

Jesus be the Centerfold

**Enjoy this
Study Guide!**

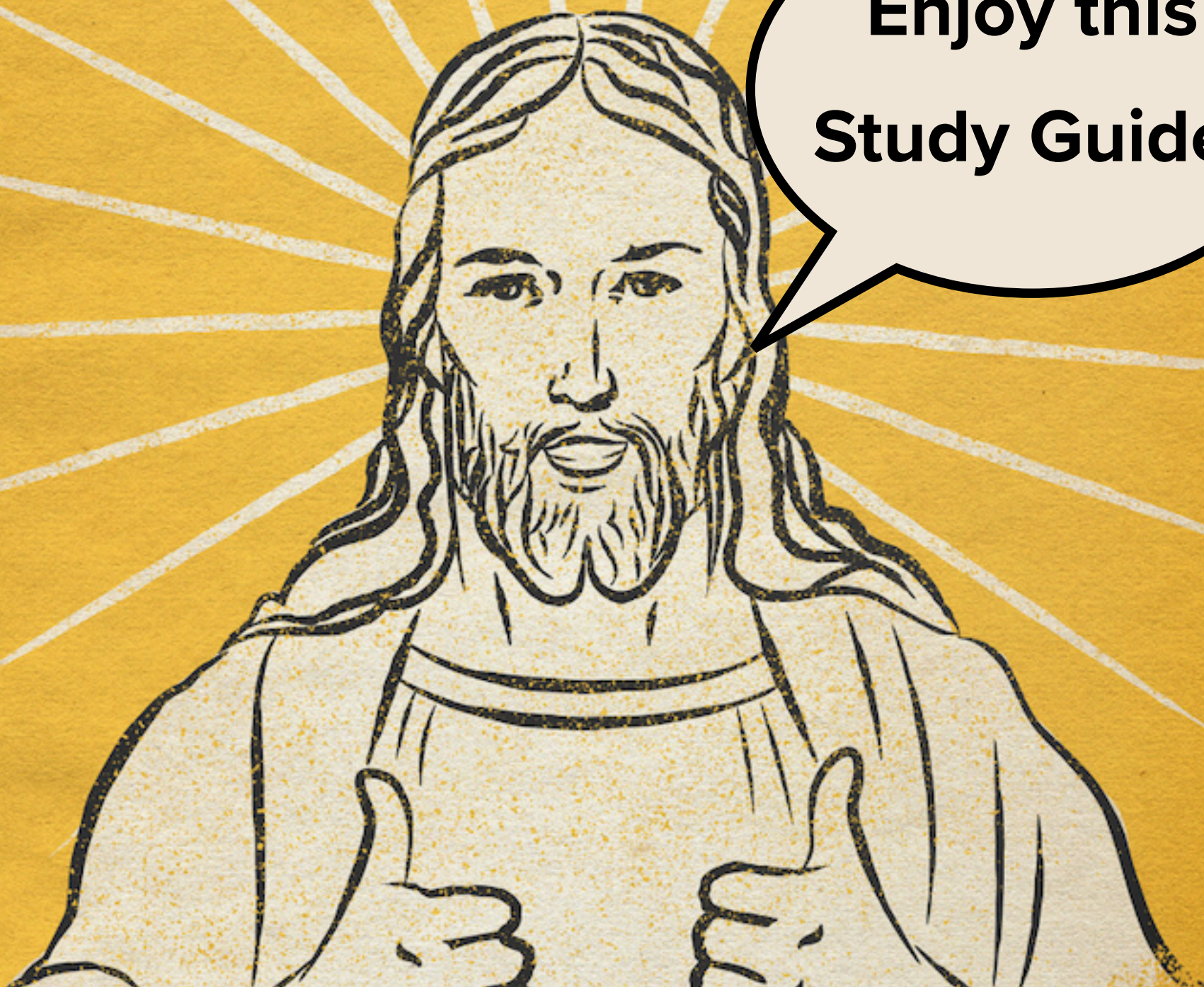


Table of Contents:

Chapter 1: CHEAP THRILL

Chapter: PINUP JESUS

Chapter: SWIPE RIGHT

Chapter: TAKING WITHOUT GIVING

Chapter 5: LUST V. LOVE

Chapter 6: PROSTITUTING THE CHURCH

Chapter 7: UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Chapter 8: DTR

Chapter 9: COVENANT V. CONTRACT

Chapter 10: THE GIFT OF COVENANT

Chapter 11: JUST SAY YES

How to use this guide:

I'm so excited for the journey you are about to take with your small group! I created the guide to lead you through this journey and to make the most out of your time together.

In this guide, I have included more questions that you will likely be able to use. That's okay! Read through them before your group meets, pick your favorites and just use those! Or, feel free to go straight through the questions, but free yourself from the pressure of trying to get through every question. Let the discussion go where it needs to go.

Thanks for opening your home and your heart to this conversation. What the world needs most right now is true covenant followers of Jesus Christ. My hope and prayer is that through this journey, you and your group will move closer and closer to Jesus.

CHAPTER 1

Cheap Thrill

Choosing comfort over commitment
and why we always settle for less.

Summary:

The author reflects on the tension between public perception and private struggles within the Christian faith. He emphasizes that true intimacy with God involves being fully known and still loved, contrasting it with a culture that often settles for superficial relationships and “cheap thrills.” Ultimately, he calls for a deeper understanding of intimacy with God, warning against the dangers of pursuing faith without the inherent risks of true relationship.

Objective:

To explore the themes of intimacy with God, the cost of discipleship, and the dangers of settling for less in our spiritual lives.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth and to guide the discussion.

Icebreaker:

Share a time when you settled for something less than what you truly desired or needed. How did it make you feel, and what did you learn from the experience?

Scripture Reading:

Before you begin, be sure to read all the scriptures listed below to give greater Biblical context for the discussion. Assign people in the group to read each scripture while everyone follows along.

- Romans 7:14-17
- Luke 14:25-27
- Genesis 3:4-6
- Luke 4:1-13

Discussion Questions:

Understanding Intimacy:

1. Reflect on the speaker's experience as a "Master Quizzer" and his simultaneous struggle with sin. Can you relate? How do you manage the tension between public perception and private struggles?
2. What does it mean to have an 'intimate relationship' with God, and how can we differentiate it from simply attending church or knowing Bible verses?
3. How does our culture's view of intimacy affect our understanding of intimacy with God? How does this compare to your current relationship with God?
4. How does the concept of being "fully known and still fully loved" resonate with you?

The Struggle with Sin:

1. Read Genesis 3:4-6 again. Reflect on a recent situation where you may have faced a temptation similar to those mentioned (Lust of the Eyes, Lust of the Flesh, Pride of Life. How did you respond, and what could you do differently next time?
2. Discuss the idea of "cheap faith" and settling for "just enough" in our spiritual lives. How can we combat this mindset?
3. Discuss Romans 7:14-17. How do you relate to Paul's struggle with sin? How does this passage help you understand your own battles with sin?

4. Compare the temptations faced by Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and Jesus in Luke 4. What can we learn from Jesus' response to temptation?
5. How does the enemy tempt us to seek the benefits of faith without the cost? How can we resist this temptation?

The Cost of Discipleship:

1. In Luke 14:25-27, Jesus speaks about the cost of being His disciple. What does it mean to carry your own cross and follow Jesus? How does this challenge your current level of commitment?
2. How do you balance the demands of family, work, and personal life with the call to prioritize your relationship with Jesus?
3. The sermon discusses the temptation to settle for "cheap faith." What are some ways you might be settling for less in your spiritual life?
4. How can you move from a surface-level faith to a deeper, more intimate relationship with God?

Application- Personal Reflection:

- Identify areas in your life where you might be choosing comfort over commitment. What steps can you take to pursue a deeper intimacy with God?
- How can you encourage others in your small group to seek a more intimate relationship with God?
- As a group, commit to one specific action this week that will help deepen your intimacy with God (e.g., dedicated prayer time, fasting, serving others).

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a prayer asking for strength and courage to pursue true intimacy with God and to embrace the cost of discipleship.

Follow-Up:

Encourage group members to share their experiences and insights from the week at the next meeting. Consider pairing up for accountability and support.

CHAPTER 2

Pin-up Jesus

Who Jesus is vs. who we make Him to be

Summary:

The author emphasizes more deeply the importance of understanding who Jesus truly is versus the images we create of Him based on our preferences and societal influences. He highlights how easily people distort their perception of Jesus to fit their own narratives, leading to a "pinup version" of Christ that lacks authenticity and truth. This tendency to curate an airbrushed reality not only impacts individual faith but can also prevent believers from experiencing the full depth of a genuine relationship with Jesus. Ultimately, Phill urges listeners to seek the real Jesus, who is both loving and just, rather than settling for a version that conforms to their desires.

Objective:

To explore the concept of the "real Jesus" versus the "airbrushed" versions we often create, and to encourage participants to seek a deeper, more authentic relationship with Christ as presented in the Bible.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer for a clearer understanding of the true nature of Jesus and his call on our lives.

Icebreaker:

Share a time when you realized something you believed or assumed was not true. How did you come to that realization, and what impact did it have on you?

Scripture Reading:

Before you begin, be sure to read all the scriptures listed below to give greater Biblical context for the discussion. Assign people in the group to read each scripture while everyone follows along. Read the following passages together:

- John 1:1-14
- Colossians 1:15-20
- Matthew 16:13-17

Discussion Questions:

The Danger of Perceptions:

1. What are some common "airbrushed" versions of Jesus that people might believe in today? How do these versions differ from the Jesus presented in the Bible?
2. How do you think the different images people have of God affect their relationship with Him?
3. Are there any aspects of Him you might be ignoring to fit your lifestyle? Are there aspects of your belief that might be influenced by cultural or personal preferences rather than Scripture?
4. Can you think of a time when your view of God changed? What influenced that change?
5. How can we ensure that our understanding of Jesus is rooted in biblical truth?

The Real Jesus:

1. According to the passages read, what are some key characteristics of the real Jesus?
2. What does it mean to you that Jesus is described as 'fully divine' and 'fully human' in scripture?
3. Why do you think the Jewish people had such different expectations for the Messiah compared to the reality of Jesus?
4. How can our own expectations of Jesus or faith impact how we respond to Him in our lives?
5. How should understanding Jesus as both fully divine and fully human impact your faith?

Jesus and Social Media:

1. The author emphasized how social media allows people to curate their lives in a way that may misrepresent reality. Think about the last thing you posted online. What was your intention behind it, and how does it reflect your true self?
2. In what ways do you curate your online life to present a certain image, and how does that relate to your faith?

Application- Personal Reflection:

- What steps can you take to deepen your understanding of the real Jesus?
- How can this group support each other in seeking the real Jesus?
- Spend a few minutes writing down any preconceived notions you have about Jesus. Then, write a prayer asking God to reveal the true nature of Jesus to you through His Word.

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a prayer asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance in revealing the true nature of Jesus to each participant and for the strength to live out this understanding in daily life.

CHAPTER 3

Swipe Right

Living out the commitments of faith
in a world of preference.

Summary:

In this chapter, the author explores how modern dating culture, particularly the "swipe right" mentality popularized by apps like Tinder, reflects a broader trend toward superficial relationships and a lack of commitment. He discusses the dangers of this mindset, suggesting it fosters a culture that easily dismisses meaningful connections and Biblical truths based on preference and fleeting impressions. As the author emphasizes the absolutes of faith in contrast to a world increasingly rejecting them, he calls on believers to re-evaluate their commitment to God, acknowledging the challenge of aligning their lives with His standards. Ultimately, he urges Christians to embrace the cost of true discipleship, recognizing that genuine faith requires a daily choice to follow Christ, even when it is difficult.

Objective:

To explore how the "swipe right, swipe left" mentality affects our faith and commitment to biblical truths, and to encourage participants to choose Jesus daily, even when it's challenging.

Opening Prayer:

Open with a prayer, asking God to guide the discussion and open hearts to His truth.

Icebreaker:

Share a light-hearted story or memory from childhood about a first crush or a funny dating experience. Discuss how relationships have changed over the years.

Scripture Reading

Read John 14:6 and Luke 9:23 aloud.

Briefly discuss the context of these verses and their implications for our faith.

Discussion Questions:

Cultural Influence:

1. How has the concept of dating changed from the past compared to today's swipe culture, and what does this say about our approach to relationships in general?
2. Reflect on your own relationships. How do you engage with friends or family? Your kids? Your coworkers? Your neighbors? Where do you find yourself 'swiping left' on certain interactions instead of fully engaging? Why do you think we do this?
3. In what ways do you think this mentality has influenced how people approach faith and commitment?
4. What does it mean to live in a world that emphasizes acceptance and tolerance, but also rejects absolute truths like the ones found in Christianity?

Faith and Absolutes:

1. Christianity is based on absolutes. How does this contrast with the current cultural trend of rejecting absolutes?
2. Why do you think people struggle with the idea of God as a supreme authority?
3. Many Christians pick and choose which Biblical truths they follow, similar to how one swipes left on dating apps. In which areas of your life do you find yourself ignoring or 'swiping left' on God's commandments? How can you change that?

Daily Faith:

1. According to Luke 9:23, following Jesus requires us to deny ourselves daily. What does it mean to you to deny yourself and choose Jesus every day?
2. Faith is about choosing Jesus every day, even when it's hard, and that it requires daily sacrifice. Can you think of a recent situation where you had to sacrifice something for your faith? How did that impact you?
3. Can you think of anywhere God might be calling you to sacrifice, but you haven't been willing?
4. What are the potential dangers of living in a culture that prioritizes personal preference over commitment and truth?
5. How can we support each other in making daily choices that align with our faith?

Application: Commitment Cards

Provide index cards and pens. Ask each participant to write down one area of their life where they want to choose Jesus more intentionally. Encourage them to keep this card as a reminder. OR if your group is really brave, encourage them to swap with someone else in the group and hold each other accountable.

Closing Prayer:

Invite participants to share any prayer requests. Close with a prayer, asking for strength and wisdom to live out faith in a world that often challenges it.

CHAPTER 4

Taking Without Giving

Why pornography (and modern spirituality) are
really all about control.

Summary:

In this chapter, the author discusses the concept of control, highlighting how this issue often stems from a desire to take without giving. He emphasizes that true intimacy in relationships—both human and divine—requires mutual submission and vulnerability rather than one-sided control. By referencing Ephesians, he illustrates the importance of viewing our relationship with God as a shared bond, where both parties give fully to one another. Ultimately, this chapter calls for a genuine relationship with God, encouraging believers to surrender control and embrace His love and lordship in their lives.

Objective:

To explore the concepts of control, submission, and mutual relationships in both our spiritual lives and human relationships, as discussed in the sermon.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth and to guide the discussion.

Icebreaker:

Share a time when you felt completely out of control of a situation and how it turned out. What did you learn from that experience?

Scripture Reading:

- Ephesians 5:21-33
- Romans 6:1-14

Discussion Questions:

Ephesians 5:21-33:

1. What does 'mutual submission' mean, and why is it important for healthy relationships? How can you practice mutual submission in your friendships or family relationships?
2. How does the concept of submission to one another out of reverence for Christ challenge or affirm your current understanding of relationships?
3. Who in your life is it hardest right now to treat with reverence?
4. Discuss the idea of God being both transcendent (Above all things) and immanent (close to us). How does this duality affect your relationship with Him that He isn't just a far away God, but wants a relationship with you?

Romans 6:1-14

1. How does Paul's warning against using grace as a license to sin relate to the chapter's message about control and one-sided relationships?
2. Why do you think many Christians struggle with the concept of revering God while also having a personal relationship with Him? In what ways can we ensure our relationship with God is not one-sided?
3. The author suggests that one-sided relationships are spiritually abusive. What does that mean, and how can we ensure our relationship with God is reciprocal?
4. Reflect on your personal relationship with God. Are there areas where you are taking without giving?

5. What steps can you take to deepen your personal relationship with God while maintaining a sense of reverence for Him?

Application:

- Reflect on areas in your life where you might be seeking control rather than surrendering to God.
- Consider practical steps you can take to foster a more balanced and genuine relationship with God and others.

Closing Prayer:

Invite group members to share prayer requests.

Pray for strength and wisdom to apply the principles of mutual submission and to deepen relationships with God and others.

Additional Resource:

Read "The Awe of God" by John Bevere for further exploration of these themes.

CHAPTER 5

Lust v. Love

How "falling in love" has redefined love forever.

Summary:

In this chapter, the author emphasizes the distinction between love and lust, arguing that true love is a commitment rather than fleeting feelings. Love involves intentional choices and sacrifices.

The author connects this understanding of love to our relationship with God, calling Christians to examine whether they are genuinely committed to loving Him or merely captivated by the idea of His grace. Ultimately, he stresses that real love requires mutual commitment and effort, urging believers to embrace a deeper, sacrificial love that mirrors God's love for us.

Objective:

To explore the differences between cultural perceptions of love and biblical love, and to encourage participants to choose a committed, sacrificial love in their relationships with God and others.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief welcome and an opening prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to understand His definition of love.

Icebreaker:

Share a brief story or memory of a time you thought you were "in love" and how your understanding of love has changed over time.

Scripture Reading:

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and 1 John 4:7-11 aloud.

Ask volunteers to summarize the key points of these passages.

Discussion Questions:

Cultural v. Biblical Love:

1. Why do you think our culture often confuses lust with love? How can you distinguish between genuine love and temporary feelings in your own life?
2. What role does commitment play in the author's definition of love?
3. What types of commitments do you think are important in your friendships or family relationships?
4. Share an example of a time when you had to choose to love someone, even when it was difficult.

God's Love for Us:

1. According to John 3:16, how does God demonstrate His love for the world? How does understanding God's love in this way change your perspective on love?
2. Why does the author believe many Christians 'lust' after the idea of God rather than truly loving Him?
3. In what ways can you actively choose to deepen your relationship with God rather than just believing in the idea of Him?
4. How does the author connect the concept of agape love to our relationships with God and others?
5. What are some practical ways you can show agape love to those around you daily?

Application: Love in Action

As a group, brainstorm a small service project or act of kindness you can do together to demonstrate agape love in your community.

Closing Prayer:

Invite group members to share prayer requests.

Invite participants to reflect silently on one area in their life where they need to choose love more intentionally.

Close with a prayer, asking God to help each person choose love daily and to empower them to love others as He loves us.

Additional Note:

Encourage participants to read the full chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4 during the week to deepen their understanding of biblical love.

CHAPTER 6

Prostituting the Church

Turning the greatest love the world
has ever known into a transaction.

Summary:

In this chapter, the author reflects on the theme of spiritual prostitution within the Church, using this metaphor to describe the transactional nature many Christians approach their faith with. He emphasizes that the Bible narrates a grand redemption story where Jesus, as the groom, sacrifices for his unfaithful bride, the Church.

The chapter warns against making faith transactional, where one pursues God for personal gain rather than genuine intimacy, and highlights the danger of idolatry in contemporary Christian life. Ultimately, he calls for deeper relational faith with God, echoing the sentiment that true love requires commitment and willingness to endure difficult truths rather than merely seeking comfort.

Objective:

To explore the themes of spiritual unfaithfulness and intimacy with God, as discussed in the chapter, and to reflect on how these themes apply to our personal and communal faith journeys.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking for open hearts and minds to understand God's message and for the Holy Spirit to guide the discussion.

Icebreaker:

Share a favorite documentary or movie and discuss what makes a story compelling to you.

Scripture Reading:

- Ephesians 5:21-33
- Hosea 2:14
- John 6:47-69

Discussion Questions:

Uncomfortable Metaphor:

1. What are your initial thoughts on the metaphor of the church as a prostitute? How does this metaphor challenge or resonate with you?
2. The author refers to the metaphor of unfaithfulness in relation to the story of Hosea and Gomer. Why do you think God uses such strong imagery to convey His feelings about our faithfulness?
3. In what ways do you think you might be prioritizing other aspects of life over your relationship with God? How can you change that?

Intimacy with God:

1. How do you define intimacy with God? Discuss the difference between transactional faith and relational faith. How can we move from one to the other?
2. The author mentions that Jesus fulfilled the law and calls us into a deeper relationship with Him beyond mere rules. How does this change your understanding of faith?
3. What are some practical steps you can take to deepen your relationship with Jesus instead of just following religious rules?

The Role of the Church:

1. How can the church avoid becoming transactional in its approach to faith and worship?
2. What role does community play in fostering a genuine, intimate relationship with God?

3. Reflect on your prayer and worship practices. How can they become more about intimacy with God rather than just asking for things?

Reflection Exercise:

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection, asking God to reveal any areas of unfaithfulness or idolatry in your life. Write down any thoughts or convictions that come to mind

Closing Prayer:

Pair up with another group member and pray for each other, asking God to help you both grow in intimacy with Him and to remove any idols from your lives.

Conclude with a prayer thanking God for His relentless love and grace, asking for His help in living faithfully and intimately with Him.

Additional Note:

Encourage group members to read the book of Hosea during the week to gain a deeper understanding of God's love and faithfulness.

CHAPTER 7

Unmet Expectations

Why the greatest problem in any
relationship is me.

Summary:

In this chapter, the author addresses the theme of unmet expectations as a root cause of relationship struggles, emphasizing that the greatest problem in any relationship often lies within ourselves. Using an analogy from Job's experiences, he illustrates how our personal expectations can shape our perceptions of others and of God. He argues that many frustrations, particularly with God, arise from our unrealistic expectations and invites listeners to reflect on their own perceptions. Ultimately, the author encourages a shift from focusing on external disappointments to examining and aligning our expectations with God's true nature as revealed in scripture.

Objective:

To explore how unmet expectations affect our relationships with others and with God, and to understand the importance of aligning our expectations with biblical truths.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth and to help each participant see their own role in relationship challenges.

Icebreaker:

Share a funny or memorable story about a time when your expectations were not met. How did you react?

Scripture Reading:

Read Matthew 7:1-5:

Discuss Jesus' teaching on judgment and self-awareness.

Read Job 42:1-4

Reflect on God's response to Job and what it reveals about God's nature.

Discussion Questions:

Understanding Expectations:

1. What are some common expectations we bring into relationships? How do these expectations affect our interactions with others?
2. What does the story about the sailor and his mustache teach us about our own expectations in relationships?
3. Can you think of a time when your expectations affected your view of a situation or a person negatively? How did that impact the relationship?
4. How do unmet expectations contribute to conflicts in relationships? Can you identify any current relationships in your life where unmet expectations might be causing frustration? What can you do to address it?
5. Reflect on a time when a relationship ended poorly. What role did unmet expectations play?
6. How do you typically respond when your expectations are not met?

Expectations and God:

1. Have you ever experienced a crisis of faith due to unmet expectations of God? How did you navigate it?
2. How does this relate to the scripture from Matthew 7:1-5
3. Reflect on your own expectations of God. Are there specific times you've felt disappointed in your faith? How might understanding God's true nature change that?

4. What role does communication play in preventing unmet expectations in relationships?

Learning from Job:

1. How did Job's story challenge your understanding of suffering and God's role in it?
2. What can we learn from Job's response to his trials?
3. The chapter suggests that the greatest problem in any relationship is "me." How does this perspective change the way you view your role in conflicts? How can you begin to align your expectations with biblical truths?

Reflection Exercise: Expectation Inventory

Take a few minutes to write down some expectations you have in your relationships with others and with God. Share one or two with the group and discuss how they align with biblical teachings.

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a prayer asking God to help each participant grow in self-awareness and to align their expectations with His will.

Optional Exercises:

Commit to reading a chapter of the Bible each day this week, focusing on understanding God's character and promises.

Identify one expectation you have in a key relationship and pray for guidance on how to adjust it according to biblical principles.

CHAPTER 8



Putting a label on this thing called faith.

Summary:

The author discusses the importance of defining relationships, using the acronym DTR, and shares personal stories from his own life to highlight how often individuals fail to communicate their expectations clearly. He reflects on his early experiences with relationships, emphasizing that many people enter into commitments without truly understanding what they mean. The message stresses that defining the relationship is not just about labels, but about the commitment and understanding necessary for a fulfilling partnership.

Objective:

To explore the concept of "Defining the Relationship" (DTR) with God, using marriage as a metaphor for our relationship with Him, and to understand the commitment and expectations involved in this divine relationship.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking for guidance and understanding as you explore the relationship God desires with each of us.

Icebreaker:

Share a funny or memorable story about a childhood or early relationship. How did you define that relationship at the time? Where might your current view of your relationship with God be defined “childishly”?

Scripture Reading?

- Ephesians 5:21-32
- Genesis 1:26-27
- Genesis 2:23-24

Discussion Questions:

Define the Relationship (DTR):

1. What does "Define the Relationship" mean in the context of human relationships?
2. Can you recall a time when you had to define a relationship in your life? How did that experience affect your understanding of the relationship?
3. How does this concept apply to our relationship with God?

Marriage as a Metaphor:

1. Why do you think God loves this metaphor of marriage so much? How does the metaphor of marriage help us understand our relationship with God?
2. In Ephesians 5:21, it says, 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.' What do you think this means when it comes to our relationships?
3. Why do you think many people prepare for a wedding but not for the actual marriage? What impact might this have on the relationship long-term?
4. Where are you guilty in your relationship with God of “focusing on the wedding” (I’m saved) but not the marriage (I’m in a relationship with God).
5. The chapter mentioned that God has made a DTR with His people throughout the Bible. How do you see God's commitment to us reflected in the stories of the Bible?

6. What do you believe is the most significant commitment God asks of us in our relationship with Him?

Commitment v. Expectations:

1. What does it mean to be "all in" in our relationship with God?
2. How can we ensure that we are meeting God's expectations in our relationship with Him?
3. Reflect on your current relationship with God. Have you had a DTR conversation with Him? Do you need to? What about?

Reflection Exercise: Group Sharing

Share any insights or commitments you feel led to make regarding your relationship with God.

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a prayer, asking God to help each member of the group to fully commit to their relationship with Him and to understand His expectations for their lives.

Optional Exercises:

Encourage group members to read additional passages about God's covenant with His people, such as Jeremiah 31:31-34 or Hebrews 8:6-13, and reflect on how these passages further define our relationship with God.

CHAPTER 9

Covenant v. Contract

Reading the fine print
on our relationship with Jesus.

Summary:

The author explores the difference between a covenant and a contract in our relationship with God, emphasizing that many Christians approach their faith as a mere contractual obligation rather than a deep, mutual commitment. He reflects on his own struggles with duplicity, highlighting how hidden sin and justifications can lead to a conflicted spiritual life. True faith requires surrender and authenticity, rather than simply following rules out of fear or obligation. Ultimately, he invites believers to embrace a genuine covenant relationship with God, which offers true freedom and fulfillment, urging them to move beyond superficial Christianity.

Objective:

To understand the difference between a covenantal relationship with God and a contractual obligation, and to explore how this understanding can transform our faith journey.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking God to open your hearts and minds to His truth and to guide your discussion.

Icebreaker:

Share a time when you felt you were in a relationship (friendship, work, etc.) that was more about obligation than genuine connection. How did it make you feel?

Scripture Reading:

Proverbs 11:3 (NIV): "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."

Matthew 7:21-23 (NLT): "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter."

John 6:38-40 (NLT): "For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day."

Discussion Questions:

Understanding Duplicity:

1. How does the author describe duplicity in his life? Can you relate to his struggle with living a divided life?
2. What are some areas in your life where you might be living with duplicity?
3. Can you think of a specific situation where you found yourself justifying your actions when you knew they were wrong? How did that affect your relationship with God?
4. How does the scripture from Proverbs 11:3, which talks about integrity and duplicity, apply to the challenges you face in living out your faith?
5. Discuss a time when you felt your integrity was challenged. How did you navigate that situation, and what did you learn about faithfulness?

Covenant V. Contract:

1. How does the chapter define the difference between a covenant and a contract?
2. Why do you think many people treat their faith as a contractual obligation rather than a covenantal relationship?
3. Have you ever felt like you were following rules without a genuine connection to God? How can you change that?

Counting the Cost:

1. Discuss the statement: "Faithfulness is incredibly COSTLY, but it leads to a life that's so much better." What are some costs you might face in pursuing a covenantal relationship with God?
2. Think about your own view of God. Do you see Him as someone who loves you unconditionally? How might embracing that love change your fears and doubts?
3. How does understanding God's covenantal love for us change the way we view our relationship with Him?

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a prayer asking God to help each member of the group to live out a covenantal relationship with Him, to embrace His love, and to walk in integrity and faithfulness.

CHAPTER 10

The Gift of Covenant

The costly relationship we are invited into,
and why it's always worth it.

Summary:

In this chapter, the author emphasizes the significance of covenant relationships with God, highlighting their relational, familial, obligational, and binding nature. He reflects on how traditional teachings often gloss over the cost of discipleship, leading to a generation of believers who are unprepared for challenges. By examining the biblical covenants from Adam to Christ, he illustrates a consistent invitation from God to enter a deeper relationship that demands commitment and genuine faith. Ultimately, the chapter underscores that true Christianity is not about a cheap contract but a profound covenant that calls for total devotion and sacrifice.

Objective:

To explore the concept of covenant in the Bible, understand its significance in our relationship with God, and reflect on how it applies to our lives today.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking God to open your hearts and minds to understand His Word and the depth of His covenantal love.

Icebreaker:

Share a time when someone made a promise or commitment and didn't keep it. How did it make you feel to have them break that promise?

Scripture Reading:

- Genesis 9:12-17 (Noahic Covenant)
- Genesis 17:1-14 (Abrahamic Covenant)
- Exodus 20:1-17 (Mosaic Covenant)
- 2 Samuel 7:8-16 (Davidic Covenant)
- Hebrews 9:11-15 (Christ's Covenant)

Discussion Questions:

Understanding Covenant:

1. What does it mean to be in a covenant relationship with God, and how is it different from a basic contract?
2. Can you think of a relationship in your life that feels more like a covenant than a contract? How does that change the way you treat that person?
3. How does the sermon describe the relational and familial aspects of a covenant?

Biblical Covenant Overview:

1. Review the six covenants mentioned in the sermon: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Christ. What are the key elements of each?
2. Why is it important that God's covenants show His unwavering faithfulness despite human failures?
3. How does knowing that God is faithful even when you fail affect your view of Him and your own spiritual journey?

The Cost of Covenants:

1. The chapter discusses the cost of entering into a covenant with God. What does this cost entail, and why is it significant?
2. How do you think our modern culture's view of relationships affects our understanding of God's covenant with us? What are some common

misconceptions you see people have about their relationship with God due to cultural influences?

3. How does the concept of obligations in a covenant help us understand our responsibilities as Christians?

4. What obligations do you feel God is calling you to in your own life, and how can you actively fulfill them?

Covenant and Atonement:

1. In what ways do you think the story of Adam and Eve illustrates the human tendency to break covenant with God?

2. Think about a time when you made a commitment but didn't follow through. What led to that situation, and what did you learn from it?

3. How is the concept of atonement related to covenant?

4. Discuss how Jesus fulfills the covenants and what this means for us today.

Personal Reflection:

- Reflect on your own relationship with God. Are there areas where you have settled for less than a covenantal relationship?
- What steps can you take to deepen your commitment to God and live out the covenant more fully?

Reflection Exercise:

Take a few minutes to write a covenant to God telling him what you want to do for Him and how you want to live for Him. If you feel bold, read them to each other.

Closing Prayer:

Invite group members to share prayer requests.

Close with a prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness in keeping His promises and asking for strength to live out our covenant with Him.

Just Say Yes

Why you will never regret chasing all of Jesus

Summary:

In this final chapter, the author emphasizes the transformative power of fully embracing faith in Jesus Christ, drawing parallels between his own life and that of the Apostle Paul. He recounts a personal journey from a life of hypocrisy and struggle to a moment of clarity that led him to genuinely commit his life to Jesus, recognizing that true freedom comes from surrendering one's life to Him. The author highlights the significance of the New Covenant, which offers redemption and a renewed identity through Christ, contrasting it with the failure of the old ways rooted in human effort. Ultimately, he calls readers to let go of worldly attachments and to choose a spiritually fulfilling life that embraces Jesus as both Savior and Lord.

Objective:

To explore the transformative power of fully committing to Jesus and understanding the New Covenant through His sacrifice.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a prayer asking for open hearts and minds to understand and embrace the message of surrendering fully to Jesus.

Icebreaker:

Share a moment in your life when you had to make a significant decision. What was the outcome, and how did it impact your life?

Scripture Reading:

2 Timothy 4:6-8:

Reflect on Paul's words about his life being poured out as an offering. How can we apply this mindset to our own lives?

2 Corinthians 5:17:

Discuss what it means to be a new creation in Christ. How does this transformation happen in our lives?

Discussion Questions:

Understanding Transformation:

1. Reflect on the transformation of Saul to Paul. How does his story inspire you in your own faith journey?
2. Have you ever experienced a "Damascus Road" moment in your life? A moment in your life that changed your perspective or direction? How did that moment shape who you are today?
3. How did Saul's transformation into Paul serve as a reminder of the power of a personal encounter with Jesus?
4. In what ways can you relate to Pastor's struggles with hypocrisy and the feeling of being lost before finding true faith? Or do you still feel lost?
5. What steps can you take to address any hypocrisy in your own life and move closer to a genuine faith?

New Covenant:

1. Discuss the concept of the New Covenant as presented in the sermon. How does it differ from the Old Covenant?
2. How does the concept of the 'New Covenant' change our understanding of our relationship with God?
3. In what ways can you embrace this New Covenant in your daily life? How can it impact your decisions and relationships?

Surrender v. Control

1. What do you think it means to 'let go of your old life' in order to embrace the new life found in Christ?
2. The sermon emphasizes letting go of control to fully embrace Jesus. What are some areas in your life where you still struggle to let go?
3. The sermon warns against cultural Christianity. How can we ensure our faith is genuine and not just a Sunday routine?
4. Paul speaks of fighting the good fight and finishing the race. What does it mean to you to remain faithful in your walk with Christ?
5. What steps can we take to deepen our relationship with Jesus beyond attending church services?

Reflection Exercise:

Spend a few minutes in silence, asking God to reveal areas in your life where you need to surrender more fully to Him.

****Action Step:**** Identify one practical step you can take this week to deepen your commitment to Jesus. Share with the group for accountability.

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a prayer asking for strength and courage to fully surrender to Jesus and live out the New Covenant in our lives.