

to know Jesus
and
touch the world

Study Guide



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Introduction

Dear Friends:

Our desire and calling as a church is *to know Jesus ... and touch the world*. What an exciting concept. It is based on a simple idea, that we can increasingly get to know the God of the universe in a personal way and that He invites us to reach out beyond ourselves to make a difference in the world we live in. In order for that to happen, we need to be open to let the Lord touch our hearts as individuals and together as a family of believers.

This study guide has been designed to help us begin to grasp the larger picture of who God is and how He has placed His DNA within us, so that we can live with a deeper understanding of how God has made us as uniquely gifted persons suited for a life and ministry where we find joy and fulfillment.

As part of this journey together, we have put together a four-week preaching series paired with small group materials for personal reflection. We would encourage you to use this book for devotional thought as well as to help you participate in a small group.

Our hope is that as you work through this book, you will not only discover more about God, but you will also discover more about how He has wonderfully made you. We, as a staff, are praying that this knowledge will encourage your heart and help you make a greater impact in the lives of those you love and in your world.

Blessings.

Dave Spate

Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of His face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like Him.

2 Corinthians 3:18 - The Message



Reading Plan

Week 1 – God’s Story

- Matthew 5:13-16
- Isaiah 45:9-12
- Exodus 34:5-9
- Isaiah 48:12-13
- Philippians 3:7-14

Week 2 – God’s Plan

- Psalm 8:3-9
- Matthew 20:20-28
- Luke 14:7-11
- John 13:1-17
- Matthew 22:34-40

Week 3 – God’s Reflection

- Hebrews 10:23-25
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
- Romans 16
- 1 Timothy 2:1-7
- Jeremiah 1:4-8

Week 4 – God’s Purposes

- Ephesians 2:4-10
- Esther 4:12-16
- Ephesians 6:5-8
- Deuteronomy 30:11-20
- Acts 20:24



God's Story

To start this process by looking inwardly would be like standing at the base of a 7000' mountain range and taking out a tape measure to marvel at *your* height. There will be time to reflect on your role, your place in history, but not now. Not yet.



Stop for a moment and think about God. What kind of words or phrases come to mind? How would you describe him to a friend?

Many who have gone before us have tried to describe God.
His character.
His size.
His love.
His ability.
His intellect.

Read through some of their descriptions.

- Psalm 147:4,5 Isaiah 40:12,13 Psalm 103:17-19
- Psalm 90:1,2 1 Timothy 1:17 Psalm 33:11
- Psalm 102:25-28 Daniel 4:35 2 Chron. 20:6
- Jeremiah 32:17 1 Kings 8:27 Psalm 139:7-10
- Hebrews 4:13 Romans 11:33-36 Job 38:4-6

Which verses stand out?

What words or phrases do you think best describe God?

When theologians talk about God they use words like omnipotent (all-powerful), infinite (without limit), and omniscient (all-knowing).

The Bible paints pictures of God being almighty, the Alpha and Omega, unsearchable, good, kind, and perfect in all His ways.

A.W. Tozer said, "Imagine going out millions of light years into space and finding a body so vast that you could throw all our solar system into it. Like throwing a shovelful of coal into a furnace, it would simply swallow up our solar system and go on. After you've thought of all that, remember that God contains all that."

C. S. Lewis said, "if you think of a sheet of paper infinitely extended in all directions and if you took a pencil and made a line one inch long on it that would be time. When you started to push your pencil it was the beginning of time and when you lifted it off the paper it was the end of time. And all around, infinitely extended in all directions, is God."

As we discuss being part of God's story it is helpful to remember that God is not contained within history, but all of history is contained within God.



Our perspective seems so limited compared to God's. Using a wide-angle lens, think about the story of the Bible. Who are some of the characters? Who is the main character? How does the plot develop? What is the climax? How does the story end? Whose name is in the title?

Take a moment and work as a group to write the story of the Bible using 80 words or less.



Found within the pages of the Bible God presents an opportunity for us to become part of His story. An invitation is given for us to connect our life with something so much greater and grander – the story of God. We get to become part of something that never had a beginning, something that will never end.

Your identity or purpose, your very reason for being, is wrapped up in God's story. Does that thought seem freeing or terrifying? Why?

Your life connected to the story of God. The upside to such an opportunity is beyond words. The catch is this: God calls us to submit our life to Him and His plan. To the unbeliever this sounds crazy, possibly even cultic. But ask a Christian if they are more content when they stand up to God or when they surrender to Him.

Think of a time when you stood up to God? What was the outcome? Did you regret it?

Think of a time when you surrendered to God? What was the outcome? Did you regret it?

Read Philippians 3:7-14.

"I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal,

where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back."

Philippians 3:12-14 - The Message

Paul's goal or focus was Jesus. This week take some time to assess what your goal is. Where is your focus?



God's Plan

Have you ever experienced a one-sided relationship? One person seems to initiate everything; always trying to make contact.

The other person is polite, but distant.

One person is willing to try multiple strategies, at times leaving themselves exposed and vulnerable.

The other person: still polite, still distant.

You can make people do a lot of things, but you can't make them like you. Sometimes the one being pursued will come around, and the relationship flourishes. Other times they don't come around, and the person waits.

Take it to an extreme and imagine the desperation of one person sitting on the front step, waiting. Knowing someone is inside, preoccupied, and too busy with other things, they wait. And wait.



Last week we discussed a number of pictures the Bible paints of God. Today we want to look at another picture of God. This time the picture is of God sitting outside the house, waiting, hoping for those inside to open the door.

How do we reconcile a God who speaks worlds into existence with a God who stands outside the home of preoccupied people, requesting permission to enter? The two pictures seem opposite, yet look at examples the Bible gives of just such a picture.

- Genesis 3:8-9
- Luke 15:11-31
- Revelations 3:20
- John 3:16-17

Do you find it easier to picture God as the all-powerful creator of the universe or as the waiting father in Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son? Why do you think that is?



When you think of God's plan for the world, what do you think He's really after? What does He want?

Some people asked Jesus the same question. What's the bottom line? What's the absolute most important thing for me to do?

Read Jesus' response in Matthew 22:34-40.

God has no desire to remain at arms length from us. He doesn't want us to relate to Him through the lens of a telescope. He wants to know us. He's looking for friendship.

God is after relationship. God designed relationships, pursues relationships, defends relationships, sacrifices everything for relationships. God's ultimate calling for you is not following laws, but being in relationship with Him. Do you agree? Why?



God's plan is for us to love Him and love one another.

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

How did Jesus model loving God and loving others?

How did Jesus' life reflect God's plan?



Look again at Revelations 3:20.

What are some different ways that you can "open the door" to Jesus throughout your day?

This week look for ways that you can purposefully and deliberately love Jesus and get to know Him better.



God's Reflection

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.' This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

Matthew 22:37-40 – The Message

Throughout the Bible God clearly places relationships to be a top priority. He wants us to love him and has gone to extreme lengths to demonstrate his love for us.

Directly linked to Jesus' challenge to love God with all your passion, prayer, and intelligence is another command. "Love others as well as you love yourself."

Your relationship with God is to be a priority, and so is your relationship with those around you. The two commands aren't to be separated but lived out together. God never intended for you to grow in your faith alone, but in the context of community, in the context of relationships.



We all need to be encouraged in our journey of faith. The encouragement we receive from those around us is a powerful tool for keeping us on our path of devotion to Christ.

Kevin Deyoung defines Christian encouragement as “highlighting the work of God’s grace evident in the Gospel or in a gospel-centred person to the glory of God.”

Encouragement is recognizing where God’s grace is evident in someone’s life and celebrating it in such a way as to give glory to God.

Biblical encouragement:

- Is based on what is true
- Is kept in proportion
- Has no ulterior motive

From your experience what differences have you noticed between Biblical encouragement and flattery?

Biblical Encouragement:

Flattery:



Read Romans 16.

How did Paul publicly recognize others? How did Paul express affection?

What was Paul’s encouragement rooted in? How do you think Paul’s words would have impacted the church?



Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7

“I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.”

2 Timothy 1:5 *NLT*

Paul reminds Timothy of his heritage of faith by telling him about the faith of his mother and grandmother. Who are the people that God has put in your life who are an example of what it truly means to follow Jesus Christ?

“This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you!”
2 Timothy 1:6 *NLT*

Paul reconnects Timothy to the greater story of what God is doing in the world and reminds Timothy that he is set apart for the work of God.

Take a moment to consider those around you. How has God uniquely called and equipped them for his purpose?

How could you speak encouragement into their life?

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”
2 Timothy 1:7 *NLT*

Often times our discouragement requires more than supportive words and truth telling love. What Timothy needed at this time in his life was a fresh touch of the Holy Spirit. Paul takes time to remind Timothy that his source of strength and resilience is rooted in a living relationship with the living God.

Take some time to consider the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. How have you invited him to be a source of strength in your life?

Pray.

Ask God for a fresh touch of his power and love in your life.

Remember, as you encourage others, that the Holy Spirit is a source of strength that God has made available for this special work of pouring courage into those around us.





God's Purpose

At the beginning of this study we talked about how out of place it would seem for a person to stand at the base of a 7000' mountain range and take out a tape measure to marvel at their height. We have had a moment to reflect on the God who spoke the mountains into existence. We have discovered that His ultimate plan for the world is for us to love Him and love one another. God has placed us in community to encourage one another. He has set a unique print in us and it is now time to look more closely at how your unique character has a part in His story.

Have you ever thought about the distinctive qualities God has woven together to make you uniquely you? Your fingerprints are one of a kind. All your physical attributes, your personality, the way you think, your experiences, your passions, your abilities, and even your failures make up the unique person you are. Nothing about you is a mistake!



Read Psalm 139:1-16.

Wonderfully made. In Hebrew, *pala'* — "to be distinct, marked out, to be separated, to be distinguished." God has uniquely designed each human being. The psalmist emphasizes the idea by repeating the same word in the next sentence ([God's] works are *pala'*).

Is it refreshing or nerve-wracking to think that God knows you more intimately than you know yourself?

You have been wonderfully made; *uniquely* created, for a reason. God has made you *distinct* for a purpose. You can attempt to establish your identity apart from God or you can see your purpose as an extension of God and His purposes. Your uniqueness has been deposited in you by God himself to better reflect His character.

Ultimately, the quest for you to discover your ultimate purpose is found within God's story and within His plan.



Read through the following verses that describe how Jesus viewed his life's purpose.

- John 17:4
- Luke 19:10
- John 18:37
- John 10:10
- John 12:46
- Luke 4:43

What kind of words did Jesus use to describe his reason for coming? Is it surprising to hear how focused Jesus sounded about His life's mission? Why?

God's ultimate plan for us is to love Him and love one another. What connection do you see between God's plan for us and Jesus' life mission?

What connection do you see between God's plan for you and your life mission?

On the grids below mark the percentages of where you are currently giving with a "C" and then mark an "X" where you want to give from this day forward.

MY TIME [0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%]

MY TALENT [0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%]

MY TREASURE [0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%]

Can you identify one key area for you to realign in your life to help you better reflect God and His character?



Read Colossians 1:25-29

“The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God’s glory.”

(Col. 1:27 – The Message)

What do you envision “God’s glory” will be like when you share in it?

Jesus lived His life out of love for God and love for you. He reached out to you and made you a part of something bigger: something beyond you.

“God wanted everyone... to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out...”

(Colossians 1:26 – The Message)

Identify some of the “everyone” that God may use you to influence for Christ.

The whole picture in God’s story – and in yours – ends with a climactic reunion scene.

At last, we will finally be united again...the way it should be. In the meantime, we express our hope for that day when we pursue intimacy with God and community with others who are on the same journey. Together, all are united in the work of preparing for the final kingdom that is to come. It is that mission that unites your small group of fellow sojourners, your local community of faith, and the global church in the same pursuit.

All this leads to an important question: What is your place in the story? It is to live in constant fellowship with God and to pursue His will for each moment; to attune yourself to the language of the Holy Spirit; to boast only in the cross of Christ; to integrate with other believers in the community of God; so that you may participate in the story of the church making disciples of all nations...until the end of time.

(quote taken from *Starting Point*, a small group study from North Point Community Church)



