



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

Session 1

- What does it mean to say and believe that the Bible is God's Word?
- What has been a challenge for you in reading the Bible?
- In what ways has the Bible helped you to know and love God?
- Why would you encourage a member of your family or a friend to read the Bible?

Session 2

- What to you is the good news—the gospel—of Jesus Christ?
- In what ways do you celebrate the holy days of Christmas and Easter?
- What is one of your favorite stories either about Jesus or told by Jesus?
- What is something you have learned about being a disciple of Christ?

Session 3

- Are there letters that have been saved within your family or been saved for you?
- Why do you value them? Why are the Bible's letters valued?
- In his letters Paul always writes, "Grace and peace to you." What do grace and peace mean for you?
- Where do you find guidance in how you are to live today as Christ's disciple?

Session 4

- What is it about Revelation that makes it so difficult for you to understand?
- When do you remember hearing Revelation read, taught, preached, or sung?
- Why do you think people today are fascinated with such things as what is going to happen at the end of the world? What does the Bible say?
- In what ways do you think "God Wins!" could be the perfect summary of Revelation?



OPENING THE SCRIPTURES

A Dramatic Reading Based on Luke 24:13–35

Readers: Narrator, Jesus, Cleopas, Unnamed disciple

NARRATOR: On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him.

JESUS: What are you talking about as you walk along?

NARRATOR: They stopped, their faces downcast.

CLEOPAS: Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?

JESUS: What things?

CLEOPAS: The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago.

UNNAMED DISCIPLE: But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him.

JESUS: You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?

NARRATOR: Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets. When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead.

CLEOPAS, UNNAMED DISCIPLE: Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over.

NARRATOR: So he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.

CLEOPAS, UNNAMED DISCIPLE: Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?

NARRATOR: They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!" Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

Luke 24:13–35 (adapted) from Common English Bible. Copyright 2011 by Common English Bible. Used by permission.

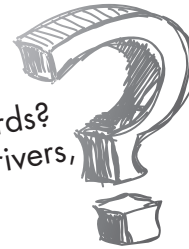


ASKING QUESTIONS OF THE TEXT

ISAIAH 43:1–7

You are among the exiles in ancient Babylon. The prophet Isaiah is proclaiming God's word to you and your friends who wonder if you'll ever see home again. What do you need to hear from God? Read Isaiah 43:1–7. Discuss:

- What does Isaiah say God is planning to do?
- How do you and your friends feel hearing Isaiah's words?
- What are you reminded of by the mention of waters, rivers, fire, and flame?
- What are the waters and fires in our lives?
- What do you hear when God says, "You are precious . . . I love you?"



2 CORINTHIANS 5:14–19

You are among early Christians in first-century Corinth, a major city of ancient Rome. Christianity is a new religion and is often at odds with other religions of the day, especially emperor worship and loyalty to Rome. You and a small group of Christians are reading Paul's letter. What do you need to hear from God? Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–19. Discuss:

- What are the differences in living for ourselves and living for Christ?
- How have we come to know Christ?
- Where do you see signs of God's new creation?
- What does it mean to be reconciled?
- What is involved in a ministry of reconciliation?
- What are some ways we can cooperate with what God is doing?





REVIEW TRANSLATIONS

The Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament was written in the Greek language. Compare the following English translations of Matthew 5:3. Discuss the questions below.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
(*New Revised Standard Version*)

"Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs."
(*Common English Bible*)

"God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!"
(*Contemporary English Version*)

"How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs!"
(*J. B. Phillips New Testament*)

"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!" (*Good News Translation*)

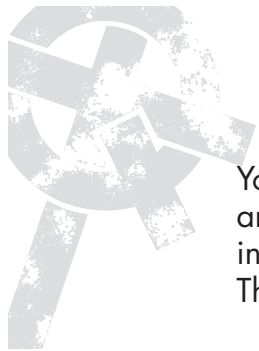
"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule." (*The Message*)

☐ What elements do the translations share in common?

☐ What differences stand out?

☐ How many of the versions above chose to use the second person ("Happy are you . . .")? And how many chose the third person ("Happy are they . . .")? What difference does this choice make in hearing God speaking to you?

☐ Each difference signals a choice by a translator(s). How important are the translation choices in helping you understand Jesus' words?

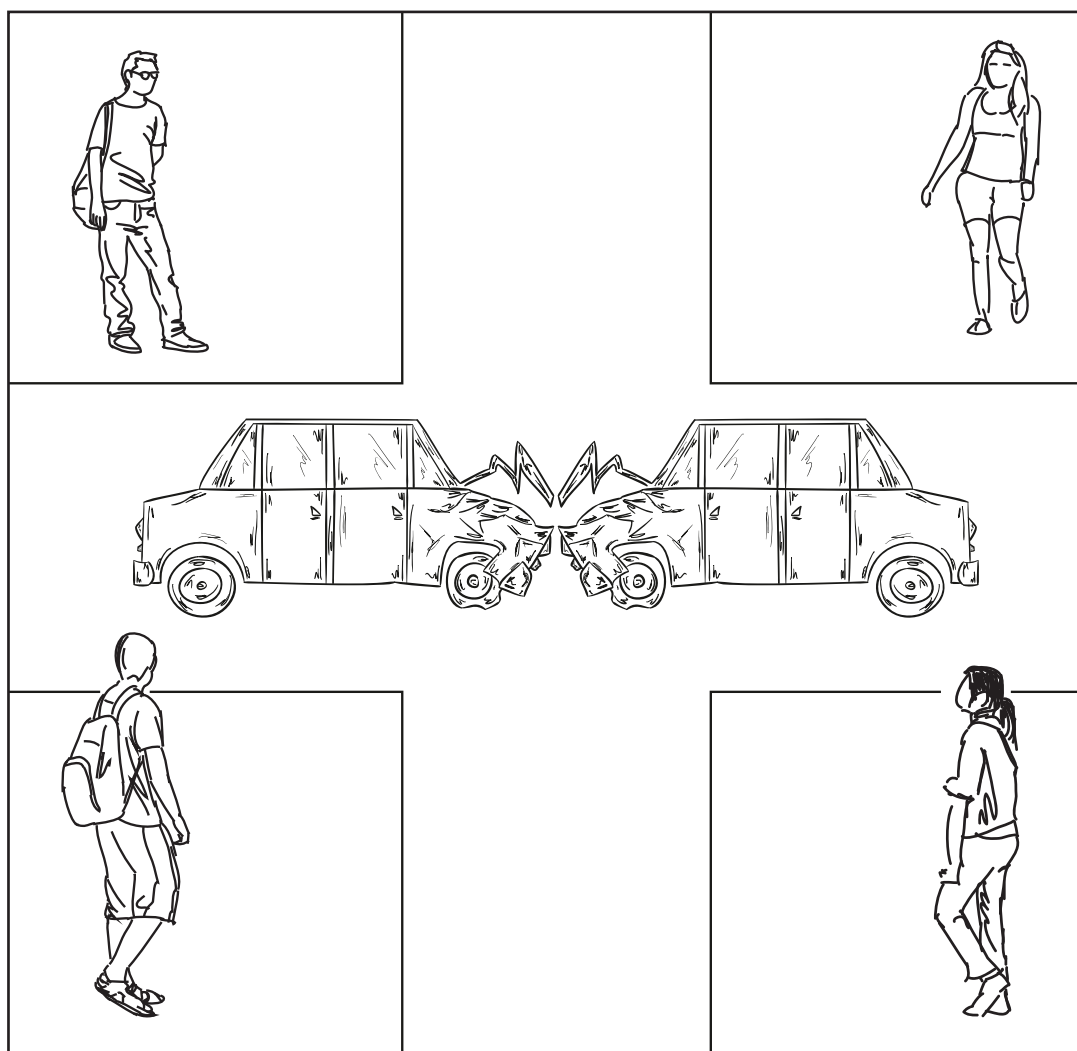


FOUR EYEWITNESSES

You are one of four witnesses to a car crash at the intersection of Broadway and Main Street. Each witness is standing at a different corner of the intersection, seeing the accident from a different direction and perspective. The four persons report the event from their particular viewpoints:

EYEWITNESS 1: When you tell a story, you stick to just the pertinent facts. When you hear a story, you like stories that have no ending, leaving you to make up your own ending. How the story affects your close family and friends matters most to you.

EYEWITNESS 2: When you tell a story, you like to report all the details. When you hear a story, you like to have a definite beginning. You craft your story so that it reaches the broadest audience, including people who are different than you are.



EYEWITNESS 3: When you tell a story, you explain why you are telling the story. When you hear a story, you like to have a definite ending. You shape your story to show how the crash resulted from the drivers' inattention to the law.

EYEWITNESS 4: When you tell a story, you limit the description to subtexts and jargon known only to a select few, your most trusted friends. When you hear a story, you care more about what it means than how it's told.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS



	Matthew 28:1-10	Mark 16:1-8	Luke 24:1-10	John 20:1-10
Who went to the tomb?				
What time of the day was it?				
What did they see?				
What were they told?				
Who did they tell?				



"WHAT MUST I DO?"

Scripture Passages:

Mark 10:17–27

Matthew 19:16–26

Luke 18:18–27

Look for similarities and differences in the stories guided by the following questions:

How is the person who asks the question identified?

How many commandments are listed?

What does Mark add to the commandments?

What commandment does Matthew add?

What is Jesus' response?

What is the response of the one who asked the question?

How do the disciples respond?

The stories are identical except for . . . ?

Do the differences change the meaning of the story? In what ways?



FAITH STATEMENT

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

—Theological Declaration of Barmen (8.11–8.12)

Discuss the character and personality of your congregation. Looking at the excerpt from the Theological Declaration of Barmen, reflect on the following questions:

What information in the excerpt is important to report to your congregation?

What about Jesus would you add to the statement?

Would you remove anything from the statement? If so, what?

Rewrite the excerpt as if you were reporting it to your congregation.

FAiTh



FOR I HAVE LEARNED

First, read the apostle Paul's closing greeting to the church in Philippi in Philippians 4:8–13.

⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Second, imagine that you are sending a letter to encourage the faith of your congregation. How would you complete the following sentences?

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now . . .

For I have learned to . . .

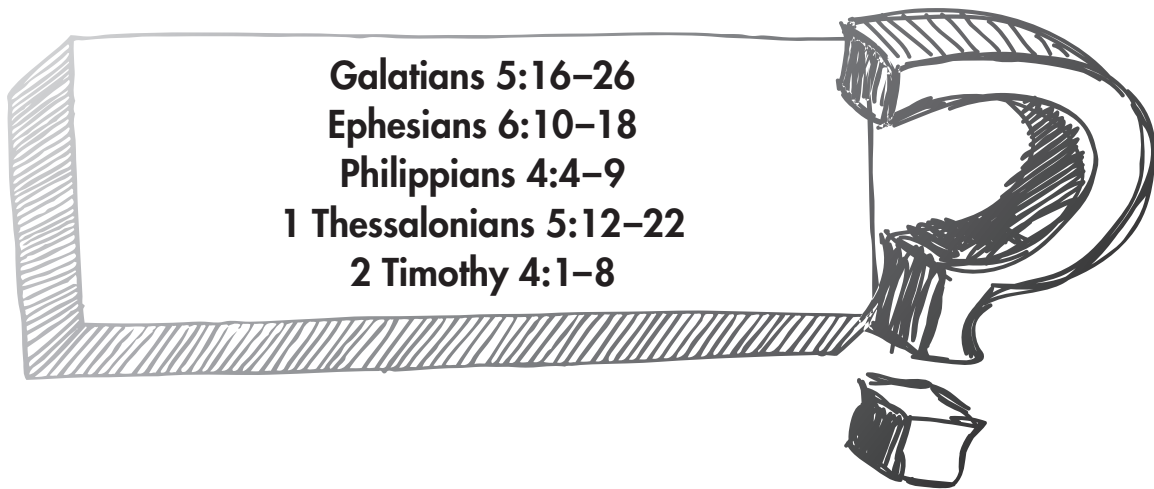
I know what it is to . . .

I have learned the secret of . . .



MY PURPOSE IN WRITING

Before adding his signature, Paul often concluded his letters with words of instruction for the church. Read one of the passages and answer the following questions:



Galatians 5:16–26
Ephesians 6:10–18
Philippians 4:4–9
1 Thessalonians 5:12–22
2 Timothy 4:1–8

What do these closing verses tell us about Paul's purpose in writing?

What guidance, encouragement, and comfort does Paul give?

Highlight the verbs. What type of behavior is Paul expecting of Christ's disciples?

In what ways do you read these verses as God's word to you?



BE TRANSFORMED

Metamorphousthe, Greek word meaning “be transformed”

Examine how *metamorphousthe* has been translated in various English translations:



“Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed* by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (NRSV)



“Don’t be like the people of this world, but *let God change* the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.” (CEV)



“Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but *let God transform* you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.” (TEV)



“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but *let God remold* your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”
(*J. B. Phillips New Testament*)

Examine Paul’s directions for those who seek to be transformed by God (Romans 12:9–18):

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.
Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.
Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
Contribute to the needs of the saints;
extend hospitality to strangers.
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.
Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;
do not claim to be wiser than you are.
Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

On the back of this page, write and meditate on one of Paul’s directions (above) for opening your life to God’s transformation:

PROJECT RUNWAY CHALLENGE



Dear Team Members,
Your inspiration for this challenge is found in a letter written almost 2,000 years ago by the apostle Paul to the church in Colossae. Paul writes, "Clothe yourselves with. . . ." Another translation reads, "Dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you."

The challenge for your group is to use available materials to create and model a garment that would express this guidance from Paul.

Enjoy the challenge. Make it work.

In Christ,

Timothy



"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (NRSV)



"So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way." (The Message)



FINDING ANSWERS: WILL WE BE TESTED ON THIS?

Revelation 1:1–5, 9–11 (CEB)

A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. Christ made it known by sending it through his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the witness of Jesus Christ, including all that John saw. Favored is the one who reads the words of this prophecy out loud, and favored are those who listen to it being read, and keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

John, to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace and peace to you from the one who is and was and is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before God's throne, and from Jesus Christ—the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. . . .

I, John, your brother who shares with you in the hardship, kingdom, and endurance that we have in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and my witness about Jesus. I was in a Spirit-inspired trance on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice that sounded like a trumpet. It said, "Write down on a scroll whatever you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

Where is John and what has happened to him?

What is about to take place?

What was John doing on this Lord's Day?

What is the time frame for the vision?

Who is speaking to John in the vision?

How is this vision to be shared within the churches?



PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE TEXT

REVELATION 21:1–14 (NRSV)

"Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**;¹ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. **He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples**,² and **God himself will be with them**;² **he will wipe every tear from their eyes**.³ Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'

And **the one who was seated on the throne**⁴ said, 'See, **I am making all things new**.'⁵ Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and **I will be their God and they will be my children**.⁶ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.' Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' **And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain**⁷ and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. **It has the glory of God**⁸ and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names **of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates**.⁹ And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

1. Isaiah 65:17

2. Ezekiel 37:27

3. Isaiah 25:8

4. Psalm 103:19

5. Isaiah 65:17

6. 2 Samuel 7:14

7. Ezekiel 40:2

8. Isaiah 60:1–2

9. Ezekiel 48:31–35



"THEN I SAW ..."—WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Revelation 1:12-13

Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning *I saw seven golden lampstands*, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest.

Revelation 5:1-2

Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne *a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals*; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

Revelation 6:1-2

Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there was a *white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.*

Revelation 7:1-3

After this I saw *four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth* so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have *marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.*"

Revelation 10:1-3

And I saw another mighty *angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head*; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, he gave a great shout, like a lion roaring.

Revelation 14:1

Then I looked, and *there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion!* And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

Revelation 19:11-12

Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. *His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself.*

Revelation 21:1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw *the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Revelation 22:1-2

Then the angel showed me the *river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*