



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on December 31, 2023
by Pastor Ruthie Seiders

THE ALREADY AND NOT YET – Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 4:16-21**I. Introduction**

Welcome to New Years' Eve 2024, where we say farewell to the old and welcome with open hearts and minds the new thing that God is doing in our lives. In-between times can be unsettling or disruptive and we can lose our footing. Or we can see it as a bridge, a transition that connects one season to the next. So, last fall we went back to Genesis, to examine the beginnings of everything, humankind, the fall, the mission, relationships, and faith. And next week we will go to Mark's gospel to discuss the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

Questions: What does the Lord have in store for us in 2024?

Bottom Line: As 2023 comes to an end, the work of Christmas begins. As we slow down to perceive the new thing that God is doing in our lives, we remember that Jesus has commissioned us to love others and to spread the Good News, until he returns again.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:Isaiah 61:1-4

61 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—

to bestow on them a crown of beauty
 instead of ashes,
 the oil of joy
 instead of mourning,
 and a garment of praise
 instead of a spirit of despair.
 They will be called oaks of righteousness,
 a planting of the LORD
 for the display of his splendor.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins
 and restore the places long devastated;
 they will renew the ruined cities
 that have been devastated for generations.

Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
 because he has anointed me
 to proclaim good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
 and recovery of sight for the blind,
 to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. In Luke 4:16-21, after Jesus reads the scroll of Isaiah, he concludes by saying “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Imagine that you were there in the temple at that very moment. Isaiah spoke those words of prophecy to the people of Israel hundreds of years earlier as a call to bring good news that Israel’s years of imprisonment and exile were over. Now Jesus is proclaiming the prophecy is now fulfilled.
 - How do you think the hearers back then would have interpreted Jesus’ proclamation?
 - Now that we are living on the other side of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, how do you interpret Jesus’ proclamation?
2. Pastor Ruthie gives several examples of “the already, and not yet” which simply means that something momentous has already begun but has not yet been completed. She expounds that the kingdom of God is already here in the person of Jesus Christ, embodied by His church. However, the Evil One is still actively trying to thwart the efforts of Jesus and his church to keep peace, love, joy, and hope alive in the world.
 - What are some of the examples of “the already, and not yet” you are experiencing for yourself or are witnessing in others?
3. As we bid farewell to 2023 and prepare to welcome in the New Year, let’s slow down and listen for God’s voice. Think about the following questions and share with your group.
 - Where would you like to experience the transforming work of God in your life?
 - Where are you already growing, even though you admit you are not yet there?
 - If you want to grow closer in your relationship with God, what are some steps you could take in that direction?
 - If God is calling you to reach out to someone to show love, forgiveness, or mercy to, does any name come to mind?
4. Pastor Ruthie concluded the message with a poem by Howard Thurman, “The Work of Christmas Begins”:

“When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost, to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,

*to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart."*

Before closing in prayer, go around the room and give each member an opportunity to share how they can begin the work of Christmas at home, school, work, neighborhood, local community or church.

Take Home Message:

Once we have received the message that the kingdom of God is already here in the person of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit can begin to transform and renew our own lives. Even though we are not yet perfect and complete, from the love, forgiveness and mercy we have received from Christ, we can share the love of Christ with others and spread the good news.

Let's Pray

III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

Prayers for Preparation of the heart

- Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

Prayers for the Purposes of God

- Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

Prayers for the People of Grace

- Pray that Grace Chapel will to seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

Prayers for the Person God's calling

- Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.

- Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

Prayers for Discernment

- Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

IV. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

V. **Support for the Leader**

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points: