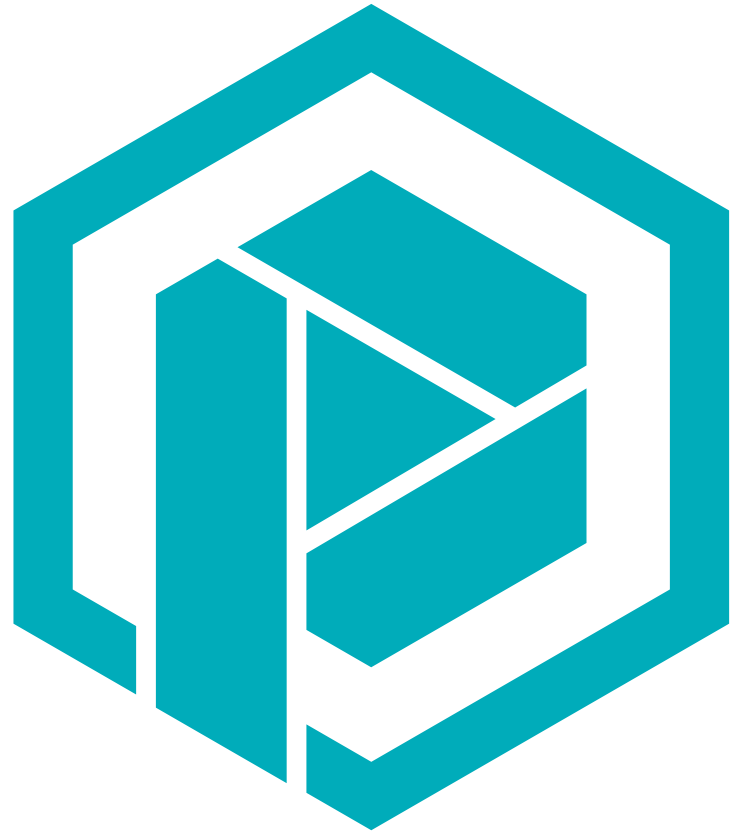
- What evidence would you expect to see of a person who was born again?
- How does Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus provide a model for how we engage with those who are religious but not committed to Christ?
- What are some reasons we should trust Jesus' teaching?
- What is the connection between a person's character and the value of their testimony?
- What are some ways we should respond to God for the gift of His Son
- How does the loving God of the Bible compare with the ways the world views Him?
- What can we learn from Nicodemus being a religious person who didn't know the truth when it came to having a relationship with God?
- Why is it important that we realize God sets the terms and conditions of how we come to Him, and not the other way around?
- Why is it important to first understand the sin in our hearts in order to fully appreciate God's gift of grace?
- How would you explain to someone what it means to have "faith" and "believe" using this account between Jesus and Nicodemus?
- What should be our response to God's love toward us in Jesus?
- What steps will you take toward sharing the gospel of Christ with others this week?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 13 | MAR. 28–APRIL 1



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


## JESUS TEACHES ABOUT LIVING WATER

John 4:7–14, 19–26, 28–29, 39


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**main point**  God's people worship in Spirit and in truth.

---

**essential doctrine**  **CHRIST AS RECONCILIATION**  
Ever since the fall of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, God and human beings have been estranged. Sin resulted not only in an estranged relationship with God but also in enmity between God and humanity. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God. Thankfully, God loves His enemies and has sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ's death, God provides the means whereby that broken relationship is restored and renewed (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18–19).

---

**Christ Connection**  Jesus told the Samaritan woman that a day was coming when worshipers would not focus on the physical location of their worship but would worship God in Spirit and truth. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, our worship is no longer confined by geography. We worship Jesus as the Savior of the whole world wherever we are.

---

## devotional questions



- Who might God be sending you to as His agent to share the gospel? How will you obey Him and go this week?
- In what ways does your soul thirst? How might you try to satisfy it apart from Jesus at times? Why?
- In what ways does the church tend to address wrongly the sins of others? What can you learn about addressing others' sins from this account?
- What can sometimes hinder your worship of God? What can you do to move past these hindrances and instead worship in Spirit and truth no matter what?
- How comfortable are you with sharing the gospel with others? What can you do to be more comfortable, and perhaps more obedient to share your faith with others?

## discussion questions

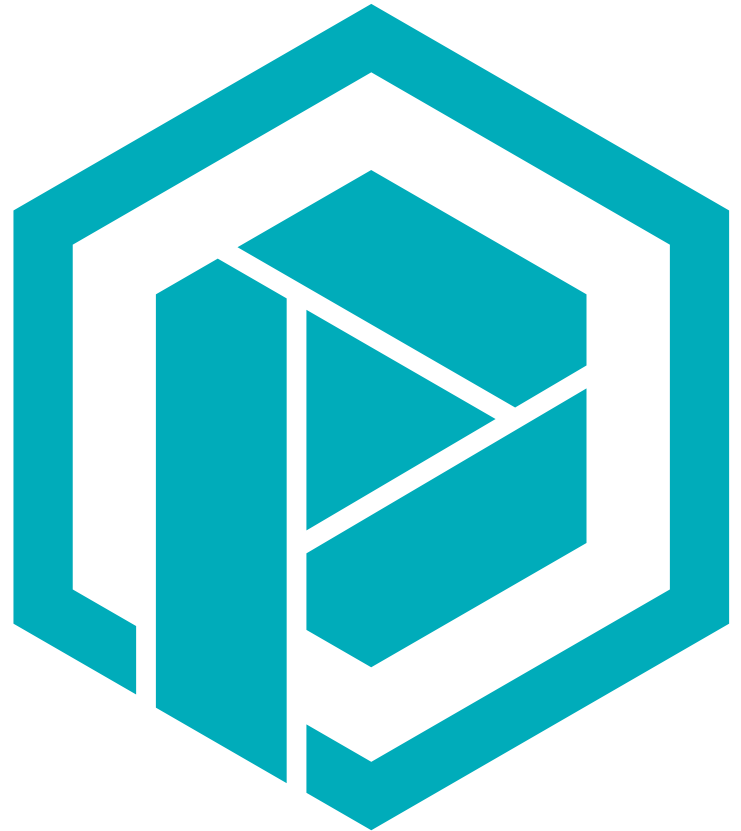


- What are some of ways we are tempted to fill the longing in our hearts with things other than God?
- How should receiving the gift of living water from Jesus change one's life?
- What should our churches look like if we are worshiping in Spirit and truth?
- Jesus taught that worship isn't tied to a place, but is something first and foremost of the heart. Why is this important in our daily lives? How can apply this when attending church?
- How does the Samaritan woman's response challenge us when it comes to pointing those others to Jesus?
- Why does God emphasize the importance of worshiping in both Spirit and truth?
- What happens when only one of these is present?
- What does it mean that the water Jesus provides has the ability to satisfy us completely?
- What are some areas of life where we have sought satisfaction in other things more than in God Himself?
- What can we learn about the disciples' response versus the Samaritan woman's response after discovering who Jesus is?
- When was the last time you broke "social protocol" to minister to someone? Why is it important that Christians be seen as breaking cultural barriers instead of creating them?

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# SPRING 2022 **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

## WEEK 14 | APRIL 4-8




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


## JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS

Luke 17:11–19


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**main point**  Thankfulness is the natural response to God's work in our lives.

---

**essential doctrine**  **JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH**  
Justification refers to the moment when a person is objectively declared righteous before God based on the righteousness of Christ's atoning death (Rom. 8:33–34). This act of declaration takes place through faith in Christ and not as a result of human works or effort (Eph. 2:8–9). Through justification, a person is made to be in right standing before God, changing what was once an estranged and hostile relationship to one of adoption into the family of God.

---

**Christ Connection**  When ten lepers called out to Jesus for mercy, Jesus sent them to the priests and they were healed. Jesus declared that the one leper who returned to thank and worship Him was saved by His faith. Likewise, when we cry out in faith to Jesus, He saves us from our sin, a gift that prompts a life of gratitude and worship.

---

## devotional questions



- How does God's merciful nearness change the way you live today?
- How does trusting Jesus for healing change your outlook today?
- How does salvation by faith set Christianity apart from all other religions and worldviews?
- How does knowing God accepts the weak into His kingdom free you to live before Him now?
- How does knowing that Jesus was rejected and suffered help you understand the way God's kingdom is at work in this world?

## discussion questions



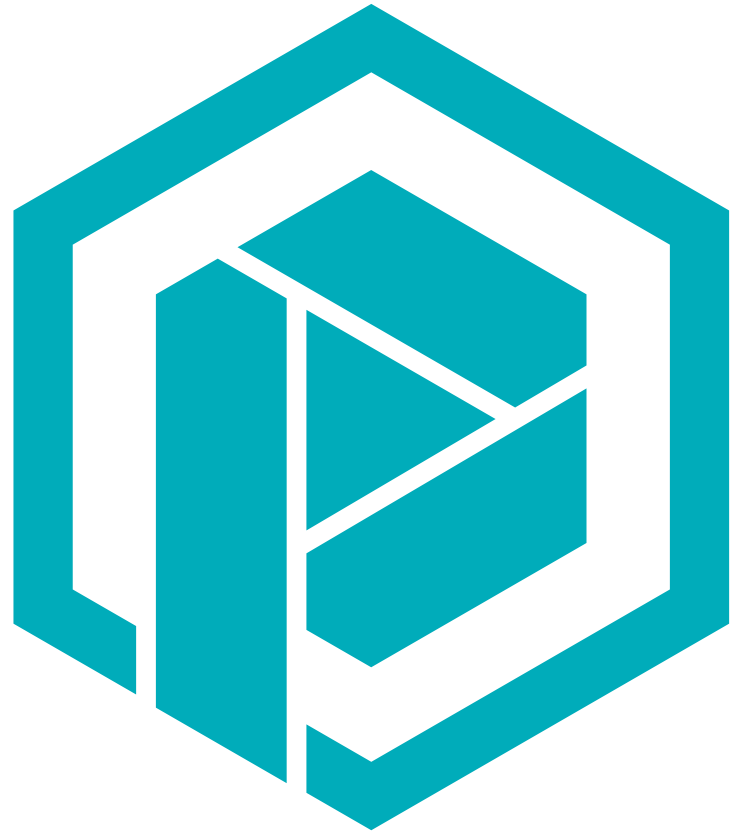
- How is sin spiritually comparable to leprosy?
- How have you experienced separation from God and from others because of your sin?
- Have you ever called out to God for help and grace during a time of desperation? How did He respond?
- What path of obedience is Jesus calling you to walk today?
- What are some things you need to thank God for right now?
- How would you describe the practice of thanksgiving in your worship to God?
- What can we learn for our own lives from the way the lepers responded to Jesus' word and instruction?
- How is it comforting to know that our only response to the gospel is to come to Jesus, not one of earning His favor through good works?
- What does this account teach us about our greatest need before God?
- How might knowing our deepest need help us in our spiritual lives?
- How does this story instruct us about living with thankfulness before God?
- What are some practical ways you can begin to give greater thanks to God for all the work He is doing in you, through you, and around you?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 15 | APRIL 11–15



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



## JESUS HEALS A WOMAN AND RAISES A GIRL

Mark 5:21–43

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**main point** >> Jesus calls us to have faith in His ability to heal both the physical and spiritual.

---

**essential doctrine** >> **FAITH**  
Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16–21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13–16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one’s life (John 1:10–13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

---

**Christ Connection** >> The woman who pushed her way into the crowd around Jesus was ceremonially unclean, thereby rendering all who touched her unclean. When she touched Jesus, however, her illness was healed. Jesus’ purity was more powerful than her impurity. In this encounter, we see a glimpse of what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross. Through faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection, our shame is removed, our guilt is absolved, and God begins His work of making us pure and holy, like His Son.

---

devotional  
questions



- Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus' power to break chains and make us whole?
- How do overwhelming circumstances draw us to Jesus? How does this story reassure us that Jesus will help us during such times?
- What is keeping you from trusting the healing power of Jesus today?
- How does the gospel assure us that honesty with Jesus sets us free?
- How does relying on the strength of your faith to save you impair your vision of God's grace?

discussion  
questions



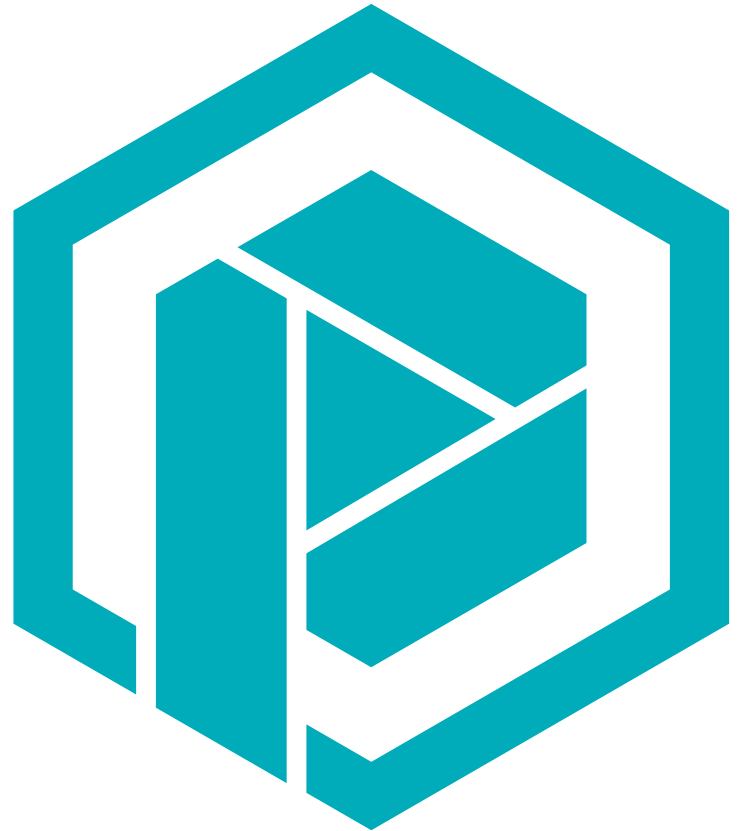
- Has desperation ever led you to Jesus? What was going on during that time?
- Why is shame such a powerful emotion? Why do feelings of shame often accompany feelings of hopelessness?
- What does the exchange between the woman's uncleanness and Jesus' purity point to about our sin and salvation?
- How does the knowledge of Jesus' power influence any fear we may have over suffering and death?
- How does the death and resurrection of Jesus give us hope beyond death?
- What can we learn from the faith of the woman and the faith of Jairus?
- Do you ever think that God isn't reachable? How does this account teach otherwise?
- What does this account teach about our condition before coming to Jesus? Why is this important?
- Why is it important that once again Jesus is interested in more than physical healing?
- What do you think is the difference between Jesus offering physical healing and personal involvement in our lives?
- How do these accounts challenge us in our own pursuit of Jesus this week?
- What can you take from these account to someone you want to encourage or minister to this week?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 17 | APRIL 25–29




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


## JESUS HEALS A MAN AT BETHESDA

John 5:2–18


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**main point**  Jesus' grace in our life empowers us to obey Him.

---

**essential doctrine**  **GOD IS ONE IN THREE PERSONS**  
While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4–6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3–4)—and each Person is distinct from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

---

**Christ Connection**  The man at the pool of Bethesda had been disabled for many years and had lost all hope and given in to despair, but when Jesus told him to pick up his mat and walk, he was healed and he obeyed. In a similar way, our sin has left us hopeless and in despair, but Jesus invites us to trust in Him and follow Him. When we do, our sin is removed and we can follow Jesus in a life of obedience.

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## devotional questions



- What are those things in your life that distract you from the Savior and Healer who calls to you even now?
- What are some laws or expectations that you are living up to in your own strength instead of obeying Jesus' commands by faith?
- How should Jesus' words in this passage affect the way you speak with people about God, matters of faith, and Jesus, in particular, as you share the gospel?
- What role do good works have in your life: Are they efforts to earn God's approval or an overflow of your heart of faith? How will you know the difference?
- How does Jesus' words challenge your understanding and perspective regarding the Old Testament?

## discussion questions



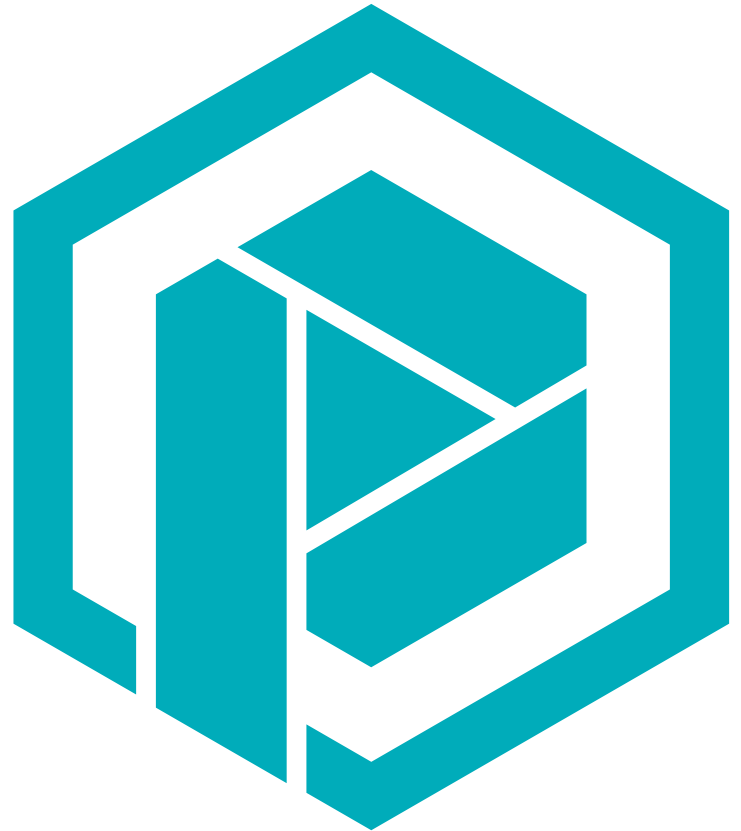
- What are some areas of life in which people may feel both helpless and hopeless?
- How do you see loneliness contribute to despair in the world?
- Why is it important to emphasize that grace comes before obedience?
- What happens to our obedience when we start trying to earn the grace God has already given to us through Jesus?
- What does it look like to walk in holiness in this world?
- What characteristics of the disabled man do we see in ourselves?
- How do you need to get up and walk in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ?
- What is our greatest need according to this story?
- What are some ways humanity tries to fix our sin problem on our own? How do these attempts ultimately fail?
- How could you use this story as a means of explaining to someone that our obedience to God comes as a response to God's grace in our lives?
- Why does the formula "grace first, then obedience" glorify God unlike "first obedience, then grace?"

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 18 | MAY 2-6



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

## JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1–7, 29–33, 35–41

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**main point** >> Spiritual blindness is the result of not seeing Jesus properly.

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**essential doctrine** >> **ENSLAVED TO SIN**  
Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

---

**Christ Connection** >> In the healing of the man who was born blind, Jesus revealed that He is the light who has come into the world. When we trust in Jesus, our sin and spiritual blindness is removed and we are able to see the light of the world in all His glory and beauty.

---

**In defense** >> The pool of Siloam was discovered by accident in 2004 as workers in Jerusalem dug to repair a sewer pipe that was located only a few feet above the buried ruins. Subsequent excavations by Ronny Reich and Eli Shukrun revealed that the pool was surrounded on all four sides by three tiers of steps that led down into the water. Ancient coinage and pottery at the site date from the time of Christ, placing the pool well within the context of the story of Jesus healing a blind man here (John 9:7). The pool's discovery leaves little doubt among both liberal and conservative archaeologists that the pool mentioned in John 9:7 is the pool of Siloam.—The CSB Apologetics Study Bible (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1318.

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devotional  
questions



- In what ways have you seen God at work in your suffering, past and present?
- What is one way your life has been different since following Jesus?
- How would you answer someone who asked you what Jesus has done for you?
- What promises of God can you cling to when trials and suffering come?
- In what ways can you meet the physical needs of the people you are sharing the gospel with?

discussion  
questions



- Why are we prone to connect all suffering to a person's sins?
- What are some ways you can be the light of Christ in your spheres of influence?
- Why do you think this particular healing was so unique and made the Pharisees so upset?
- What does Jesus' actions in this account teach us about how we should live our lives?
- How can we respond to Jesus' goodness and grace in our lives this week?
- What are some ways we are challenged to live based on Jesus' actions in this story?
- What are some ways we can respond to God's grace in our lives like the man who was healed?
- According to this story, who was ultimately blind: the blind man or the Pharisees? What does this teach us about our own condition before believing in Jesus?
- What are some ways we can worship our Lord and Savior for the healing from sin that He gives to us?
- What are some opportunities in your community for your group to meet people who are on the margins and in need of the hope of the gospel?
- How will you live in the light of Jesus so others become aware of their spiritual darkness and need for Jesus?



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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 19 | MAY 9-13



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

## THE GOSPEL

Genesis 1:31; Psalm 19:1; Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:23, 6:23; 1:25; Proverbs 14:12; John 3:16; Colossians 2:14

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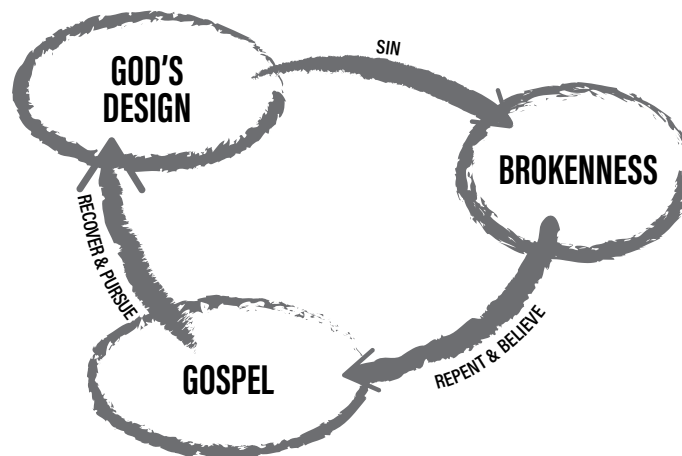
**main point** >> Jesus is Savior!

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**essential doctrine** >> **GOSPEL**  
Look up The Three Circles evangelism tool online at <https://lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide>

---

**Christ Connection** >> Jesus is the Son of God who lived a perfect life on earth. He died on a Cross to erase the sin and brokenness in your life. He came back to life and walked out of the grave so that you, too, can move from death to life. You become a child of God when you repent of your sin and believe that Jesus is the Son of God.





- When you watch the sun rise, throw a ball in a field, or feel the wind against your skin, do you think to yourself that God's creation is very good?
- How can you begin to see and know God's creation as very good?
- How often do you find yourself questioning why you are the way you are and wanting to be different?
- What steps do you need to take in order to fully experience God's design for your life?
- Do you want to live a life enslaved to sin or in the freedom of Christ?
- What areas of brokenness are students your age currently caught in, and how can they experience freedom from this brokenness?
- The Bible tells us there are two types of people, those in brokenness and those in Christ. Where do you find yourself and where do you want to be?

Leaders, begin by giving this statement, your story in one sentence, and have your students take turns telling their story.

There was a time in my life where I felt \_\_\_\_\_(anxious, depressed, hopeless, worried, alone, fearful, abandoned, worthless, etc.) until I encountered the love of Jesus, surrendered my life to Him, and now I experience \_\_\_\_\_(peace, joy, comfort, hope, love confidence, purpose, etc.) Do you have a story such as that?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 20 | MAY 16–20



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

## THE GOSPEL

Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10; John 3:36; Acts 17:22-34

### main point



God is sovereign, and we are responsible. Jesus' finished work on the Cross, if we repent and truly believe, is God's restoration plan for the brokenness of the world.

### essential doctrine



#### SURRENDER

We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The Gospel is the Good News that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die for our sins (John 3:16). Salvation is not based on works, so that no one may boast, but by grace alone, through faith alone, on Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). His Holy Spirit enables us, imperfect followers seeking a perfect God, to recover and pursue His design for our lives (Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10). To deny the Gospel is to embrace condemnation before God. God's only provision for salvation is to believe in Christ Jesus (John 3:17-18, John 3:36, John 14:6). The Gospel is the only answer for the world's brokenness. Surrender to Him, love Him, follow Him, live for Him, and take His message wherever you go.

### In defense



What is sin? Sin is any feeling, thought, speech or action that comes from a heart that does not treasure God over all things. The following are the roots of sin with which we all struggle on this side of eternity.

- The glory of God not honored
  - The holiness of God not revered
  - The greatness of God not admired
  - The power of God not praised
  - The truth of God not sought
  - The wisdom of God not esteemed
  - The beauty of God not treasured
  - The goodness of God not savored
  - The faithfulness of God not trusted
  - The promises of God not believed
  - The commandments of God not obeyed
  - The justice of God not feared
  - The grace of God not cherished
  - The presence of God not prized
  - The person of God not loved
- Bethlehem College & Seminary Chancellor John Piper



- If someone were to observe your life for just one day, would he/she see areas in your life in which you are not honoring God (examples - looking down on or speaking unkindly of someone, justifying actions that are not Christlike, being impatient, irritable, self-absorbed, avoiding where God is directing you because you are seeking man's approval, driven by selfish ambition vs. motivated for God's glory or the good of others)?
- What sin struggles are you tempted to excuse, or even love, in your own life?
- Is it possible to hate the sin with which you struggle without hating yourself?
- Is there an absence of repentance in your life?
- What is the difference between works and fruit, and why is that important?
- Have you ever prayed for God to reveal the areas in your life in which you struggle to believe or trust in Him?
- If you have trusted in Christ, what sin struggles or desires have you seen God radically change?
- If you have been following Christ for a while, can you share with the group biblical disciplines that help you to guard your heart and mind from the way the world desires to normalize sin?
- What does it look like to pursue God and His design?
- How has God been pursuing you?
- When you imagine Jesus on the Cross, taking on the wrath of God the Father, is it personal or do you just hear the crowds screaming "crucify Him"?
- What, in the depths of your heart, do you conceive God to be, and why does that matter?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 21 | MAY 23–27



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

## DOCTRINES

Ez. 36:26-27, 1 Peter 1:23, 25, 2 Cor. 5:17, 1 John 3:9; Romans 3:24, 5:1, Gal. 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:23, Heb. 13:20-21, Gal. 5:16-18; 1 John 2:4-6, John 6:40; Romans 8:17, 1 Cor. 15:12-58

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**main point** >> God's Word teaches us doctrines (beliefs) that help us stand firm in our faith and help us truly understand and articulate our salvation.

---

**essential doctrine** >> **REGENERATION, JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION, PRESERVATION, AND GLORIFICATION**  
 Regeneration, justification, sanctification, preservation and glorification are the essential doctrines of our faith! Look again at 2 Corinthians 5:17. In Christ we are made NEW! The doctrines of regeneration and justification clearly point out the complete change that comes for every believer – and make very clear that our salvation is based on who Jesus is and what He has done for us. We cannot make ourselves new; we cannot justify ourselves. We are all sinners. It is only through the truth that God both forgives and justifies us that we can be saved! Once we are new in Him, we then can seek to be holy as He is holy – then we are able to daily persevere in sanctification to more clearly reflect our Savior! With the proper Heavenly perspective, we can daily find lasting peace and hope.

---

**Christ Connection** >> This entire week has been a beautiful invitation to salvation! Spend some time reading Titus 3:3–8. This passage clearly defines the doctrines of our faith we studied this week and is a great passage to help illustrate who Christ is and all He has done for us!

---

**In defense** >> Give students time to walk through the doctrines and passages of Scripture above. Ask students to share how they came to know the Lord. How would they share the Gospel clearly with someone who was struggling to grasp salvation?

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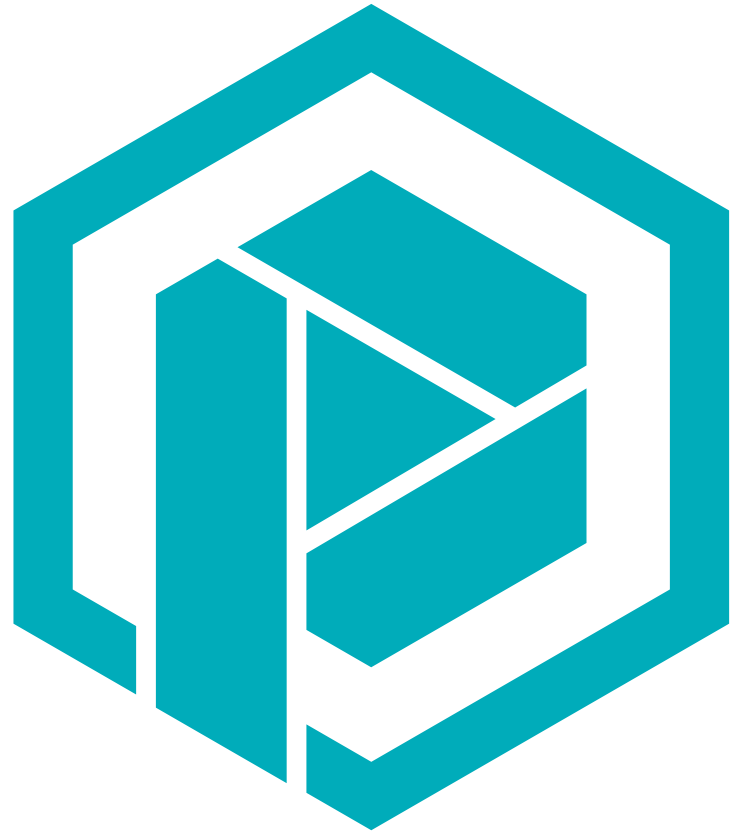
- Walk through each of the five doctrines: REGENERATION, JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION, PERSEVERANCE, GLORIFICATION. Have students at your table clearly define each doctrine and then spend time discussing why it's important to truly understand these doctrines in a way you can believe them yourself and in a way you can clearly explain them to others.
- Read the following verses and discuss them in light of the doctrines we have studied. How do they encourage you in your faith? Challenge you to grow? Empower you to share the Gospel with someone else?
  - Philippians 1:6; 9-11
  - Hebrews 10:11-25
  - Galatians 6:7-10
- What are some actionable steps you can take to live out your faith?
  - If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus, do that today! He will renew and justify you through Jesus!
  - Have you been walking in victory? Seeking to be holy as He is holy? How have you seen God sanctifying your life? What steps do you need to take to look more like Him?
  - Are you weary in your walk? Are you questioning the race before you? How can you stand firm for all your life? How can you encourage one another to persevere in your faith?
  - How is your perspective of heaven? Are you finding hope in your ultimate glorification? Do you long for eternity with God? And if you don't, how can you begin to shift your perspective?
- Close in prayer, thanking God for salvation through Jesus! Ask Him to help you joyfully grow and stand firm in your faith. Thank Him for eternity with Him and pray that you always find your hope in Him.

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 22 | MAY 30–JUNE 3



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

## ORDINANCES

Luke 3:21; Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Luke 22:19-26;  
1 Cor. 11:28, Is. 53:5, Matt. 26:28

---

**main point** >> Baptism and communion are public professions of an inward faith with an eternal God.

---

**essential doctrine** >> **BAPTISM AND COMMUNION**  
Baptism and Communion point to the Resurrection of Christ, as both point to the death and rise of Christ.

---

**Christ Connection** >> Baptism and communion are a more obvious Christ connection as they both fully revolve around Jesus, but it is still essential to remember the depth and significance behind both practices.

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discussion  
questions



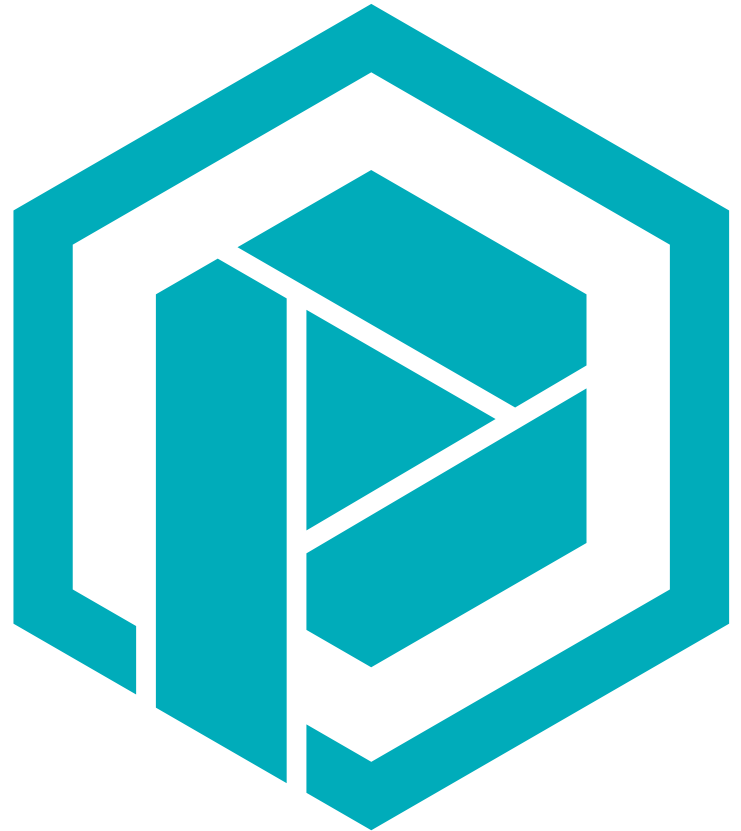
- Do you have to be baptized to be saved? Why or why not?
- Why is it so important to be baptized in front of your community?
- Why does the Great Commission apply to us today?
- Think about the last time you took communion. What did it mean to you? What was your mindset going into it?
- How has baptism affected your life directly? Your baptism, your friends' baptisms, etc.
- Should you participate in communion every time? Why or why not?
- How does baptism point to the Resurrection of Christ? How does communion?

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SPRING 2022

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 23 | JUNE 6–10



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

## IMMOVABLE BELIEFS

Deut. 4:1-2, 17-19, Luke 21:33, Romans 15:4; Jer. 10:10, 1 Tim. 1:17; Gen. 1:1-2, 26; Gen. 1:26-30, Eph. 2:1-22; Gen. 2:15-25

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main point



What makes up a family is clearly defined in Scripture, no matter how our culture decides to define it.

---

essential doctrine



### GOD'S WORD

God's Word is true. He has created us and has a plan for each one of us. If we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, we are adopted into His family as sons and daughters.

---

Christ Connection



The things and the ways of the world are always changing, but we can put our trust in a God who is never changing, always true and always faithful.

---

devotional  
questions



- What's a Scripture you can encourage someone with today, or even share the hope of Jesus?
- What are the things you are placing before God? In what ways are you placing them before God?
- How have you seen the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in your life?
- Why did God create humans with a sacredness of life?
- How have you seen the world skew the biblical definition of "family"?

discussion  
questions



- Have you ever thought of Scripture as God-breathed? Why or why not?
- What is the purpose of Scripture?
- What can we learn about God from Scripture?
- Since God is deserving of all our worship and devotion, what are things in your life that you tend to place before Him?
- God is omnipresent and omniscient; how do these characteristics of God change the way we live?
- God has a specific plan for you, because He formed you in your mother's womb, and knows the very hairs on your head. How does - or can - this change the way we live?