

Getting to Know Jesus

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY
AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

THIS SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY and discussion guide is designed to be used by a group of 4-10 people who want to further discuss the concepts in this book and dig deeper into God's Word.

Note: The use of a study Bible will help you with questions you have about the Bible passages.

INTRODUCTION

Getting Started

1. Think of a person or even multiple people you know on a sincere, deep, and maybe even on an intense level. What were the main factors that allowed your relationship to deepen and become more meaningful?

2. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” In what ways do you find Jesus’ words in Matthew to be true in your own life? How would you describe your current level of contentment with what you treasure and where you are investing your life?

3. What is the difference between “knowing about Jesus” and “knowing Jesus.” How can recognizing this difference shed new light on someone’s understanding of Christianity? How can it help guide you in the process of growing in a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ?

4. What is your first impression of seeing the Six Core Teachings of the Bible as a way to know Jesus better?

Digging Deeper

Read Luke 7:36-50

1. What is the point of the story Jesus tells to the Pharisee?

2. Describe the difference between the Pharisee's relationship with Jesus and the woman's relationship with Jesus.
3. Why did the woman love Jesus more than the Pharisee?
4. What is this story teaching us about Jesus? What is it teaching us about sin and forgiveness?

Read Psalm 139

This Psalm helps us see that God already knows everything there is to know about us.

1. How does it make you feel that God knows you this well? Why?
2. What does this Psalm reveal to you about God – who he is, what he is like?

Read Colossians 1:15-20

This passage asserts that Jesus is the center of all creation.

1. In your own words, what is this passage saying about Jesus?

2. Which verse is the most helpful to you, why?

Connecting the Dots

1. Share the best thing you learned about Jesus in the introduction.

2. Describe your life journey especially in light of your faith and relationship with Jesus. Think of times you have been close to him, far from him, struggling with faith, strong in faith. Who has helped you in your walk of faith? What events in your life have been major influences on who you are and what you believe?

3. Where are you right now on your spiritual journey of faith?

4. Intimacy is one of the most special gifts God gives to us – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. With intimacy comes understanding and closeness within a relationship. In what ways do you find this to be true in your life?

5. We experience intimacy, depth, communication, identity, vulnerability, and commitment in relationships with others. In what ways can you experience these same gifts in relationship with Jesus?

CHAPTER 1

THE BIG PICTURE

An Explanation of the Gospel – The Six Core Teachings of the Bible

GETTING STARTED

1. Look at the list on page 21 about the differences between man-made religion and what God has revealed to us in the gospel. Are there any on the list that you have misunderstood? Explain.
2. Which of the six core teachings is the most interesting to you? Why?
3. If you died today, do you think you would go to heaven? Why or why not?

4. Try to summarize the message of the gospel in your own words in a sentence or two.

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Romans 3:20-28 and Ephesians 2:1-10

1. What is your first reaction to the message of these passages? What strikes you the most?
2. What do you think is the main point of these passages?
3. What do these verses have to say about doing good works to earn God's favor or to earn a place in heaven?
4. Is anyone good enough to earn a place in heaven? Explain.
5. What does the Bible say opens heaven to a sinner?

Read Luke 15:11-32

1. Describe the heart of the younger son based on his words and actions.
2. What is your reaction to how the father welcomes home the younger son? How does it make you feel?
3. Are you more like the younger son or the older son? Why?
4. What does this story reveal to you about the heart of God?

Read Luke 5:27-32

1. Why are the Pharisees frustrated by Jesus? What does this story reveal about the hearts and attitudes of the Pharisees?
2. What do you think Jesus is teaching in verses 31-32?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. Share the best thing you learned about Jesus in chapter one.
2. Do you find commitment to be something scary or remarkably refreshing and fulfilling? Explain. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 28, “And surely I will be with you to the end of the age.” Reflect on the endless commitment of love from Jesus and rest in his unconditional faithfulness.
3. What is your reaction to the idea of getting to know Jesus as the focus of being a Christian? What insights does that idea give you into being a Christian?
4. What questions do you have at this point in your study? What is confusing to you?

CHAPTER 2

THE FIRST CORE TEACHING

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

God's Values – Ten Truths that Give and Govern Life

GETTING STARTED

1. Name a close friend and list some of the values that you share. How do those shared values strengthen your friendship?
2. In your life, do you feel the Ten Commandments are a burden and added weight on your shoulders, or do you feel they are a help to you? Why?
3. Are you generally a rule follower or a rule breaker? Explain. How much do you struggle with authority? Why or why not?

4. Which commandment in this chapter was the most interesting to you? Why? What does it reveal to you about God's heart? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER:

Read Psalm 19:7-14

The word "law" can also be interpreted as teachings/truths.

1. What does this passage tell us about God's truths? Which description is the most interesting or insightful for you? Why?

2. What do verses 12-13 tell us about the challenge of sinning against God's law?

Read Matthew 5:17-48

1. Jesus demands that we follow both the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. In other words, our actions and our intentions matter. What is your reaction to these words of Jesus?

2. What is your reaction to the level of obedience Jesus demands?

3. Verses 43-48 talk about loving your enemy as one of the distinguishing marks of the Christian faith. What is so radical about this principle? How is loving your enemy a reflection of what God has done for you?

Read Psalm 51 and Psalm 32

1. What do these passages tell you about the depth of our sinfulness and our need for God's mercy?

2. What verses capture your attention the most? Why?

CONNECT THE DOTS:

1. After reading this chapter, has your view on The Ten Commandments changed? Explain.

2. It is often easier to apply God's law to other people than it is to ourselves. How do these commandments help you look at your own heart? How do they help you love Jesus more?

3. "The worst sinner I know is me." What is your reaction to this quote? How does it affect your ability to treat others with grace?

4. The Bible shares three uses for God's perfect law: *As a **curb** (our conscience/natural instinct that tells us we are doing wrong; a way of correcting our way of life), a **mirror** (to help us realize our sinfulness and God's holiness), and a **guide** (being shown the best way to live for God).* Have you encountered any of these uses of the law in your life? Explain. How have they helped you in your daily life?

5. Between gossip, slander, and hindering the truth, words have the ability to cause so much damage. At the same time, words also have the ability to lift up, encourage, and affirm others in what they do and who they are. Why is it so tempting to fall into the sin of talking negatively about others? Why is it so difficult to speak highly of others and see them as our Savior Jesus does? How can we stop ourselves from speaking negatively and begin to speak more highly of others and truly *“love your neighbor as yourself”*?

6. Sexuality and physical contact is one of the most extremely powerful human behaviors. It has the power to be beautiful and have meaning if used according to God’s design, but it also has the power to tear relationships apart. In your life, how have you seen this at work?

7. What is the best thing you learned about Jesus in this chapter?

CHAPTER 3

THE SECOND CORE TEACHING

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE APOSTLES' CREED – GOD'S IDENTITY

Part I – God the Father – Yahweh, Your Creator

GETTING STARTED

1. A gift can be anything from a toy to a relationship. Gifts come in all shapes, sizes, and prices – sometimes they are even priceless. What is the best gift you have ever received? What made this gift so special?

2. What are a few things in your life for which you are most grateful? Why?

3. In general, are you more content with your life, or are you frustrated and unsatisfied? Why?
4. How do you feel about seeing everything you have as a gift from God?

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Genesis 1:1-5, 2:1-3 and John 1:1-5, 14

The book of Genesis explains the genesis, or beginning, of all things. Everything that exists has its beginning in Genesis – except God, of course.

1. How did God create things?
2. What is John saying about Jesus in John 1?
3. What connections do you see between these two passages?

Read Luke 11:1-13

1. What is the main point of verses 9-13? What does this tell you about God the Father?

2. What do you think is the connection between Jesus teaching us how to talk to God and God's desire to bless us?

Read Psalm 19:1-6

1. What do you think is the main point of this passage?

2. What is the connection between God and his creation?

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

1. How does giving and receiving gifts allow us to understand God's heart?

2. *“He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.”* What does it mean to put your trust and hope in God the Father to provide for you daily?

3. What was the best thing you learned about God in this chapter?

4. Share a few of your favorite places in creation. What do they reveal to you about God?

5. How do you feel about God relating to you like a father?

CHAPTER 4

THE SECOND CORE TEACHING

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE APOSTLES' CREED – GOD'S IDENTITY

Part II – God the Son – Jesus Your Savior

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you like your name? Why or why not? What does your first and last name mean? Why did your parents choose your particular name?
2. Share a couple of people you think have a good name and reputation. Why do you feel that way about them?

3. Can you think of a time when your reputation was damaged? Was it by your actions or by someone else's? Why is it so frustrating and painful to have your reputation damaged?

DIGGING DEEPER:

Read John 14:1-6 and Acts 4:12

1. The Bible reveals that faith in Jesus Christ as God's only Son as our Savior from sin is the only way to get to heaven. What do you think about that truth? Why do you think this message is offensive to many people?

2. It has been said that there are only two religions (or categories of religions):
 - Christianity, which teaches that people are saved by God's grace because of the death and resurrection of Jesus which atones for our sin; and
 - All other religions, which teach that people are saved by doing good works that earn them favor in God's eyes.

- Why is grace such a difficult concept for humans to accept? Why do we prefer our own good works over God's free grace?

Read Matthew 28:16-20

1. What do you think Jesus teaches in the words of verse 18?
2. In verse 19, why do you think Jesus clearly tells us the name of God?

Read I John 4:1-6

1. What criteria can we use to discern if a spirit is from the one true God?
2. This passage suggests that there is a true God and other false gods. Why do you think humanity invents or believes false messages about God?
3. Why do you think the message of the gospel of Jesus is hard for the world to believe?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What have you learned in this chapter about sin and our need for a Savior from sin?
2. Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you think I am?” Ask yourself, “Who do I think Jesus is?”
3. Put into your own words why the death and resurrection of Jesus is so important.
4. What is the best thing you learned in this chapter about Jesus?

CHAPTER 5

THE SECOND CORE TEACHING

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE APOSTLES' CREED – GOD'S IDENTITY

Part III - The Holy Spirit - Your Counselor and Comforter

GETTING STARTED

1. Share a time when a counselor or a good friend helped you see something about yourself that you didn't realize.
2. Why is getting feedback and input about ourselves so important?
Why is it often difficult?
3. Why do you think we often need other people to help comfort us in difficult times?

DIGGING DEEPER

Read John 14:15-31 and John 16:5-16

In these passages, Jesus is telling his disciples that very soon his time on earth will be done. He explains that he will send the Holy Spirit to work in and through God's people.

1. In verse 26 – what does Jesus say is one work of the Holy Spirit? Why is this point so important?

2. Look on page 79 for Luther's explanation to the third part of the Apostles' Creed. What does this mean? After looking at the list of things the Holy Spirit does, how does that information help bring you peace? (John 14:27)

3. A counselor rarely has black and white answers to fix your problems. Instead, he or she asks questions, offers insights, and helps guide your thinking. How does that better help you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?

Read Acts 2:1-13, 14-36, 37-41 (the account of a day called Pentecost)

1. Look at 2:1-13. Why do you think the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a flame of fire? What do the two have in common? What does this imagery teach us about the Holy Spirit?

2. Read verses 14-36. Look closely at verses 22-24 and summarize in your own words what Peter is saying. Why is this so important?

3. Read verses 37-41. What do you think the phrase “cut to the heart” means in verse 37? Why do you think this message cut them to the heart? Why would this message still cut people to the heart today?

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14

In the Hebrew language, breath, wind, and spirit, are all the same word. Notice all the times those three words are used in this passage.

1. Why do you think God had Ezekiel preach to the bones as a way to bring them back to life? What was God revealing through this vision? What can we learn from this?

2. Read Ephesians 2:1-6 and John 5:24. How are these passages connected to the story in Ezekiel 37? Why do you think the Bible uses “resurrection” language to talk about coming to faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

1. God hates sin and separation from his people. He desires to be in an intimate relationship with us, but our actions and what happens in our lives often causes separation between God and us. What seems to separate and create distance between you and God?
2. How can you look for the Holy Spirit to be your counselor and comforter in your daily life?
3. How does the Holy Spirit help you to know Jesus better through your daily life?
4. What is the best thing you learned about the Holy Spirit in this chapter? Why?

CHAPTER 6

THE THIRD CORE TEACHING

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE LORD'S PRAYER

Communicating with God

GETTING STARTED:

1. What are the main ways you communicate with family, friends, colleagues?
2. What is your greatest pet peeve when it comes to communication?
3. What is something you do that impedes communication with others?

4. What makes a person an effective communicator?

DIGGING DEEPER:

Read Matthew 6:5-15

1. What is Jesus saying to us about prayer in verses 5-8?
2. Why do you think Jesus gives us a list of things to talk to him about?
3. Which one of the phrases in the Lord's petition is the most meaningful to you? Why?

Read Ephesians 1:15-18 and Ephesians 3:14-21

1. What do you think it means when Paul says "that they eyes of your heart may be enlightened"?
2. Why do you think Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is to "know Jesus better"?

3. List the things Paul prays for in the second passage. Which is the most meaningful to you? Why?
4. How can you use these prayers for yourself and the people you know and love?

Read Matthew 7:7-12

1. What insights do you gain from verses 7-8 into Jesus' thoughts on prayer?
2. What is Jesus saying to you in verses 9-11?
3. How do these verses help you think about your own prayer life?

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

1. Do you enjoy serious and personal conversations, or are they a struggle for you? Why?
2. Who is someone easy to talk to about serious, deep, and personal subjects? What qualities does that person have that makes it easy for you to talk about serious subjects?
3. How would you characterize your conversations with Jesus? Serious? Frequent? Deep and meaningful? Common and ordinary?

4. What is your prayer life like? When do you pray? Where do you pray? What resources do you use to help you? How does reading the Bible help your prayer life?

5. What was the best thing you learned about Jesus in this chapter?

CHAPTER 7

THE FOURTH CORE TEACHING GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH BAPTISM

Being Identified with and Connected to God

GETTING STARTED:

1. Share some of the most important commitments you have in life.
2. Why is commitment so meaningful and so difficult at the same time?
3. What do you worry about in life? What do you fear? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER:

Read Matthew 3:13-17

1. Baptism was a common religious ritual. A ceremonial washing was a physical action that reminded people of their need to be spiritually cleansed and for their sins to be washed away. Why do you think this ceremony was helpful to people?
2. Why do you think Jesus was baptized?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “To fulfill all righteousness”?

Read Matthew 28:16-20

1. Verse 17 says some of the disciples doubted. What do you think they doubted? Why did they doubt?
2. Why do you think Jesus tells his disciples to make more disciples by baptizing and teaching?

3. Why is it important that Jesus specifically identifies how the disciples should be baptized (in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)?

Read Romans 6:1-7

1. What do you think it means to be baptized into the death and the resurrection of Jesus?

2. What does it mean to be united with Jesus?

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose applying water as the action that would miraculously and mysteriously connect us to himself?

2. Think of some common “physical markings” that people use to convey what is important to them. Why are these helpful?

3. Martin Luther said that every morning when you wash your face you should remember your baptism. How can remembering and celebrating your baptism be helpful in your life of faith?

4. What is the best thing you learned about Jesus in this chapter?

CHAPTER 8

THE FIFTH CORE TEACHING GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Genuine Repentance, Amazing Grace

1. Sometimes it is hard to be honest about our sin and vulnerable enough to share the darkest parts of our lives. In what ways do you find it hard or easy to be open about your struggles?
2. When was a time in your life that you opened up about your struggle with sin? How did that feel?
3. Why is it so difficult and frightening to be honest about our sins and weaknesses?

DIGGING DEEPER:

Read Psalm 130

1. What does this passage say about our need for forgiveness?

Read I John 1:8-10

1. What does this passage say about denying the fact that we are sinners?

Read Psalm 51

1. What do you think the writer means in verse 5 that he was sinful at birth, sinful from the time his mother conceived him?

2. What do you think the writer means in verse 6?

3. What do you think the writer means in verse 17?

Read Psalm 19:12-13

1. Why do you think the writer is particularly concerned about hidden sin and willful sins?
2. When someone willfully and repeatedly sins against you, what does it do to your relationship? Why?

Read Luke 24:44-49 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

1. What is the main message Jesus tells the disciples to share?
2. It is often said that the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus is the central truth of the Bible and the Christian faith. What do you think that means?

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

1. Why do you think all human beings have such a hard time owning up to their sins?
2. Why is grace and mercy so powerful, especially when it is undeserved?
3. Why is daily repentance so important in the life of a Christian?
How do you practice daily repentance?
4. What is the best thing you learned about Jesus in this chapter?

CHAPTER 9

THE SIXTH CORE TEACHING

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE LORD'S SUPPER

Intimate Communion with God

GETTING STARTED:

1. Why do you think some people are more comfortable than others with getting close to another person? Are you comfortable being close to other people? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think marriage can be the source of great joy, and also of great pain?
3. How close is your family? How open are you about your love and affection for each other?

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

1. What does it mean for two people to submit to one another? Why is this such a powerful experience? What happens when a husband and wife don't submit to each other?
2. What do you think verses 31-32 mean?
3. Why is the phrase "one flesh" such a powerful image of intimacy?
4. Why do you think God uses marriage as a picture of the relationship he desires to have with you?

Read Matthew 26:26-29

1. Why do you think Jesus said, "This is my body... this is my blood"?
2. How does eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus, in, with, and under the bread and wine, result in a "one flesh" union?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. Why do you think Paul is so concerned about people participating in the Lord's Supper without proper respect and reverence?
2. What do you think Paul means in verses 27-29?
3. What do these verses tell you about the practice of taking communion in church?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. Why do you think Jesus gave us a meal as one of the most sacred acts for Christians to do regularly?
2. Why is the real presence of Jesus in, with, and under the bread and wine such an important and powerful truth?

3. What do you do to prepare to take the Lord's Supper? What do you think about and pray about as you take the Lord's Supper?

4. What is the best thing you learned about Jesus in this chapter?

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