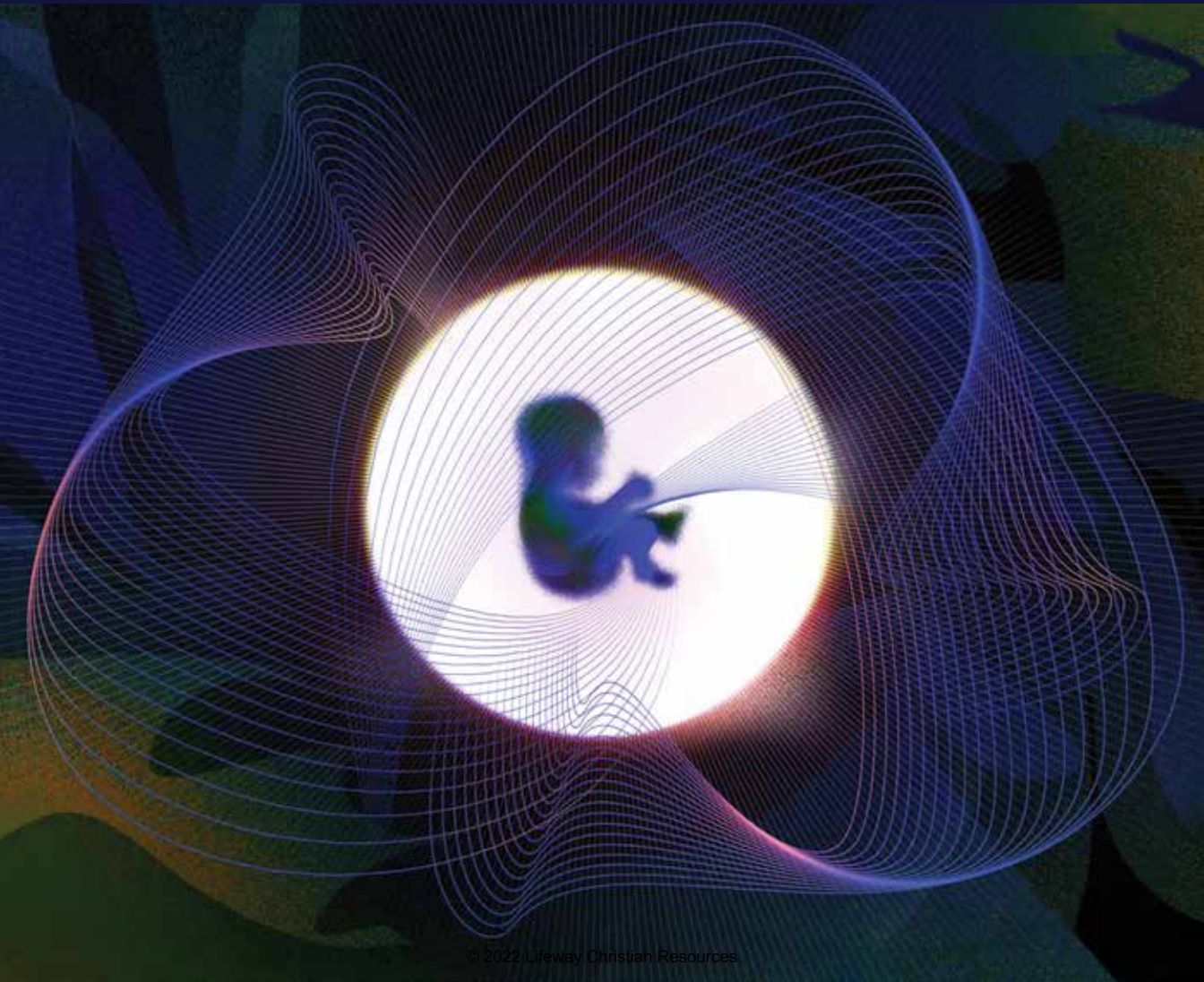




the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.

FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH

ADULTS / DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE / SPRING 2023 / VOL. 7



GOD'S WORD TO YOU

A SON WAS BORN FOR YOU

Isaiah 9:6: “For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us.”

A Son will be given—a gift, a present. Isaiah lived in days shadowed by gloom, but God granted a flicker of hope, a ray of light—a Son would be given, a descendant of King David would come, an eternal kingdom would be established, one marked by justice and righteousness.

Yet God’s people were shrouded in gloom for their lack of justice and righteousness. Their idolatry, their sin, brought God’s judgment and their exile to the nations. They were meant to be a light to the nations; instead, they were nearly snuffed out. Still, a flicker of hope, a ray of light—a Child would be born. Through many dark days and years of God’s silence, the flicker remained until the Son at last was given.

Matthew 1:21: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

God presents His gift, the Son. And this Son answers the question, He solves the problem of their gloom—He will save His people from their sins. Their lack of justice and righteousness will be made up in His fullness. Their idolatry and sin will be done away with in His sacrifice. The flicker rages; the ray bursts forth; the Light has come to His people—and more.

Luke 2:10-11: “But the angel said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’”

The present, the gift, is for all the people. The Savior from sins is for all the people; the Messiah-King is for all the people. Repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, who died for sins and rose from the dead that you may have life. “See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

CONTENTS



SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

All Ages Study Plan	6
How to Use the Daily Discipleship Guide	8
7 Arrows of Bible Reading	10

UNIT 19: HERE IS THE LAMB OF GOD

	Introduction	12
March 5	Session 1 The Savior Is Born (John 1)	16
March 12	Session 2 The Savior Is Presented (Luke 2)	24
March 19	Session 3 The Savior Is Baptized (Mark 1)	32
March 26	Session 4 The Savior Is Faithful (Matthew 4)	40
April 2	Session 5 The Savior Is Followed (John 1)	48
April 9	Session 6 The Savior Is Our Sacrifice (Doctrine: Christ as Sacrifice) ...	56

UNIT 20: GOD’S LOVE WAS REVEALED AMONG US IN THIS WAY

	Introduction	64
April 16	Session 1 The Son Brings Eternal Life (John 3)	68
April 23	Session 2 The Son Offers Living Water (John 4)	76
April 30	Session 3 The Son Embodies Divine Love (Doctrine: God Is Love)	84

UNIT 21: WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD

	Introduction	92
May 7	Session 1 Rejection of the Messiah (Luke 4)	96
May 14	Session 2 Amazed by the Messiah (Luke 4)	104
May 21	Session 3 Obedience to the Messiah (Luke 5)	112
May 28	Session 4 Faith in the Messiah (Doctrine: Faith)	120

Purpose Matters	128
References	130

THE EDITOR

The people of God in the time between the Old and New Testaments were waiting for something to change, for God to fulfill His promises in dwelling with them, in giving them an eternal king, and in lifting the weight of persecution and suffering. God promised a Savior, but He didn't say when. So the people of God continued waiting for that Messiah.

When Jesus came on the scene, it was like a breath of fresh air, a turning of the wind that some embraced and some rejected. The Jews had heard God's Word and prayed for the promises to be fulfilled, and yet, some were still skeptical.

Is He really the One promised? Could what He says be true? Is it all consistent with what God has written? Can He really save us? Does He really love us?

The questions some asked at that time are the same questions some are asking today.

But Jesus is real. And He is who He says He is and promises change in our lives—a new birth, a new perspective, a new way of interacting with this earthly world and the heavenly one. Jesus is the game changer that tears down the veil and opens the gate through the sacrifice and payment of Himself. No other seeming deity loves like this. And this is a love we can put our faith in.

So as we study God's Word, may we respond in faith to Jesus's invitation to come and know Him more and, with that knowledge, share that gospel with others. Because with Jesus, good news has truly arrived.

Y Bonesteele

Content Editor

The Gospel Project for Adults

The Gospel Project®

Adult Daily Discipleship Guide
Volume 11, Number 3 Spring 2023

Ed Stetzer and Trevin Wax
Founding Editors

Daniel Davis
Team Leader

Y Bonesteele
Content Editor

Dwayne McCrary
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Brian Daniel
Director, Adult Ministry

Ken Braddy
Director of Sunday School

Send questions/comments to:

Team Leader by email to daniel.davis@lifeway.com or mail to Team Leader, The Gospel Project: Adult Daily Discipleship Guide, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707; or make comments on the web at lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States
of America

The Gospel Project®: Adult Daily Discipleship Guide (ISSN 2162-7207; Item 005461524) is published quarterly by Lifeway Christian Resources, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2022 Lifeway Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit lifeway.com, or write Lifeway Resources Customer Service, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email orderentry@lifeway.com, fax 615.251.5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

THE WRITERS

Allyson M. Howell (Unit 19 Introduction) is a communications associate for the Patients' Rights Action Fund. She holds an MDiv from Midwestern Seminary. Allyson is a member and the deacon of Women's Ministry at Wornall Road Baptist Church and lives in Kansas City, Missouri, with her husband, Randy.

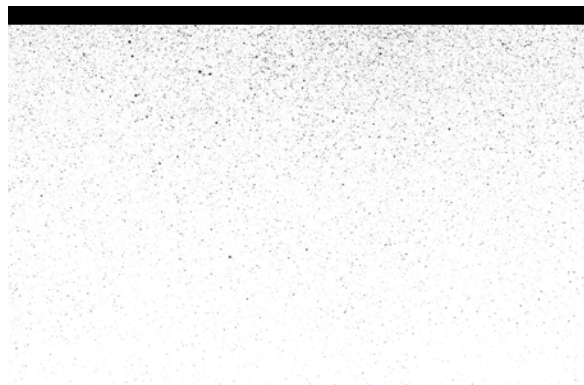
Greg Kilgore (Unit 20, Sessions 1-3) is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Oakhurst in Oakhurst, California. He and his wife, Megan, have three children: Owen, Camille, and Judson Titus. Greg is a PhD student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also teaches as an adjunct professor.

Katie Orr (Unit 21, Sessions 1-4) is the author of *Secrets of the Happy Soul*, seven FOCUSed15 Bible studies, and is the creator of the Bible Study Hub community, where women can receive training, encouragement, and accountability to enjoy God's Word. Katie holds an MA in Discipleship from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. She and her husband, Chris, along with their three children, live in central Florida.

Chris Poblete (Unit 20 Introduction) serves as lead pastor at King's Cross Church in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. He earned an MDiv from Gateway Seminary. He is the author of *The Two Fears: Tremble Before God Alone*. Chris and his wife, Alyssa, have three children: Geneva, Haddon, and Judson.

Daniel Ritchie (Unit 21 Introduction) is an evangelist, speaker, and author from Raleigh, North Carolina. He's written two books: *My Affliction for His Glory* and *Endure*. He has spoken both nationally and internationally for churches, schools, colleges, seminaries, corporations, and professional sports teams. You can visit him online at danielritchie.com.

Matt Rogers (Unit 19, Sessions 1-6) is the pastor of Christ Fellowship Cherrydale in Greenville, South Carolina. He and his wife, Sarah, have five children: Corrie, Avery, Hudson, Willa, and Fuller. Matt is also an assistant professor of church planting at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Director of Church Health with the Pillar Network, and a freelance author.



ALL AGES STUDY PLAN

VOL 1: From Creation to Chaos

(Genesis) Fall 2021

Unit 1: The Heavens Declare the Glory of God (Gen. 1–2; Pss. 8; 96)

Unit 2: Let Us Make a Name for Ourselves (Gen. 3–11)

Unit 3: I Will Make Your Name Great (Gen. 11–50)

VOL 2: From Captivity to the Wilderness

(Exodus–Deuteronomy) Winter 2021-22

Unit 4: Out of Egypt I Called My Son (Ex. 1–15)

Unit 5: To Dwell in the House of the Lord (Ex. 16–40; Lev.)

Unit 6: Be Holy, Because I Am Holy (Num. 13–14; 20–21)

VOL 3: From Conquest to a Kingdom

(Joshua–1 Samuel) Spring 2022

Unit 7: Lord, Teach Me Your Statutes (Josh. 1; 3–4)

Unit 8: Fear the Lord and Worship Him (Josh. 2; 6–11; 23–24)

Unit 9: There Is No Fear of God Before Their Eyes (Judg.; Ruth; 1 Sam. 1–6)

VOL 4: From Unity to Division

(1 Samuel–1 Kings) Summer 2022

Unit 10: Because of Your Hardened Heart (1 Sam. 8–15)

Unit 11: Create a Clean Heart for Me (1 Sam. 16–17; 2 Sam. 6–7; 11–12)

Unit 12: If You Walk Before Me with a Heart of Integrity (1 Kings 1–12)

VOL 5: From Rebellion to Exile

(1 Kings–The Prophets) Fall 2022

Unit 13: Your Passions Wage War Within You (1 Kings 12–18; 2 Kings 1–5; Isa. 44)

Unit 14: Seek the Lord, All You Humble of the Earth (2 Chron. 24; Isa. 22; 25; 30; Zeph.)

Unit 15: He Has Made Every Nationality (Jonah; Nah.; 2 Chron. 36)

VOL 6: From Captivity to Restoration

(The Prophets, Ezra–Esther) Winter 2022-23

Unit 16: The Lord Keeps His Eye on Those Who Fear Him (Jer. 29–30; Dan.)

Unit 17: Take Refuge in the Lord (Ezra 1–6; Zech. 13–14)

Unit 18: For Look, the Day Is Coming (Esth.; Neh.; Mal.)

VOL 7: From Heaven to Earth

(The Gospels) Spring 2023

- Unit 19:** Here Is the Lamb of God
(John 1–2; Luke 2; Mark 1; Matt. 4)
- Unit 20:** God’s Love Was Revealed
Among Us in This Way (John 3–4)
- Unit 21:** Without Faith It Is Impossible
to Please God (Luke 4–5)

VOL 8: From Wonder to Rejection

(The Gospels) Summer 2023

- Unit 22:** The Works That I Do in My
Father’s Name Testify About Me
(Mark 4; 8; Luke 5; Matt. 9; John 10)
- Unit 23:** The Kingdom of God Is in Your
Midst (Matt. 5–7; 13; 24; Luke 15; 17)
- Unit 24:** God’s Glory in the Face of Jesus
Christ (Luke 13; John 11)

VOL 9: From Death to Resurrection

(The Gospels) Fall 2023

- Unit 25:** Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Who Kills the Prophets
(Matt. 21–25; Mark 1; John 6; 14)
- Unit 26:** The Hour Has Come
(John 12; Matt. 26)
- Unit 27:** The King of the Jews
(Luke 22–23; Matt. 27–28)

VOL 10: From Many People to One People

(The Gospels, Acts) Winter 2023–24

- Unit 28:** I Am with You Always
(Luke 24; John 20–21; Matt. 28)
- Unit 29:** You Will Be My Witnesses
(Acts 1–2)
- Unit 30:** Every Day the Lord Added to
Their Number (Acts 2–5)

VOL 11: From One Nation to All Nations

(Acts and Epistles) Spring 2024

- Unit 31:** Every Knee Will Bow
(Acts 5–8; Phil. 2)
- Unit 32:** The Power and the Wisdom
of God (Acts 9–12; 1 Cor. 1; 12)
- Unit 33:** A Prisoner of Christ Jesus
(Acts 9; 13–14; Philem.)

VOL 12: From This World to the World to Come

(Acts, Epistles, Revelation) Summer 2024

- Unit 34:** Ambassadors for Christ
(Acts 15–19; 2 Cor. 5; Eph. 4)
- Unit 35:** That I May Gain Christ
(Acts 20–28; Phil. 3)
- Unit 36:** A New Heaven and a New Earth
(Rev. 4–5; 19–22)

HOW TO USE THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

*Central to your personal
and group experience with
The Gospel Project for Adults
is the Daily Discipleship Guide.
Here's how to make the most
of your time with it:*

BEGIN WITH PERSONAL TIME IN THE WORD

We recommend beginning your week with the daily devotions. These devotions lay a foundation for what will be explored and discussed in your group time as you build healthy rhythms of personal discipleship.



DAY 1

READ:
John 1:1-5

FOCAL PASSAGE:
John 1:1

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #10: GOD IS ONE IN THREE PERSONS

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Philippians 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each Person is distinct from the others (Matthew 11:27; John 10:30, 14:16). This perfect unity within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

When you think about Jesus, where do you start? For most of us, we start with the Gospel stories. After all, Jesus is introduced to the world in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We get His birth story and His family genealogy. We see details of His upbringing and His early life. He is like us, so surely that's where the Jesus story begins, right?

Such an understanding makes sense for how people enter our world. All of our stories start with a birth. We came into existence with our human conception and birth. We have a starting point. A family. A life that plays out chronologically and in which we grow in maturity and stature. You might push that point a bit and suggest that our lives start before our birth, in that we are the product of the various influences that brought us into existence. And surely that is true; the various lives of our parents and grandparents are critical factors that shape the persons we are today. But even in that, we did not really exist then. The circumstances that shaped us did, but our lives start with conception and a birth story.

Not Jesus. John said that the Son of God is eternal. He existed as God and with God from the foundation of the world. Jesus's story does not start with His birth. It doesn't even start with God's work of creation and the story of the garden of Eden. The Son of God existed even before Eden. The Son of God is eternal, existing as God and with God before the foundation of the world. He has always been, and He will always be.

How does the eternal existence of the Son of God compel you to worship Him?

17

STUDY THE BIBLE WITH YOUR BIBLE

Reading and studying the Bible is absolutely life-changing, and we believe the best way to study the Bible is to use the Bible you own. Whether you read from the CSB, ESV, NIV, KJV, or many other translations, the Daily Discipleship Guide helps you engage with the session not only with our book but your Book.



GET BACK TO BASICS

As you read and study, we recommend using the tool found in your Daily Discipleship Guide called the “7 Arrows of Bible Reading.” The 7 Arrows guide both novice and experienced students of the Word through the basic mechanics of Bible study by asking a few key questions of any passage (see pages 10-11 for more information).

7 ARROWS OF BIBLE READING

by Matt Rogers

There is often a vast disconnect between the awareness of the need for disciple-making and practical tools that actually aid in this work. Three factors are essential: Scripture, relationships, and time. Discipleship happens when the life-changing truth of Scripture is infused into genuine relationships over an extended period of time.

Our desire was to create a simple, reproducible strategy that would facilitate this process. This led us to develop a simply strategy for small clusters (2-3 people) to meet together regularly and talk about the Scriptures and apply them to their lives.

The seven arrows of Bible reading were an attempt at developing a tool for proper hermeneutics to power these relationships. We did not want our people to simply talk about the Bible. We wanted them to understand the Bible and know how to apply it to their lives. Each cluster would read a predetermined passage of Scripture and discuss it using these seven arrows.

What does this passage say?

What did this passage mean to its original audience?

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about man?

What does this passage demand of me?

How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

How does this passage prompt me to pray?

DISCUSS AND APPLY IN COMMUNITY

Each session concludes with a two-page discussion guide. This guide includes the key points of the session along with interactive questions and activities designed to address the needs of a variety of learning styles. Mark up the discussion guide, make notes, fill in the blanks, do the activities, write out questions and thoughts—make it yours!



7 ARROWS OF BIBLE READING

by Matt Rogers

There is often a vast disconnect between the awareness of the need for disciple-making and practical tools that actually aid in this work. Three factors are essential: Scripture, relationships, and time. Discipleship happens when the life-changing truth of Scripture is infused into genuine relationships over an extended period of time.

Our desire was to create a simple, reproducible strategy that would facilitate this process. This led us to develop a simply strategy for small clusters (2-3 people) to meet together regularly and talk about the Scriptures and apply them to their lives.

The seven arrows of Bible reading were an attempt at developing a tool for proper hermeneutics to power these relationships. We did not want our people to simply talk about the Bible. We wanted them to understand the Bible and know how to apply it to their lives. Each cluster would read a predetermined passage of Scripture and discuss it using these seven arrows.



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?

ARROW 1: The goal was for the clusters to start by summarizing the main point of the passage as succinctly as possible, ideally in one sentence.

ARROW 2: Next, the clusters sought to discern authorial intent for the passage by asking what it meant to its original audience. Since a text of Scripture can never mean what it never meant, it is necessary to begin by discerning what the text meant. Often this may require the clusters to consult other study tools or cross-reference other biblical texts to arrive at the meaning of the text.

ARROW 3: Thirdly, we asked what the text tells us about the nature and character of God and specifically His work through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

ARROW 4: Fourthly, the text was analyzed to see what it tells us about humanity. Bryan Chappell refers to this as the “fallen condition focus” of the text. What does the text reveal about sin and humankind’s need for the gospel?

ARROW 5: Then we moved the clusters to application. Since we had rooted the clusters in the meaning of the text, they were now positioned to rightly apply it’s meaning to their lives.

ARROW 6: From there we wanted our clusters to apply the Scripture to their relationships with others. Ideally, they would discuss how the text shaped both how they related to other believers and how they lived on mission in the world.

ARROW 7: Finally, the clusters rooted their prayers in the Scriptures. Hopefully, the previous six arrows kindled the flames of passionate prayer in the lives of the clusters—both for their own sanctification and for their mission to the lost.

With this model, we touched on three important areas for discipleship:

Scripture—Disciple-making was rooted in a rightful understanding of Scripture and not in simply doing life together, unpacking another sermon, or dependance on classroom instruction.

Simplicity—Disciple-making was simple enough for everyone to get involved. All believers could take these principles, a Bible, and a relationship with a young Christian and get to work.

Stickiness—Disciple-making through understanding and applying Scripture was etched in the minds of our young church. They could use these same arrows not only to guide their cluster discussions but also their personal Bible study, small group leadership, and comprehension of sermons.

These arrows have proven to be a unique tool in our disciple-making toolbox that the Lord is using to call and build faithful and fruitful followers of Jesus.

Matt Rogers is the teaching pastor at The Church at Cherrydale in Greenville, South Carolina. His church developed the Seven Arrows tool to help people read and understand Scripture within their small groups. The concept has gone on to form the basis of a 52-week devotional for teens from Lifeway Students, the Seven Arrows Bible from B&H, and is now featured in The Gospel Project for Adults and Students.

UNIT 19

+

HERE IS

THE LAMB

OF GOD

“We Have Found the Messiah!”

by Allyson M. Howell

One of the hardest things in life is waiting. Waiting for the doctor to call with the diagnosis; waiting to see if you'll ever get married; waiting for a baby, a job, a home, a friend. Sometimes it may even be a minor inconvenience, such as waiting in line at the grocery store, waiting for dinner to be ready, or waiting for the gas tank to fill up. At times it may get the best of us and we throw up our hands in exasperation, deciding the reward is not worth the inconvenience of the wait.

WAITING, WAITING, WAITING . . .

From Genesis to the beginning of the Gospels, God's people have been waiting. Day after day, they came to the temple with their firstborn animals, the first picks of their harvest, and their choicest oils. Every year they took a perfect lamb, slaughtered it, and painted its blood above their doorpost.

All of this was done in obedience to God while they waited for the Messiah to come. This was, of course, not done with perfect patience or steadfast obedience. Israel's history is full of failure and stories of those who took matters into their own hands. Many of the greatest men and women of the Bible decided that the perfect deliverer promised to them was not worth the wait. They had to do something to speed up the process. So they struck the rock, gave over the handmaid, formed the golden calf, and trusted themselves over God.

Yet God was still patient with them. He still offered them a way to be in relationship with Him despite their disobedience. He provided them with a temple, with Passover, and with the offering of sacrifices to come and ask for forgiveness. But the cycle continued—make sacrifices, receive forgiveness, doubt God, disobey, repeat.

But finally, Jesus makes His arrival.

JESUS'S FIRST COMING

Imagine you were one of the disciples. Your entire life, you've heard stories of a Messiah who is to come. You listened to the prophecies; you listened to stories of your ancestors. Repeatedly in your family history, you hear rumblings of who the Messiah might be. Was it Moses? Elijah? David? No. The Messiah was still to come. When will God ever bring about the one who is to save them?

You follow a man named Jesus, and you wonder if He might be the one spoken about your whole life. Throughout your time with Him, Jesus demonstrates that He is the Messiah. He performs miracles, heals the sick, forgives sins, and speaks of His Father and His kingdom. Jesus calls people into a relationship with God, pours out compassion and love on those who do not deserve it, and reveals that God's desire is to be restored to His people.

Upon Jesus's death, burial, descent, resurrection, and ascension, you see that all of the promises of God were fulfilled. God's people were waiting for a deliverer, a savior, one who would make a way for them to be with God forever. Jesus was that Savior who sacrificed Himself to make a way!

Upon Jesus's death,
burial, descent,
resurrection, and
ascension, you
see that all of the
promises of God
were fulfilled.

Now you know for sure that all who believe that their sins are paid for by Jesus's sacrifice do not have to wait to be forgiven. They do not have to wait to know God or be in a relationship with Him. All of these gifts are available now!

You know that no longer do we have to make sacrifices in the temple, no longer do we have to observe Passover. We simply see what Christ has done, trust Him fully, and recognize the payment for all of our sins has been paid.

Finally, this Messiah, this final sacrifice, was nothing you imagined but more than anything you could have hoped for. The disciples were certain that Jesus was worth the wait.

The disciples were certain that
Jesus was worth the wait.

Our lives were bought with a price— the perfect price of Jesus's life.

JESUS'S SECOND COMING

Here you are today. You know the final sacrifice has been made on your behalf. You believe that Jesus was the culmination of God's plan for His people. Yet you still walk through this life longing for so many things. The waiting is not over. Not only are you waiting to see how various life circumstances pan out, but you're also waiting, whether you think of it often or not, for death.

As morbid as that may seem, death is the inevitable end of your story here on earth. If you are a follower of Jesus, however, you know that death does not have the final say. You look forward to being united with Jesus in heaven. You know that eternity promises all the joy, peace, happiness, and love that comes with being in God's presence.

You understand that you are in what many call the "already but not yet." This means that Jesus already ushered in God's kingdom, but it is not fully completed or realized yet. You are on the other side of Jesus's fulfilling all that was promised in the Old Testament. You have already received new life in Christ. But you are

not perfect yet, you are not fully healed yet, and you are not fully in the presence of God yet. Not yet, but one day.

Every day, you can make the decision to walk with your head down, despairing that you still sin and that the world is still broken. Or you can decide to remember that your fate is sealed, that your life is already paid for, and that you have been given all the promises of God in Jesus.

Sometimes this will mean sacrificing what you want or what is comfortable. Sometimes hope is exhausting and you wonder if it is all worth the pain you endure in this life. Our lives were bought with a price—the perfect price of Jesus's life. And Jesus will be our prize. One day, when we leave this earth and enter heaven, we will forget all the struggles of this world. We will see that every sacrifice we made was worth it because we are now with Jesus!

Remarkably, Jesus will look to us, embrace us in His loving arms, and tell us that His sacrifice on the cross was worth the wait, and as He delights in our presence, we will delight in His forevermore.



THE SAVIOR IS BORN

+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

Jesus is the Word, the Son of God who came into the world to bring salvation.

+ BACKGROUND PASSAGE:

John 1

+ SETTING:

At the start of the New Testament, the situation was bleak for God's people. Even after God's people returned to their land, they were still under the power of the Medo-Persians—after them, the Greeks, and after them, the Romans. The prophets were silent. The kingdom was broken. The future was dark. Greek and Roman culture had enveloped the whole area, and the elitist Pharisees and Sadducees had come into power to try to lead the Jews, but their only real hope was the coming of the Messiah. But when would that be? Into this, Jesus was born. Everything changed when Jesus showed up.

DAY 1

READ:

John 1:1-5

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 1:1

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #10: GOD IS ONE IN THREE PERSONS

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Philippians 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each Person is distinct from the others (Matthew 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

When you think about Jesus, where do you start? For most of us, we start with the Gospel stories. After all, Jesus is introduced to the world in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We get His birth story and His family genealogy. We see details of His upbringing and His early life. He is like us, so surely that's where the Jesus story begins, right?

Such an understanding makes sense for how people enter our world. All of our stories start with a birth. We came into existence with our human conception and birth. We have a starting point. A family. A life that plays out chronologically and in which we grow in maturity and stature. You might push that point a bit and suggest that our lives start before our birth in that we are the product of the various influences that brought us into existence. And surely that is true; the various lives of our parents and grandparents are critical factors that shape the persons we are today. But even in that, we did not really exist then. The circumstances that shaped us did, but our lives start with conception and a birth story.

Not Jesus. John said that the Son of God is eternal. He existed as God and with God from the foundation of the world. Jesus's story does not start with His birth. It doesn't even start with God's work of creation and the story of the garden of Eden. The Son of God existed even before Eden. The Son of God is eternal, existing as God and with God before the foundation of the world. He has always been, and He will always be.

How does the eternal existence of the Son of God compel you to worship Him?

DAY 2

READ:

John 1:1-5

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 1:5

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The person who supposes that he is protected by the darkness is vain, since he cannot escape the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not. Accordingly, he is discovered like a fugitive and a wicked hireling and is recognized before he can conceal himself. For all things are known to the Lord before he seeks them out, not only past events but also those that are to come."¹

—Ambrose (339-397)

Who wins an arm wrestling match? Unless you are arm wrestling your grade school child, it's the strongest person who wins. You might let a kid win from time to time, but if both parties are genuinely trying and all the variables are equal, then the strongest person is going to prevail.

John introduced two foes at the start of his Gospel: darkness and light. The world is dark. Everything about it gives testimony to the brokenness that sin introduced into the good world that God made. And the darkness is great. It's not a little bit of darkness from time to time, but it's overwhelming darkness in a myriad of ways. It's so dark that we can easily believe that darkness is all there is.

Enter light. It's the opposite of darkness in every way. John said Jesus is the light, and He entered into the darkness. Who wins?

We know this answer intuitively, without even considering Jesus. What happens when light enters darkness? The light prevails. Even a little bit of light can drive out a whole lot of darkness. Just think about what happens when you turn on a flashlight at night and switch on your headlights for an evening drive. Light dispels darkness.

It's easy for us to lament the shape of the world and fear that darkness will win out. But Christian, take heart that Jesus is light, and darkness cannot prevail against the bright light of Jesus. Non-Christian, if you sense and fear the darkness around and within, come to Jesus and enter His light by faith and be saved.

What situation are you facing in which you fear that darkness will prevail? How can the light of Jesus bring hope and help there?

DAY 3

READ:

John 1:6-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 1:8

NOTES

Creation is awe-inspiring. You've likely had the experience of seeing something in nature that made your jaw drop. The classic examples would be places like the Grand Canyon or an ocean sunset. But it doesn't even have to be something that compelling. Every time we step into nature, we see something that inspires us or draws our attention to the creative nature of God. The color green. The sound of birds. The smell of flowers.

John used the image of "light" to describe Jesus. It's a feature of creation. In fact, light is the way we perceive the other elements of creation that astound us. Without light we could not see the mountain range or the cresting waves of the ocean.

What do you do when you see something awe-inspiring? You talk about it. Well, more likely, you first take a picture of it, then you tell someone about it, then you post the picture online so that others can see it and you can tell more stories about it. No one sees something astounding and keeps it to themselves. The things that capture our attention compel our conversations. This was true for John the Baptist. He saw the light of Jesus, and he spent his time testifying to that light. He wanted others to see the light. He wanted them to experience the glory He saw in Jesus. He didn't attempt to take attention away from the light. He understood His role was merely to stand back and point to the light so that others could see.

How are you living to testify to the light of Jesus Christ?

DAY 4

READ:

John 1:9-18

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 1:15

NOTES

Rank is a concept often relegated to the military. A person who has demonstrated unique competence and character is promoted through the ranks. The higher the rank, the greater the position of honor. Rank is not something that comes to a person passively. People have to earn the rank. The higher the rank, the more that is required to earn that status.

Rank necessitates submission. Others do not have the freedom to break rank and, for example, talk down to a superior. The person who has earned the rank gets to embody the privilege of that rank, and the subordinates are expected to honor the person of higher rank.

If there is anyone who has rank, it is Jesus. He is not merely the most excellent One, the glorious God of all creation. He has also earned His superior rank by entering our world and securing salvation for His people through His death and resurrection. John the Baptist understood that Jesus ranked higher than him because of His pre-existence, but he also knew the reason for which Jesus came—to be “the Lamb of God” who would take away the sins of the world. In the opening of John’s Gospel, it’s clear that John the Baptist willingly and humbly submitted himself under the superior rank of Jesus Christ.

What are some ways your life indicates that you believe Jesus ranks higher than you?

DAY 5

READ:

Hebrews 1:1-12

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Hebrews 1:3

NOTES

Children often are a reflection of their parents. Yes, our children might look like us and reflect our physical attributes, but likely they act like us as well. They reflect our personality and our method of interacting with the world. This can be good when they show the best of who we are. But it can also be a painful mirror for our sin. In them we see the poor ways that we deal with the world and the broken aspects of our identity.

God has no such problem. There are not good aspects and bad aspects of His being. He is a God who is good and who does good. All of the time. Everywhere. Exactly. So when God's Son comes to the world, He comes as the exact imprint of that nature. He is a man who is fully and perfectly good. He only and always does what is good. Jesus is the exact imprint of the perfect nature of God.

As such, Jesus helps us see God. Imagine all you had was the Old Testament and you were seeking to understand the character of God. How far could you get? You could see and understand so much about who God is, but the full impact of the glory of God is seen most clearly in Jesus. He is God in the flesh, and since this "enfleshment" allows us to see God in a personal way, we are better positioned to see and understand the glory of God by looking at Jesus.

What attributes of God does the revelation of Jesus help you understand better?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Can we wonder that the Lord Jesus, in his preaching, should continually draw lessons from the book of nature? When he spoke of the sheep, the fish, the ravens, the corn, the lilies, the fig tree, the vine—he spoke of things which He Himself had made."²

—J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

POINT 1: The Word of God in Creation (John 1:1-5)

KEY DOCTRINE #10: GOD IS ONE IN THREE PERSONS

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the _____ is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Philippians 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each Person is _____ from the others (Matthew 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect _____ within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.



What makes it hard for you to think about the Son of God existing as God when God created the world?

In Jesus is _____ and _____, and that being so, He came into the world to bring _____ to overcome the darkness.

POINT 2: The Word of God in Redemption (John 1:6-13)

Like John the Baptist, God calls all believers to be _____ to share the truth of Jesus Christ with others so they might _____ in Him.



Why might it be difficult to share the truth of Jesus Christ?

All who _____ in Jesus, who _____ and believe in Him, are brought out from the darkness and are able to see the glory of God as His children.



How does this passage say people are saved from sin and darkness?

POINT 3: The Word of God in Glory

(John 1:14-18)

The Son of God put on _____ to become the _____ for the sins of the world that we may see His _____.



What attributes of God are revealed through Jesus's incarnation for our salvation, for which we should praise and imitate Him?

Jesus brought _____ and _____ to the world, revealing the Father and revealing Himself as God.



Why might we find it difficult to speak and act in grace and truth?

MY RESPONSE

Because our spiritual blindness has been removed through Christ, we never cease sharing the gospel with grace and truth, praying that the eyes of others might be opened as well.

- **HEAD:** How does Jesus's incarnation reveal God's love for human beings?
- **HEART:** How will you respond to the glory of God seen in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ?
- **HANDS:** How will you be like John the Baptist in pointing someone to Christ this week by your words and deeds?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"God's own Son became the Son of Man that he might make the children of human beings into children of God. For when that which is exalted associates with that which is lowly, its own glory is diminished in no way. Instead, it elevates the other from its great lowliness, and this is what happened with Christ."³

—John Chrysostom
(347-407)