

WEEK 10: LIFE IN THE END

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Big Picture

This is where we're going... the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.




- Cost of Discipleship
- Cultures restored (all nations brought back to God)
- A people of reconciliation
- Jesus' return
- God restores all things

Set the Training Tone

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community)
- Have fun, keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (let's give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in his Story!

Review Last Week's Story

-  **Last Week...** We looked at Jesus' disciples in the early church. We saw that they lived a life of prayer, sharing their things, selling things to fund the mission, eating together, preaching, giving to the work, sacrificing, learning from the apostles, studying the Word, celebrating communion, living a life of service together.
-  We also looked at two ways of living and being the church... controlled by our own fleshly desires or led by the Holy Spirit. We looked at two lists that the Apostle Paul taught some of the disciples. It showed the type of life that each of these two ways of living would produce.
-  **What stuck with you from our dialogue last time we were together?**

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

Scene 1 ~ Cost of Discipleship

Story from... Luke 9:57-62

When Jesus says, *"Come follow me,"* he invites us to be his disciples and let him lead us on a spiritual journey. There are costs associated with this journey, this life. I want to tell you a story about Jesus that happened during his lifetime. In it, Jesus offers three people the opportunity to be his disciples.

Now while walking along the road to Jerusalem, a man came to Jesus and said, *"I want to follow you wherever you go."* Jesus looked at the man, and knowing his heart said, *"Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but I don't even have a place to sleep at night."*

Later, while on that same road, Jesus approached another man. And he said to him, *"Follow me."* The man replied to Jesus saying, *"But let me first go home and bury my Father."* But Jesus said to the man, *"Let the spiritually dead bury the dead. Your duty is to the living—go and preach about the Kingdom of God."*

And while on the same road, there was a third man. He was like the first that approached, and said to Jesus, *"I want to follow you..."* then he added, *"but first let me go home and say goodbye to my family and friends that are there."*

Jesus said to this man, *"Anyone who has put his hand to the plow and then looks backward is not fit to be a part of the Kingdom of God. Once you have started in this life there is no looking back! You can't put God's kingdom off until tomorrow. If you do there is no place in the Kingdom of God for you."*

Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Cost of Discipleship

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. Jesus invites these people to follow him, to be his disciple...

What excuses did they have for not obeying Jesus?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- 1st Man: Jesus responds to his quick offer to follow him ... (see Jesus’ response below)
- 2nd Man: Let me first go and bury my father...
- 3rd Man: Let me first go and say goodbye to my family and friends...

2. What was wrong with each of their responses...? Anything?

Note: Culturally, the man that wanted to bury his father was not waiting to attend his funeral, he would have been saying, “After my father has died, and I have fulfilled my duty as his son and received my inheritance, I will then come and be your disciple.”

-  Let **me first** go and...

3. What was Jesus’ response to these men?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- “Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but I don’t even have a place to sleep at night.” Jesus was exposing this man’s desires to keep hold of his earthly comforts.
- “Let the spiritually dead bury the dead. Your duty is to the living—go and preach about the Kingdom of God.”
- “Anyone who has put his hand to the plow and then looks backward is not fit to be a part of the Kingdom of God.”

 **These are three of the primary hindrances to true discipleship, illustrated by the 3 men who were not willing to go all the way with Jesus as Lord.**

Mr. Too Quick—the love of earthly comforts.

Mr. Too Slow—the precedence of a role, job or occupation.

Mr. Too Easy—the priority of family and friendships.

All of them had their priorities wrongly focused...

4. What is Jesus teaching should be our highest priority in life as his disciple?

 **Luke 14:33**

Jesus said, “Any of you who does not give up everything they have cannot be my disciple.”

5. What changes in your life and priorities would you need to make in order to more fully be Jesus’ disciple?

6. How important is it for us to teach this story to the people we disciple? Why?

Scene 2 ~ Creation Restored

Story from... Luke 17; Acts 3; 1 Corinthians 15; Rev. 21:1-8; Rev 22:1-7

Jesus promised to come back one day, saying, *"When I return again, everyone will know I am here. It'll be like a huge flash of lighting that fills the sky!"*

When Jesus returns he will destroy all evil, sin and rebellion. There will be no more sin or sickness, pain, or death. Every Christian, either alive or dead at the time, will receive new bodies and live on a new earth, restored back to the way God designed it. And they will live forever!

God showed one of Jesus' disciples, named John, what this would be like, in a dream. John faithfully wrote down all that God showed him... John wrote:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth were gone forever. And I saw the holy city coming down from God out of heaven. It looked like a bride beautifully dressed and ready for her husband."

"And I saw a river, with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of Jesus. It flowed down the center of the main street in the holy city. On each side of the river grew a tree—and BOTH—were a Tree of Life! On them was enough fruit to heal all the nations of the world!"

No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of Jesus will be there, and his disciples will be there worshipping him. And they will see his face, and they will be known and marked as his own. There will be no night time there—no need for lamps or sun—for God himself will shine on them. And together, they will rule over everything forever and ever.

"Then I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is again among the humans! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sadness or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.'"

And Jesus, sitting on the throne said, 'Watch, I am making everything new! Everything has happened as planned! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. Everyone who allows me to conquer sin and selfishness for them will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.'

"But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—they will end up in the fiery lake. This is the second death."

And Jesus said, "Watch as you wait for me, because I am coming back soon!"

Scene 2 Dialogue ~ Creation Restored

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

7. When you heard this story today, what did it remind you of in the bigger Story we have heard so far?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- *The garden, the way things were originally.*
- *God with humans, peace, harmony.*
- *No death. Humans living forever.*
- *All things restored to what God had intended!*

8. What do we see that was broken early in the story that is now reconciled and restored? Who restores it?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- *Relationships, nature, life...everything!*
- *Jesus is the one who makes all things new. Remember, he is Lord over creation, Lord over humanity, Lord over ALL!*

9. How does it make you feel that (if you are in Christ—his disciple) you will live forever?!

10. In the story we see All nations living together in peace worshipping God forever... what does that show us about what God is now doing among his people—Jesus disciples? How are we to live in light of this?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- *If God created everything “good” and “excellent” and is restoring all things to that condition, we cannot live at odds to his perfect plan. We, too, are to be agents of his reconciliation.*

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

[Resting Slide]

11. What does this passage from the Bible teach us concerning our role in reconciliation?

12. Who does the Story say will inherit this eternal life lived close to God?

- *Everyone who allows me to conquer sin and selfishness for them will inherit all these blessings... Thoughts on this?*

13. From what we've learned in the story so far, why is this eternal life lived close to God not the only possible eternal ending for humans?

 ***“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—they will end up in the fiery lake. This is the second death.”***

Note: The word Coward is rooted in self-preservation, an unwillingness to accept the cost of following Jesus

14. What are your thoughts our questions about what Jesus says here?

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

Using Media

Use of songs or artwork for further discussion...

Penn Gillette Video

Comedian/magician Penn Gillette talks about a man who loved enough to give him a Bible. Penn is an atheist...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JHS8adO3hM>

Further Application

15. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?

16. In light of major decisions or situations you are facing, how does all of this make you feel about your life based on where the Story is ultimately headed? Does it give you hope?

17. What most affected you about this discipleship training?

 **How do you intend to make disciple-making a priority in your life?**

18.  If we really began to live as active disciple-makers, how would it affect our neighborhood, our city?

 ***The Great Commission***

19. How can we pray for you?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out handout is tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.