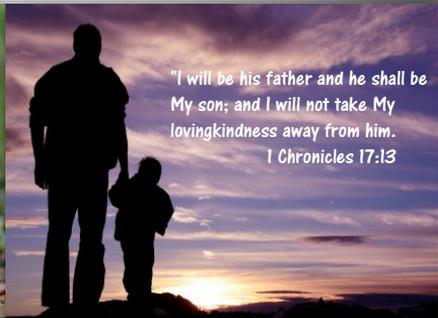


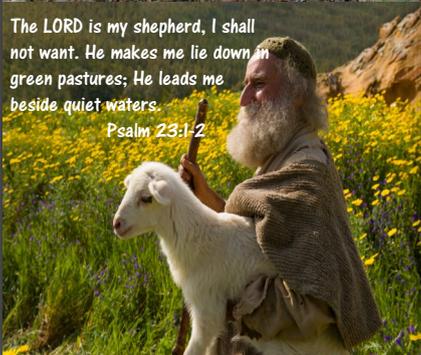
God Cares and He's in Control



Let me dwell in
Your tent
forever; Let
me take
refuge in the
shelter of Your
wings.
Psalm 61:4

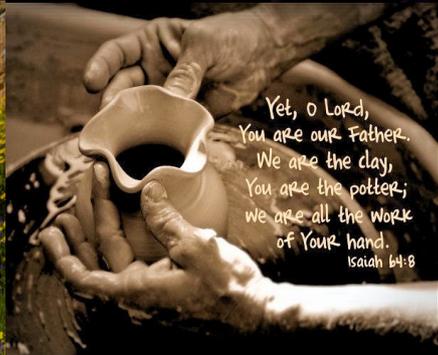


"I will be his father and he shall be
My son; and I will not take My
lovingkindness away from him."
1 Chronicles 17:13



The LORD is my shepherd, I shall
not want. He makes me lie down in
green pastures; He leads me
beside quiet waters.

Psalm 23:1-2



Yet, O Lord,
You are our Father.
We are the clay,
You are the potter;
we are all the work
of Your hand.
Isaiah 64:8

**At the crossroads of life,
God directs our steps.**

God Cares and He's in Control

God Cares & He's In Control Guidebook

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CONTENTS

Foreward

Session 1	God Cares for His Creatures	1
Session 2	God Cares for Our Suffering	5
Session 3	God Cares for His People	9
Session 4	Christ Cares	13
Session 5	God Cares by Grace Alone	17
Session 6	God Cares about Our Lives	21
Session 7	God Cares for His Kingdom	25

FOREWARD

This series is designed to inform and assure us of God's care and control over all of His Creation. God makes His loving concern for the world clear in His message to us, the Bible. Throughout the ages, many men have tried unsuccessfully to destroy God's Word. Yet, the Bible is the most printed and read book of all time! The miraculous preservation and propagation of the Bible is just one of many examples of how *God cares and is in control*. Reading and understanding the Bible — keeping in mind that God is speaking not just about “those people,” but about *all of us* — has changed national histories and individual lives. Because judgement, death, and suffering are common themes in the Bible, some avoid it in the belief that “ignorance is bliss.” Yet, ignorance is the *root* of the problem and *why* so many of us suffer. God tells us that all of Creation was cursed as a consequence of Man *ignoring* Him. *Now* is the time to turn and start paying attention to Him! As one who has compassion on us as a shepherd does for his sheep, God calls us to follow Him. He calls us to read His Word, recognize Him as King, and joyfully receive Him as Savior *and* Friend!

This is the central message of the following study: *yes, there is suffering, but we have hope because God has shown us His great care through Christ, and He is in control*. My prayer is that everyone will see their desperate need to be rescued from God's judgement and reconciled to Him through the Way, that is Christ Jesus.

- Elder Allen Ellis

1

God Cares for His Creatures

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ How BIG is your God?

SUMMARY

In this session, we will explore some basic truths about who God is. God is greater than anything else we have ever known. In fact, He is beyond everything that we know. And yet, He is nearer to us than anything else. Through Christ, He created and cares for all things.

LISTEN

“O Lord my God, You are very great...” - Psalm 104:1b

- One word to describe God is “beyond.” God is *beyond* time and space. God is *beyond* finite minds.
- Nobody completely understands God.
- Another word to describe God is “near.”
- God has a plan .
- God has a purpose.
- God acts in our lives.

Notes

DISCUSS

- What do you think of the professor's statement quoted at the beginning of the message? *"If you don't believe that God ordained all things, you are basically an **atheist**."*
- Why does it matter how big your God is?
- Do people have a hard time believing that *"God unchangeably ordained whatever comes to pass?"* Why or why not?
- What beliefs and/or actions follow from the belief that God is *transcendent*?
- What beliefs and/or actions follow from the belief that God is *immanent*?
- Describe a situation in which you were moved to heartfelt praise of God. Then, describe a situation in which you were discouraged about life. How were those situations related to your view of God?
- What did you learn tonight that equips you to help others develop a bigger view of God, and to grow their praise to Him?

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Ephesians 1:3-14
- ◆ Romans 11:33-36
- ◆ Genesis 1 & 2
- ◆ Psalm 104
- ◆ Psalm 145

How do each of these passages describe God's *transcendence* and/or *immanence*? How is God over and beyond His Creation (including us)? How is He near to us?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

2

God Cares for Our Suffering

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ How do you handle suffering?

SUMMARY

In this session, we will explore one biblical figure's experience of suffering. Through his situation, we will consider what the Bible has to say about suffering generally, and about our suffering in particular. We will also look at Christ's suffering on our behalf.

LISTEN

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.” - Job 1:21b

- God delivers His people from bondage, through the wilderness, and into a state of rest in both Old and New Testaments.
- Faithful obedience, good works, and love mark this wilderness period.
- The only suffering that we experience is that which God permits.
- The bad things that happen to us are not necessarily connected to our sins.
- A proper response to suffering is worship.
- It is appropriate to express pain, and to confess our struggle to hold on to hope.
- God is wiser than us, and His ways are higher than our ways.

Notes

DISCUSS

- God calls His creation “very good” in Genesis 1:31. Read Romans 8:22-23. Why does Creation now *groan*?
- What does the Gospel of Jesus Christ say about suffering?
- Why is there still a degree of mystery behind our suffering?
- Based upon Job’s experience, what do we know about *Satan’s* agenda in our sufferings? What is *God* doing in our difficulties?
- How does Romans 8:28 relate to suffering?
- What are some bad responses to suffering? What are some good responses to suffering?
- What does it mean to be in a “wilderness period” as Christians? How does Christ’s promised return give us hope?

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Job 1
- ◆ Romans 11:33-36
- ◆ Job 13:15, 19:25
- ◆ Romans 8:18-28
- ◆ Hebrews 3:7-11 (Psalm 95)
- ◆ 1 Peter 2:21-25

How do each of these passages shed light on the cause(s) and purpose(s) of our suffering? Where is hope found in these passages?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

3

God Cares for His People

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ How do you show care for others?

SUMMARY

In this session, we will consider how God demonstrates care for His people. We will begin at the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and we will end at the Cross, God's most dramatic deliverance of His people.

LISTEN

“See the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today.” - Exodus 14:13b

- God is determined to sovereignly display His glory to the world.
- God is glorified when He judges the unjust, and when He saves His own.
- God single-handedly fights on behalf of His chosen people.
- God is present to save His people.

Notes

DISCUSS

- In light of tonight's message, what is the Bible a record of?
- What are the two ways God displays His glory?
- Why did God harden the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, causing them to pursue the Israelites after the latter had already left Egypt?
- In what ways has God worked in history to save His people by His presence?
- How much did the Israelites contribute to God's deliverance of them from slavery and Egypt in the Exodus event? How much do we contribute to God's deliverance of us in the "Second Exodus" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ today?
- What did Jesus discuss with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration? *See Luke 9:31 for help.*
- How does the "first" Exodus point forward to the "Second Exodus" that Jesus Christ accomplished?

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Exodus 14
- ◆ Romans 6:1-11; 9:17-19
- ◆ 2 Corinthians 1:9; 5:14-21; 12:9-10
- ◆ Colossians 1:27
- ◆ Mark 10:38
- ◆ Revelation 15:3

How do each of these passages encourage us to worship God? What are some ways to describe God as He relates to His people (e.g., Father, Shepherd,) in these passages?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

4

Christ Cares

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ What is the mark of a true friend?

SUMMARY

In this session, we will build upon the previous weeks' themes of God's care and control by considering the work of Christ. We will hear about what Christ has done, and consider what our response ought to be.

LISTEN

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” - John 15:13

- Christ’s care for us is dramatically displayed in His death for our sins.
- Christ died to showcase the Father’s love for us.
- Christ came to lead us into the “promised rest” of relationship with God.
- God is present to save His people.

Notes

DISCUSS

- What does Christ's death on the cross tell us about the seriousness of our sin?

- In His death, Christ demonstrated the Father's love for sinners. What does that mean to you?

- What do you trust? In what do you find hope for salvation, in light of the sin that so severely separates you from God?

- Jesus invites us to follow Him and *rest*. What does He mean by *rest*? Rest from what? Are you restless? Or, have you accepted Christ's offer to rest?

- Why is it sometimes (frequently) difficult to accept Christ's offer of rest for our souls?

- What would remove those difficulties/obstacles?

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Galatians 1:3-4
- ◆ 1 Peter 2:24
- ◆ Romans 6:23
- ◆ John 3:16
- ◆ 1 Timothy 2:3-6
- ◆ John 14:6
- ◆ Matthew 11:28-30

What do these passages tell us about our sin? What do they tell us about Jesus Christ? How do we “come to the Father?” What does this look like, according to Jesus?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

5

God Cares by Grace Alone

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ What is grace?

SUMMARY

In this session, we will take a closer look at the conditions that make it impossible for us to be with God without Him taking the first step toward us. We will consider the depth of Man's sinfulness and the saving power of God's grace in and through Jesus Christ.

LISTEN

“By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” - Ephesians 2:8

- The world’s view of mankind is radically different than God’s view. God rightly recognizes that we are born into spiritual brokenness.
- God does not wait for us to choose Him. He chooses to save us.
- Christ came, lived, died, and rose again to save God’s chosen people *completely*.
- The Holy Spirit of God enlightens God’s chosen people’s minds and renews their wills so that they would hear and respond to God’s call.
- God does not give up those whom He has claimed as His own.

Notes

DISCUSS

- How does tonight's message show God to be in control?
- Which of the five points on the last page give you the most comfort? Why?
- Which of the five points on the last page give you the most difficulty? Why?
- One way to summarize tonight's message is to say, *God Saves Sinners*. What are some other ways to summarize ?
- If God is not in control of salvation, then what is the alternative? If salvation does not depend upon God, what (or who) is the deciding factor?
- As you consider the last question, remember this obvious truth: *God is God, and I am not.*

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Man's Spiritual Brokenness
 - ◇ Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8; 2 Corinthians 3:5
- ◆ God's Choice to Save
 - ◇ Ephesians 1:4-5; Romans 9:11-16; James 2:5
- ◆ Jesus Saves God's Chosen People Completely
 - ◇ John 6:35-40
- ◆ The Holy Spirit Brings In God's People
 - ◇ John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23, John 6:44, 65
- ◆ God Preserves His People in Secure Faith
 - ◇ Isaiah 43:1-3; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:35-39

As you consider these passages and the points that they illustrate, what is your immediate response? How do these passages show not only God's *control*, but God's *loving care* for His people?

Imagine that you're at a Youth sports event and you hear an enthusiastic father shouting loudly in support of his son. He's loud, and he isn't getting any quieter. Even if *you* find him to be a bit over-the-top, what might the son feel, knowing that his father is cheering him on so mightily?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

6

God Cares about Our Lives

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ How can parents show love to their kids?

SUMMARY

*In this session, we will consider the power of prayer according to God's will, as displayed in one woman's life. God not only commands us to pray, but Christ tells us **how** to pray effectively. He cares about the lives of his people too much to leave them without good instruction.*

LISTEN

“Lord, teach us to pray... - Luke 11:1b

- Hannah’s bitter situation led her to the Lord in prayer.
- Hannah’s broken heart connected her to the Lord.
- Her desire was for God to be glorified, and for His kingdom to be advanced.
- God answered Hannah’s prayer and granted her request, making her glad.
- God answers our prayers when we pray according to his will.

Notes

DISCUSS

- Do you remember any sorrowful situation in your life which brought you closer to God?
- Does prayer have any impact?
- In 1 Samuel chapter 1, Scripture says that the Lord had closed Hannah's womb. But Hannah *kept on* praying, and God answered her prayer! Does God change His mind when we pray?
- Read the Lord's Prayer (see Matthew 6:9-13). Why does Jesus tell His disciples to address God as "Our Father?"
- What does it mean to ask God to "give us this day our daily bread?" What does this mean to you?
- What makes prayer effective?
- God is sovereign and cares for our lives. Then, why should we pray?

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Genesis 3:8
- ◆ 1 Samuel 2:1-10
- ◆ Matthew 6:9-13
- ◆ Luke 11:1-13
- ◆ Psalm 4

What does Genesis 3:8 tell us about how people respond to God's presence? Prayer is frequently referred to as "entering into the presence of God." Why might people resist prayer?

Hannah prayed again *after* God answered her initial request. Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10, and reflect upon what she prayed in response to God's blessing.

Why is it important that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray? In His parable in Luke 11, what attitude does Jesus encourage His disciples to take when they pray? What about King David's attitude in Psalm 4?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

7

God Cares for His Kingdom

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

⇒ What do kingdoms look like?

SUMMARY

In this session, we will consider Christ's mission as our returning King. We will explore how He establishes, rules, and populates the Kingdom of God by proclaiming the eternal Gospel of God in the Holy Spirit's power.

LISTEN

“The kingdom of God is at hand!” - Mark 1:15b

- Christ came as a re-
turning king claiming
(and renewing) that
which was already
His.

- Christ’s kingdom is
spiritual, everlasting,
and founded upon
the eternal Word of
God.

- Christ as our King is...
 - Redeemer
 - Brother
 - Shepherd

- Christ fills the king-
dom with joy-filled
sons and daughters
of God serving their
Father with worship
in Spirit and Truth.

Notes

DISCUSS

- What is God's Kingdom? Who is in it? What does it look like?
- Where in the Bible are we given a picture of God's Kingdom?
- Read Mark 1:14-28. How does the concept of "the Kingdom" shape Jesus's ministry?
- Read Acts 16:29-34. What did Paul and Silas tell the jailer to do in order "to be saved?" What did Kingdom enrollment look like for the jailer and his household?
- Read Ephesians 2:8-10. What (or Who) ultimately makes Kingdom growth happen?
- What barriers exist for you to "believe in the Lord Jesus" if you do not already? If you do believe already, how do you live as a member of God's Kingdom?

FOLLOW UP

Key Readings

- ◆ Mark 1:14-15
- ◆ Isaiah 40:3-11
- ◆ Matthew 4:23
- ◆ Galatians 4:4-6
- ◆ Ezekiel 34:11-16
- ◆ John 10:11-18
- ◆ Psalm 100; Psalm 23
- ◆ Ephesians 2:8-10

What do these passages tell us about Jesus Christ's relationship to the Kingdom of God? What is our place in the Kingdom, and in relation to Christ?

What questions come to mind as you consider these passages?

**Crossroads Community Church exists to
meet people at the crossroads of life
with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to
help one another along the road of
spiritual growth.**

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