

LEADER'S GUIDE

**SEEING GOD'S
POWER IN
ACTION**

***LETTING GOD WORK IN
US AND THROUGH US***

Life Group Leaders Guide

Seeking God First

*Learning to live, love and lead
like Jesus.*

*First Baptist Church of Eugene
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Seeking God First

Learning to live, love and lead like Jesus.

Throughout the Bible, God tells us... commands us... invites us to seek after Him.

Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. (1 Chronicles 22:19)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

And not only are we told to seek after God, we are told to seek Him *first*. As Jesus puts it, “seek *first* His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).

Have you ever wondered what the Bible means when it tells us to “seek after God first?” Have you ever thought about what “seeking God first” might sound like, feel like, and look like in everyday life? Does it mean you have to be perfect or, at least, pretend to be perfect? Does it mean you have to talk and pray with special religious-sounding words? Does it mean you have to sell everything you own and live a life of poverty? Does it mean you have to dress in a robe and strum a guitar on a hillside? Does it mean you can’t eat meat? You can’t eat veggies? You can’t eat anything... at least for long periods of time? Does it mean you have to talk, dress, look, and act a certain way? Does it mean...?

It’s fascinating to consider that the God, who tells us He is always with us, also tells us we need to seek after Him – to seek after Him first. And let’s face it, no matter how you reconcile these two truths, seeking God first is easier said than done. For if you are like most, it can be a struggle to just seek after God, let alone to seek Him first in our everyday lives.

That’s why we created this study which aimed at helping one another better understand what it means to seek after God, why it’s so important, and how we can seek after Him first in our daily lives, no matter where we may be at in our spiritual journey. So whether you are facing times of fear, sorrow, doubt, brokenness, confusion, adversity... we invite you to join us as we seek to learn together what it means to seek after God in our lives... first. For as 1 Chronicles 28:9 puts it, “If you seek Him, He will be found by you.”

Blessed to be on this incredible journey with you,

Frank Bonser & Corey O’Connell

Let’s get started...

Seeking God First

Learning to live, love and lead like Jesus.

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How to use this Leader's Guide

The group story-telling and discussion time consist of five separate parts. Each part is important to help group member to: 1) Participate, 2) Learn by repetition, and; 3) Discover what God wants them to do with each passage.

1. Review: (2-3 Minutes)

Take a short time to review last week's passage and draw out key points that were learned.

Caution: Do not create a discussion. Example questions could be:

- What was one thing you remember about last week's story?, or,
- Did someone last week say something that was particularly meaningful to you this week, What was it?, or,
- Did you find yourself sharing the story with anyone? Who? or,
- Ask follow-up questions of individuals who shared a particular action they were going to take as a result of last week's passage.

2. Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Briefly set the context of this week's passage from your Leaders Guide.

- Here is what has happened since last week's story and some context to this week's story, or
- This week we are looking at

Optional: You could ask a couple of general questions as an introduction to stimulate the group's thoughts about the upcoming passage. They help get the group focused on the story that is about to be told.

- Example: Say, before we start the story, "As you hear our story, I would like you to be thinking about a couple things."

3. Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can in your own words. Let God's Word stand on its own.

- Don't add to the story...just tell the story.
- Don't stop to teach or try to make points...just tell the story.
- This is not a performance; just think of sitting around a campfire and telling it in your own words.
- The objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to simply share the main points of the passage.

4. Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions.

- What was the first thing that happened?
- What happened next? Then what happened? Then....?

If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events of the story.

- Don't stop for discussions. Keep moving through the passage until it has been completely rebuilt.
- Remember the *purpose* is to:
 - Get everyone to participate.
 - Make sure the passage is accurate. Nothing added or left out.
 - Help learn and remember the passage through repetition.

5. **Group Discussion: (35-45 Minutes)** The groups discussion time consists of three different types of questions to encourage each member to participate and discover what God has for them in each of the passage. All three types of questions used sequentially have a specific purpose and should not be skipped.

Basic Questions: (What does the passage say?)

These four questions can be used to start a discussion each week. Use them in a variety of ways. You will not have time to cover all four each week, which is good.

1. What is one thing that struck you, or was new to you, from this passage?
2. Is there anything you dislike or that confuses you about this passage? Don't stop to discuss, but remember to come back if you have time.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus or the Holy Spirit?)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions: (What does the passage mean?)

These are important questions for your group. They not only can stimulate great discussion and prompt your group members into action; they can also allow you to see into a person's heart in significant ways. There are two ways to ask life application questions:

- Use story specific questions provided in the guide, or
- Form your own questions based on hearing an individual's comments during the Basic Questions time.
- The point of these questions is to go deeper in to what the passage means, and not to discuss more information about the passage.
- There is no particular order to ask these questions. They are used to guide the facilitator in asking follow-up questions that will reach people's hearts.

Life Application Questions: (What should we do with what we've learned?)

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage? or,
2. What do you think God is putting on your heart to do with this passage?
 - **Important:** The Life Application Question(s) are the most important questions and are the purpose of the discussion. This is where people put the Scripture into action.
3. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Tips:

- Do not skip the Basic or Other Applications Questions. They set up the Life Application Questions.
- Manage your discussion time well to ALWAYS arrive at these question(s) with at least 10-15 minutes of discussion time left. It is intended to be the most meaningful time of the group meeting.

6. **Prayer Starters:**

Each discussion page will have some thoughts to assist in how the group can pray for each other and for the Life Group based on the context of the passages that were just reviewed.

Group Facilitator Reminder:

Participants will experience the passage four different ways (Repetition is our best learning method).

1. Individually read it before they come to the group meeting.
2. Hear it told orally in the group.
3. Participate in rebuilding it together.
4. And finally, discuss it in detail as a group.

When Serving Good Seems Like A Waste

Psalm 73

Context for this week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Facilitator Note: Telling a psalm as a story might be a challenge for your group. Please consider the following options. The passage can be read by the group skipping the rebuild, or for the more adventurous, retold in your own words. It can also be recited from memory by a group member or collectively (don't let us hold you back).

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Why do the rich and famous seem to prosper with little regard for the things of God? Life can be discouraging when it seems like there are a few who have it easy and the many who are struggling to get by. What good is it to devote ourselves to God if it will not bring relief from the daily grind? Psalm 73 asks and answers this age old question.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. How does the distribution of resources in life sometimes seem unfair?
2. Can you describe a time when you felt the same way as the psalmist?
3. What transformed the psalmist perspective on life?
4. How can we let God change us?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts..
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Hannah's Struggle

1 Samuel 1:1-18

Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Hannah is the mother of Samuel who will become a powerful prophet in Israel, but as our story starts out we find her barren. Her situation is far beyond her control. She is one of two wives and feels tormented because she has not born a child for her husband. Hannah is distraught over her circumstances and cry's out to the only one who can help her. Let's look at Hannah's interaction with God.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. In what ways can you identify with Hannah?
2. How would you describe your prayer life during that season or circumstance?
3. How is seeking God different in times of grief than other times in your life?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts..
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

God Hears Hannah's Cry

1 Samuel 1:19-28

Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

In our last passage we met Hannah, crying out to God in her distress. In this section of scripture we see how God answers her prayer. We also see her faithful response to God's answer.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. How does Hannah respond to God?
2. What can you learn from her example?
3. Have you made promises to God before in a time of distress? Were you able to follow through with your promises? Could you give us an example?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Nicodemus Speaks With Jesus

John 3:1-21

Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

At the beginning of John's Gospel, we see Jesus ministering to his countrymen and for the most part receiving a warm reception. He is gaining support and not yet facing the persecution that is to come. It is here that we are presented with the story of Nicodemus. In the big picture John uses this story to display the deity of Jesus through his insight into heavenly things. However, in the passage we are confronted with a teacher of Israel seeking out Jesus at night. Nicodemus is perplexed by Jesus words and cannot rest until he gets some answers. Let's find out why.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What is significant about Nicodemus coming to Jesus? Why at night?
2. Why does Jesus speak with such harsh words to him?
3. Would someone be willing to describe what their rebirth process was like? Easy, pain free or did you come out kicking and screaming?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Thoughts:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Moses Intercedes For Israel

Exodus 32:7-20

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Have you ever had someone defend you in a circumstance that was completely overwhelming? In this story we find Israel in the process of ratifying their covenant with God. Moses is up on Mount Sinai hearing from God, Israel is at the foot of the mountain waiting for his return but he is gone too long. Losing patience while waiting for Moses, the people of Israel pressure Aaron and demand an idol to worship. Moses finally returns with the Ten Commandments and he immediately faces God's anger with Israel over their unfaithfulness. Moses steps in to speak with God on behalf of his countrymen.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Have you ever found yourself interceding for someone? Could you tell us a little about it?
2. How does God respond when you intercede for others in prayer?
3. Have you ever been in the position of Israel and in need of intercession?
4. What does this story teach you about the ultimate intercessor, Jesus?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Caught Between A Rock And A Hard Place

Esther 4

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Sometimes seeking God can be hazardous to your health. Through a series of "coincidences" Esther, our heroine, becomes queen to the King Xerxes of Persia. However, she finds out that there are many rules to follow when you are queen. Mordecai, Esther's true or adopted father, stirs up Haman, one of the King's advisors. Haman not only wants to repay Mordecai for his insolence but annihilate all of the Jews as well. Esther finds herself in a position to help her people or to try and save herself.

Facilitator Note: *Suggest the entire group share in telling the story. 4-5 verses each.*

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What advice would you give someone in Esther's situation?
2. Seeking God can be costly. What has been one cost to your relationship with God?
3. How would you describe the results of that cost to someone? Was it worth it?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Lost and Found: The Missing Word Of God

2 Kings 22

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

In 2 Kings we find Israel and Judah divided into two kingdoms and things are a mess. In fact the Law has been lost and much of the population is following after pagan gods. However, things are about to change. This is the story of Josiah who was convicted by God's Word and led a revival in all of Judah. The end of his story is far from a fairytale but through it we learn much about our Father.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. It is hard to believe that the Law of God was misplaced for years. What was Josiah's reaction after hearing the Law read?
2. Do you see people reacting in the same way today? How so?
3. Josiah seeks God in Word and in deed. What do you think the reaction of others were to their inspired king? In what ways have you seen other react as God lights a fire in their hearts? How about your heart?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Centurion Seeks Jesus

Luke 7:1-10

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Jesus returned from the mountainside after praying all night and then chose his twelve disciples. He went down and stood on a level place where a great number of people had gathered along with his disciples. Jesus addressed His disciples with His Sermon on the Mount. After He had finished, Jesus entered Capernaum, where He was approached to come and heal a centurion's servant that was dying. This passage helps us understand how we should seek Jesus today.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. The Centurion sends emissaries to Jesus rather than coming himself. What does that tell us about him?
2. In what ways can you relate to the Centurion?
3. How does the Centurion's response in verse 8 demonstrate such strong faith?
4. Do you think you would respond in a similar or different way if Jesus were to offer to come into your home? Why?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Delighting In God

Psalm 1

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Facilitator Note: Telling a psalm as a story might be a challenge for your group. Please consider the following options. The passage can be read by the group skipping the rebuild, or for the more adventurous, retold in your own words. It can also be recited from memory by a group member or collectively (don't let us hold you back).

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

The First two psalms form an introduction to the entire book. Psalm 1 presents the central theme of the Psalms that we are to take delight in God's Word and meditate on it. It is through God's written Word that his children will receive his blessing. The psalm also contrasts the ultimate destiny of those who seek God and those who do not. Let's get started.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Explain the contrast between the righteous and the wicked in Psalm 1?
2. The righteous are described as trees planted by a river. How are they nourished and how would you describe what a well-nourished life (tree), looks like?
3. How do we follow the advice of the psalm and avoid being influenced by the "wicked"?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.

Foreigners Come To Bethlehem

Matthew 2:1-12

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

The intention of the gospel according to Matthew is to demonstrate that Jesus is the true Messiah. Matthew uses numerous Old Testament quotations as proof that Jesus is the one who fulfilled these prophecies. He starts his book by substantiating that Jesus is the Messiah, son of David, and descendant of Abraham by way of an extended genealogy. He then begins the following story. Let's see what comes next.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Why would pagan astrologers be seeking Jesus?
2. In what ways are you and I like or unlike the Magi?
3. What were some of the motives for laying gifts at the feet of Jesus?
4. What are some of your motives, (or gifts), that you bring to Jesus today?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Solomon's Request

1 Kings 3:1-15

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

While David is known as being a "man after God's own heart" he is not the world's strongest administrator. Solomon becomes king according to God's promise to David but also inherits a few loose ends that need tying up. Faced with the overwhelming task of running a kingdom, Solomon seeks God and is presented with a unique opportunity. Solomon's response is very meaningful for us today.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. How would you respond if God gave you the same opportunity he gave Solomon?
2. What do you learn about the human heart from Solomon's example?
3. What does Solomon's interaction teach us about God's values? Motives?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Falling At The Feet Of Jesus

Luke 7:36-50

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Forgiveness has a profound effect on a person. In this passage we find Jesus and the disciples dining with a group of Pharisees (Jewish teachers) when their meal is interrupted by a woman of ill repute. Those at the meal are surprised and disturbed by her actions with the obvious exception of Jesus. This passage sheds a different light on the motives to seek Jesus first.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What kind of risk did this "sinful woman" take in coming to Jesus? What are some of the risks that you and I take?
2. What does Jesus see in her that the others do not?
3. What would each of us have to do to seek Jesus with complete humility? How do you think Jesus would respond? Could we pray for that tonight?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:1-27

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Daniel and a number of his countrymen are taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. These are the best and brightest men of Israel that serve the King's court in various ways. Just like the many other Jews who were serving a foreign king, Daniel faces death. King Nebuchadnezzar thinks his wise men have been making things up so he puts them to the test by asking them to interpret his dream, without telling them what the dream was about. Daniel and his friends soon hear that their lives are in danger and begin to take decisive action.

Facilitator Note: *Suggest the entire group share in telling the story. 4-5 verses each.*

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What is Daniel's reaction when he hears Nebuchadnezzar's decree? What can you learn from Daniel?
2. How would you react if you found yourself in Daniel's shoes?
3. Daniel's song of praise is moving: What can we learn from his outburst of praise?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Jesus Heals The Official's Son

John 4:43-54

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Jesus is traveling through Judea marveling people with his miracles and teaching. He even makes a quick trip into Samaria with the local population turning out in mass to see him. Jesus then travels back to his home town and then to Cana where he performed his first miracle. In Cana a government official finds himself in need of Jesus in more ways than one.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What are your thoughts regarding Jesus' comments in v. 44 and v.48 and the crowd's response in v. 45?
2. Why is Jesus critical of those who desire to see signs and wonders? What is Jesus looking for from those who seek him?
3. Are you always able to take Jesus at his Word (v. 50)? Why, or why not?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Confidence In The Quest

Psalm 27

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Facilitator Note: Telling a psalm as a story might be a challenge for your group. Please consider the following options. The passage can be read by the group skipping the rebuild, or for the more adventurous retold in your own words. It can also be recited from memory by a group member or collectively (don't let us hold you back).

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

This psalm clearly expresses that the Lord is our light and salvation. The psalm has two distinct tones. The first six verses are filled with confidence in God while the following six verses take more of a sorrowful tone. As we dig into this psalm we find David seeking after God both with confidence at times (v. 4) and in less certain times (vv. 7-8). David is encouraging us to seek God with confidence when times are good and in the middle of troubling times as well. In the final two verses, David's words are presented as an example to follow. We are called to be like David and "Be strong, take heart and seek God in all circumstances." The big question for us is how do we seek God in times of confidence and in times when we feel more vulnerable.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Can you recall (or describe) a time in life when you were walking closely with God? What did that time feel like?
2. How did that time seem easier or harder to seek God than others?
3. Do you find it hard to seek God during times of difficulty? Why do you think that is?
4. What guidance does Psalm 27 give us about seeking after God?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.

David's Example In Responding To God

2 Samuel 12:13-25

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

David sent his army off to war and for some unexplained reason did not join them. He stayed home and ends up having an affair with Bathsheba, fathering a son, and eventually murdering one of his best soldiers. David has sunk up to his neck in sin and deceit. God then sends Nathan, a prophet, to confront David about his sin. Let's see how David responds to God's rebuke and what we can learn.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What troubles you about this story? Why?
2. Why would God use such an extreme act as an example of how to seek God and repent?
3. Is there something that God needs to be dealing with in your life right now? Would you be willing to share it and let us pray?
4. Why is it sometimes so difficult to repent?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Knowing God's Character Changes Everything *Numbers 4:1-25*

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes) In this passage we see several parallels in attitudes of Israel's interaction with Moses and God to their interactions with Jesus in the Gospels. Israel has recently been brought out of Egypt and witnessed many miracles along the way. Then they sent spies into Canaan who came back with opposite reports. The majority of the spies expressed fear while Caleb and Joshua expressed confidence that God would once again provide for them. Let's see how Moses responds to this circumstance.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes) Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Is there any character(s) you can identify with in this passage? Moses, Caleb, Joshua, the people, all of the above? How so?
2. Describe how Moses appeals to God? What is his argument?
3. What is one thing you have learned from God's response in this passage?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Ethiopian Responds To The Word

Acts 8:26-40

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

In the book of Acts we see the Gospel spreading farther and farther from Jerusalem, like ripples on a pond. Even as the apostles begin to experience persecution, God uses these circumstances to spread his Word even farther and faster. In today's passage we find Phillip interacting with a foreigner who is struggling to understand the Old Testament.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. How does God pave the way for his message? In what way could God use you to further his message of the "Good News" to others?
2. How does the Ethiopian's respond when he understands the Word? Has it ever been like that for you, or different?
3. What do you learn from Philip's example in assisting someone who is seeking Jesus? Can you think of anyone who could use your assistance? Could we pray for that?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Elijah Gets Recharged

1 Kings 19:1-17

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

God works many miracles through Elijah in an attempt to turn the hearts of Israel back to him. Elijah is told to pray for a drought and for three years not a drop of rain falls in Israel. The Kingdom is in distress and King Ahab blames Elijah. Before Ahab can get his hands on Elijah, God calls him to demonstrate that the God of Israel is far greater than the idols of Ahab. In the end, God miraculously proves himself and the pagan prophets perish. After this great demonstration of power Elijah prays and rain is restored to Israel. Elijah is worn out from all the confrontation. In his exhaustion he flees to the desert where our passage begins.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. How does God provide for Elijah? How has he provided for you in times of need?
2. Can you describe a time when God made his presence known to you?
3. How do we know when we have heard God speak today?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Nehemiah's Gamble

Nehemiah 1:1-2:8

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes) The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book with two sections both describing Judah's return to the Promised Land after their exile. Nehemiah is a great example of what a Godly leader looks like. He leads by example and puts the good of his people before his own. God has strategically placed Nehemiah in the court of the king for a greater purpose. Nehemiah demonstrates to us through his actions how to seek God first.

Facilitator Note: *Suggest the entire group share in telling the story. 4-5 verses each.*

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes) Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. After hearing the distressing news, where does Nehemiah turn? Where do you sometime turn in times of stress and what are the results?
2. What costs or risks is Nehemiah willing to take for God? What are some of the costs or risks you have had to face?
3. Have you always seen the risks rewarded? Why do you think that is?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Difficulty Of Following Jesus

Matthew 19:16-30

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Have you ever looked for something you lost and found something unexpected in the process? Perhaps one day you were digging around in your sofa cushions for your car keys and pulled out a five dollar bill instead. Matthew records the story of a man who got more than he bargained for when he asked Jesus a question. This passage helps us see the truth about following Jesus.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What were some of the motives behind the man's questions?
2. Is Jesus telling us to sell everything we have and give to the poor?
3. What is it about money or wealth that makes it so difficult for us to seek God?
4. What are some of the things that await those who are able to overcome such obstacles?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

The Meaning Of Life

Ecclesiastes 2

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Facilitator Note: Telling a psalm as a story might be a challenge for your group. Please consider the following options. The passage can be read by the group skipping the rebuild, or for the more adventurous retold in your own words. It can also be recited from memory by a group member or collectively (don't let us hold you back).

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Meaningless, meaningless, says the teacher! Ecclesiastes is a book concerned with wisdom. At its heart are two main points; there is value in fearing the Lord and the work of ordinary life. The author is concerned with the practical application of God's law to our everyday life. Let's see what we can learn about seeking God from the wisest man to ever live.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Why is so much of life described as meaningless? Can you share a recent example of one meaningless area or act in your life?
2. What does the author find meaningful? Do you agree?
3. Describe the contrasts in v: 26. What belongs to the man who pleases God?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Hezekiah Turns To God

2 Kings 19:1-19

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Judah has been invaded by the superpower of the day, Assyria. King Hezekiah, Judah's King, has complied and paid eleven tons of silver and a ton of gold to get Assyria to withdraw their troops. However, the Assyrian King wants to make an example out of Hezekiah and makes him an offer he must refuse. Hezekiah in distress turns to God for help. In doing so he becomes an example for us when we face overwhelming circumstances.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Could you share whom or what circumstance has been an Assyria in your life? Can you share what you are learning from your response(s)?
2. Can you give share an example of a Hezekiah in your life?
3. What is one way you would like to be more like Hezekiah?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Even When The Odds Are Stacked Against You, Faith Will Always Win

1 Samuel 17:32-51

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Often we think of the story of David and Goliath as a story about overcoming giants or the skill of a mighty warrior. David and Goliath is about something even greater, faith. In this story David's faith is on full display. Where did David learn such great faith? Let's take a different look at an often told story.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What life lessons has David already learned at a young age?
2. How has David developed such great confidence, or is it trust, or both? What are you learning from this passage?
3. Is there a time of life when you had David's confidence in God? When, or if not, why? What changed? Can we pray for that?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Zacchaeus Goes To Great Heights In Seeking Jesus

Luke 19:1-10

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Jesus is making his way up to Jerusalem. Along the way he is teaching his disciples about his coming resurrection, a subject they are having a hard time grasping. On the way he interacts with a blind beggar who persistently calls out to Jesus for mercy, even after being rebuked. In the same way Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, stubbornly pursues Jesus. His interaction with Jesus forever changes his life.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Where were you when Jesus found you? Up a tree or up a creek?
2. What is the significance of Jesus eating with Zacchaeus? How would you react if Jesus invited himself to dinner with you?
3. Is there a person in your life that can be "paid-back" with interest as Zacchaeus did?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

A Foreign General Seeks The True God

2 Kings 5:1-19

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

This is an intriguing story starring a gentile General from the nation of Aram. Naaman takes the advice of a slave girl and seeks out the prophet Elisha. This passage shows us how far God's mercy extends, beyond the borders of Israel, to all who seek him with the right motives.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Naaman was desperate for relief from his skin condition. Is there anything in your life you are seeking relief from? Could you share one of those with us? Can we pray for that?
2. Does God always respond to us when we are in desperate need? Why, or why not?
3. How does God's answer deepen your relationship with him?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Prepared For Eternity

Matthew 25:1-13

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Jesus earthly ministry is drawing to a close. He is giving his final instructions to his disciples and preparing them for his departure. However, Jesus' departure to the Father is not the end of his ministry. Matthew records several stories encouraging Jesus followers to be prepared for Jesus' return. Let's see what this passage teaches us.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Who do you relate to in the story? Why?
2. Time is a limited resource. What are some of the things you wish you had more time for and how does this parable help you see what you should do with your time?
3. How would your life be different if you knew Jesus was returning tomorrow? Next year?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Jacob's Cunning Surpassed by God's Blessing

Genesis 32:9-32

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Jacob is an ambitious young man willing to use any means necessary to gain an advantage for himself. He often depends on his own skill set and knowledge; however, his ultimate success is rooted in God's blessing. In today's story we will see how God demonstrates his provision for those who seek him, even if their motives are a little suspect.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. When have you relied on your own "skill set" rather than trusting God?
2. What was the cause of the softening of Esau's heart? Jacob's gift or something else?
3. Have you ever faced an Esau in your life? Can you tell us how you handled that confrontation and what you learned?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

A Song Of Ascent: Waiting On God

Psalm 130

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Facilitator Note: Telling a psalm as a story might be a challenge for your group. Please consider the following options. The passage can be read by the group skipping the rebuild, or for the more adventurous retold in your own words. It can also be recited from memory by a group member or collectively (don't let us hold you back).

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Psalm 130 is unusual compared to other psalms. The psalmist personally describes his waiting on the Lord and corporately presents this as a model of Israel's hope in their redemption. However, no other psalm expresses what an evil sin is with such a New Testament (current day) flair. Here we can discover God's heart and desire for his people.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What are a few things you learn about sin from this psalm?
2. What do we learn about God's view of sin?
3. What are some of your thoughts about how this psalm can apply to our daily life in today's world?
4. Has this psalm caused you to think about the Old Testament with a different perspective? How?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Are We Really Inadequate?

Exodus 32:7-20

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

In one encounter Moses is transformed by God from a humble shepherd to a leader of God's people. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt and Moses, a Hebrew, was raised in Pharaoh's household by Pharaoh's own daughter. When Moses was around 40 years old (Acts 7:23), he saw the Hebrews being abused. Later Moses kills an Egyptian when he finds him beating a fellow Hebrew slave. The murder soon became known by Pharaoh causing Moses to flee for his life. He went to Midian, got married and was there for 40 years (Acts 7:30). Moses is now an 80 year old shepherd for his father-in-law. Let's see what happens next.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. What motivates God on behalf of his people?
2. Why do you think God chose Moses, with all his faults to lead his people?
3. In what way can you relate to Moses circumstances? Do you ever feel inadequate? How do you respond or deal with it?
4. How does God respond to Moses? How would he respond to you?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Returning To The Father

Luke 15:11-32

Review Last week's Story: (2-3 Minutes) Helps transition the group into Scripture.

1. What was one thing you remember about last week's story?
2. What comments were particularly meaningful to you?

Transition to this week's Story: (2 Minutes)

Jesus has been traveling the countryside while teaching large crowds about the cost of being his disciples. When Jesus encounters a new audience he begins teaching them by using parables. The purpose of the parables is to help people understand how his teaching is relevant to their daily lives, just like ours. This parable includes three characters that Jesus uses illustrate God's character and to seek him in our daily lives.

Tell the Story: (3-4 Minutes)

Tell the story as best as you can, don't stop to teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Again, the objective is not to memorize it, but to learn it and be able to just share it.

Rebuild: (5-6 Minutes)

Chronologically rebuild the story asking questions. If necessary, have the group look for what may have been added or left out. Stay focused on the main characters, locations and events.

Basic Questions:

1. What is one thing that struck you or was new to you from this passage?
2. Is there anything you disliked or that confuses you about this passage? Please explain.
3. What does this passage teach you about God? (Jesus, Holy Spirit)
4. What does this passage teach you about people?

Other Application Questions:

1. Which character do you identify with most in this passage and why?
2. Has this passage caused you to see your past differently? How so?
3. What do we learn about God from the father's actions and does that make any difference to you in your day-to-day life?
4. What lessons can we learn from the returning son?

Life Application Questions:

1. How is God asking you, us, to respond to this passage?
2. Is there an area of your life that this passage is causing you to see differently? Could you tell us a little about that?
3. What are some thoughts you have from this passage about seeking God first? What do you think God might be asking you to do differently?
4. How can this passage help you live, love, and/or lead more like Jesus?

Prayer Starters:

1. Lift up those with "heavy hearts" and ask God for healing from their hurts.
2. Pray for people you know who need a relationship with Jesus. Pray that they would experience God in all his love and power.
3. Ask that God would remove anything that holds us back from seeking him.

Year End Review Leaders Guide

Purpose:

To help group members recognize the personal growth they have experienced in their relationship with Christ and with each other as a group.

Facilitators Notes/Suggestions

- You might handout the following questions the prior week so group members can come better prepared to share their answers.

Discussion Questions: (Examples)

Curriculum Review

1. What was one of the most meaningful passages for you this past year? Why?
2. What is one way you have been surprised by this study of passages?
3. What is one theme that you are walking away with from this past study of God's Word?
4. What is one area that you have grown the most in as a result of this study?
5. How do you feel you are better equipped to live, love and lead like Jesus?
6. What is one thing that God has put on your heart as a result of this past year's study?

Life Group Experiences Review

1. What is one way you have been surprised about your Life Group experience this past year?
2. What is one way you have personally grown this past year as a result of our Life Group?
3. What have been your biggest challenges this past year and what influence has our Life Group had on it for you?, your family?, your co-workers?, friends?
4. What things have you appreciated most about being together this past year?
5. How would you describe a Life Group to someone who has never experienced it before?
6. Is there any group member's contribution that has been particularly meaningful to you? Who, What and Why?
7. What are some of the ways you would like to grow this coming year? Why?
8. Who do you know that we could be praying for this year to join us or another Life Group?
9. What would you like to see our Life Group become this coming year? Why?

Prayer Techniques:

- You can ask a group member to begin accumulating both individual and group prayer requests from the discussion.
- You can pray as each request surfaces from the discussion time.
- Prayers can be written down and sent to the group later to remind each member of what they are committing to individually and the group.
- Pray for the Leadership of your Life Group and the development of new leaders to start new groups for our growing biblical community.

We are thankful for...

- The instruction book that God has written for us for life.
- The personal and loving relationship he has pursued with each of us through Jesus.
- The personal relationships we have developed together as a Life Group.
- The prayers and encouragement that has been so meaningful this past year.
- You fill in the rest!

Communion Guide

Tips, Suggestions and References

What we believe

- Communion (or the Lord's Super) is an *expression* of our faith in Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Savior. We believe it is a *symbol* of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross and is to be done in *remembrance* of Him. The key is found in the phrase: "do this in remembrance of me" (Lk.22:19; 1 Cor.11:24-25).

Why do we value the Lord's Supper?

- The Lord Jesus placed a supreme value upon it; (Matt 26:26-29, Mk. 14:22-25, Elk. 22:17-20)
- The Early church highly regarded it; (Acts 2:42,46; 20:7, 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

- A special time of remembering what Jesus has done for us. It is His body and blood which are remembered in the Lord's Supper.
 - Remember the Past: What He did on the cross.
 - Remember the Present: Our current relationship with Him.(1 Cor. 10:16-17)
 - Remember the Future: His promised return.(Lk.22:16)
- A time of thanksgiving (The Lord Jesus took the bread, and "having given thanks, He broke it...")
- A time of fellowship with other believers. Reminder of the unity we have in Jesus Christ.

Who should take part in the Lord's Supper?

- Assembled believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 11:27-32)
- It is for believers whose hearts are prepared before the Lord (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 27)
- Ask yourself:
 - Is there any unconfessed sin in my life?
 - Do I need to restore any broken relationships in my life?
 - Do I need to recommit myself to the Lord?

Resources:

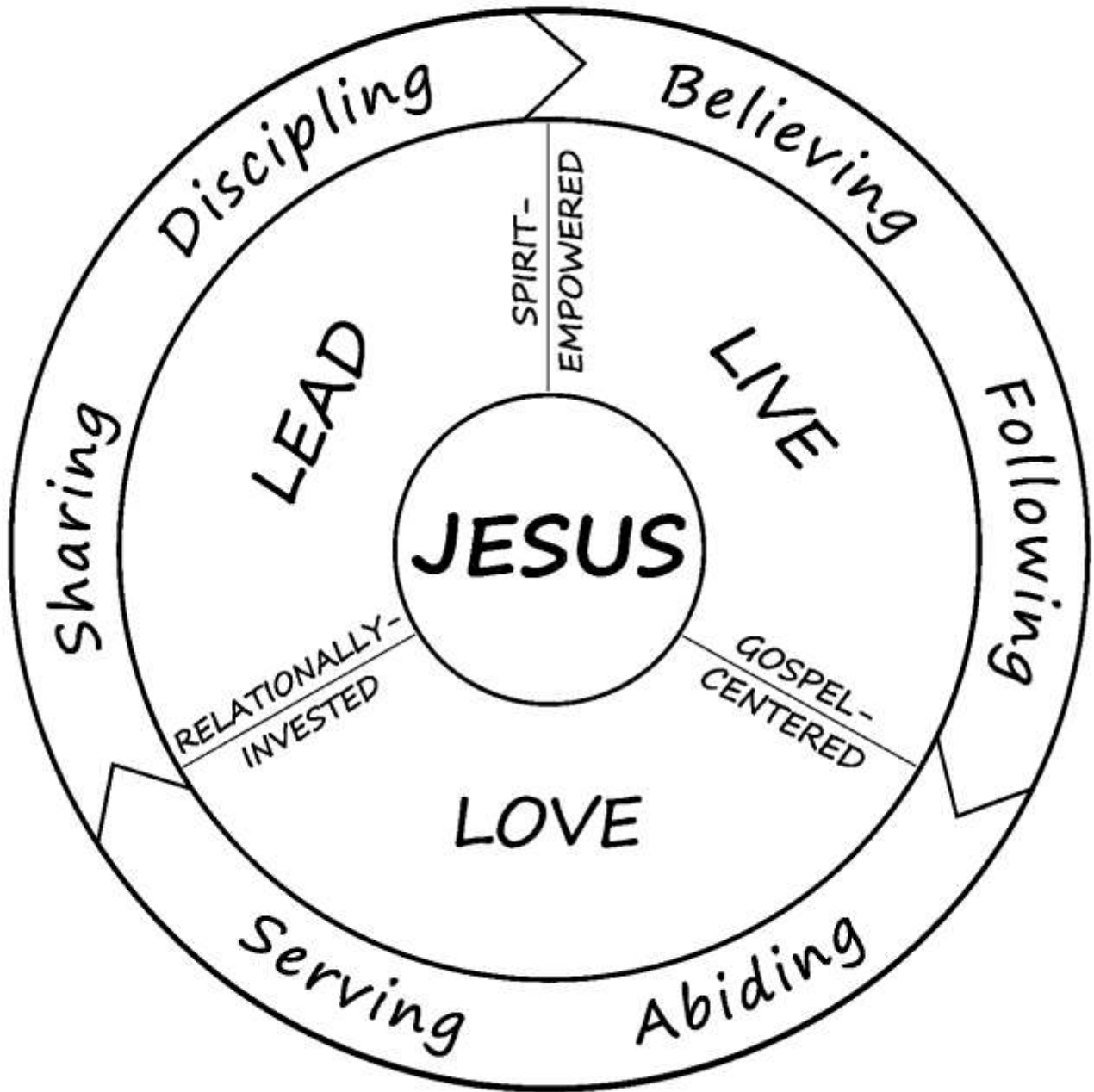
- Bread (A form of flat cracker by its nature represents the sinless body of Christ)
- Cup (Grape juice)
 - Special cups are not required. Any variety or size of cups can be used. Small 1 ½ oz. cups can be purchased at many local stores: Dollar Store, Christian Book Stores, etc.

General Group Flow

- Open with a short devotional.
 - The What and Why of Communion, or,
 - Passages leading up to the Last Super.
- Prayer of thanksgiving for the bread.
- Read the Scripture verse
 - Take the bread together.
- Prayer of thanksgiving for the cup.
- Read the Scripture verse
 - Take the cup together.
- Close in Prayer

Profile of a Disciple

GOD'S GLORY



Profile of a Disciple

