

HOW TO USE **GOD'S BIG PICTURE**

9 UNITS

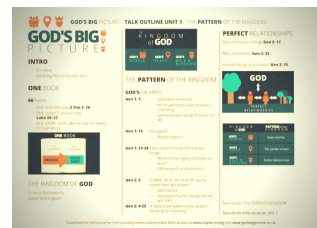
VIDEO



10 minute video with Vaughan Roberts each covering a stage in the Bible's story



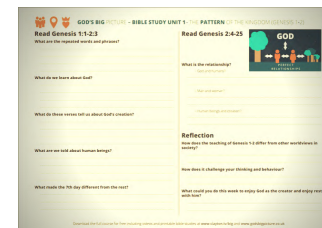
TALK OUTLINE



For scribbling extra notes as you watch Vaughan

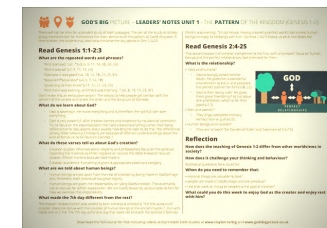
3 PRINTABLES

BIBLE STUDY



Hour long study on a Bible passage related to Vaughan's video

LEADERS' NOTES



Answers and helpful comments about the Bible study questions

(Each printable is 1 sheet of A4 and will print happily as colour or black and white)

WHAT IS THE GOD'S BIG PICTURE COURSE?

It's a totally free Bible overview course tracing the story of the whole Bible, taught by Vaughan Roberts. Each of the nine units takes 1- 1 1/2 hours to do.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Anyone who wants to see more deeply how the whole Bible fits together and understand each passage better in the light of the whole book.

HOW COULD I USE IT?

- In a mid-week group at church, such as a home group
- As an individual watching online
- In a one to one Bible study with a new Christian or someone investigating Christianity
- As an intensive training course on a weekend away

HOW TO DOWNLOAD (for the non techy)

- You can watch all the videos online at www.clayton.tv/big but if you want to play them offline (e.g. in a group setting) download by clicking on the red link under the video. It could take 30 minutes to download them all (at average download speed, 10Mbps).
- Right click to extract the zipped files (or double click on a Mac). There are 10 video files (9 units and an intro).
- Simply double click to play the video files (using the video player on your computer - or install a player e.g. VLC player from www.videolan.org).
- If you want to watch in a group - connect your computer to a TV or projector using an HDMI cable.
- All the printables download as PDF files in the same way.



GOD'S BIG PICTURE – LEADERS' NOTES UNIT 1 - THE **PATTERN** OF THE KINGDOM (GENESIS 1-2)

There will not be time for a detailed study of both passages. The aim of the study is to help group members see for themselves the main elements of the pattern of God's Kingdom. If time is short, the leaders may wish to summarise the key points in Gen 2:4-25.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3

What are the repeated words and phrases?

- "And God said, 'Let...'" (v3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26)
- "And it was so" (v7, 9, 11, 15, 24)
- "God saw it was good" (v4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)
- "separate"/"separated" (v4, 6, 7, 14, 18)
- "according to their kinds" (v11, 12, 21, 24, 25)
- "And there was evening, and there was morning..." (v5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31)

Don't make this an exhaustive search. The idea is to help people get familiar with the content of the verses and to see the order and the structure of Genesis.

What do we learn about God?

- God is sovereign. He made everything and is therefore the rightful ruler over everything.
- God is very powerful: all of creation comes into existence by his word of command. Try to focus on the essential point that God created everything rather than being deflected onto discussions about exactly how long he took to do this. The differences among Bible believing Christians are because of different understandings about the kind of literature to be found in Genesis 1.

What do these verses tell us about God's creation?

- Creation is good. Whereas some religions and philosophies focus on the spiritual, regarding the material as either negative or neutral, the Bible knows of no such division. Matter matters because God made it.
- Creation is ordered. Everything is given its appropriate place and category.

What are we told about human beings?

- Human beings are set apart from the rest of creation by being made in God's image and, therefore, each individual has great dignity.
- Human beings are given the responsibility of ruling God's creation. This is certainly not an excuse for selfish exploitation. We are God's stewards, accountable to him for how we exercise this responsibility.

What made the 7th day different from the rest?

The chapter division (which was added by later editors) is unhelpful. The first account of creation does not climax with the creation of human beings at the end of chapter 1, but with God's rest in 2:1-3. The 7th day is the one day that does not end with the standard formula

('And it was evening...') It continues. Having created a perfect world God invites human beings to enjoy its blessings with him. Genesis 2:4-25 shows us what that looks like.

Read Genesis 2:4-25

This second account of creation complements the first, with a narrower focus on human beings and the perfect relationships God intended for them.

What is the relationship?

- God and humans?
 - God is lovingly concerned for Adam. He gives him a wonderful environment to live in and provides the perfect partner for him (v18, 22).
 - God is their loving ruler. He gives them great freedom (v16), but issues one prohibition, which is for their good (v17).
- Man and woman?
 - They enjoy complete intimacy without fear or guilt (v25)
- Human beings and creation?
 - They are to 'work' the 'Garden of Eden' and 'take care of it' (v15)



Reflection

How does the teaching of Genesis 1-2 differ from other worldviews in society?

How does it challenge your thinking and behaviour?

Additional questions here could be:

When do you need to remember that:

- material things are valuable to God?
- people are made in God's image and are precious?
- rest (not work or things or people) is the goal of creation?

What could you do this week to enjoy God as the creator and enjoy rest with him?



Read Genesis 3

The serpent

How do we see Satan using the same tactics today?

The talk has pointed out that Satan causes us to doubt the clarity, truth and fairness of God's word. Check that people have understood this and then focus on application. Make it specific and concrete by discussing one or two specific temptations. E.g. How might Satan try to tempt you to lie or to gossip.

The sin

What did Adam and Eve do wrong?

They are disobeying God's clear command and deciding that they will decide the standards by which they will live, rather than submitting to him. It is an act of fundamental rebellion. This has been the nature of sin ever since.

The consequences

The talk has already shown how sin damages the perfect relationships of the Perfect kingdom. Briefly get the group to repeat those points, referring to the verses in Genesis 3, while also mentioning other examples. Then ask them to describe the continuing impact of sin today.

How do we see sin damaging relationships in Genesis 3 and today between:

- Men and women
 - They cover themselves (v7). The complete openness and intimacy of 2:25 has gone. • Adam blames Eve (v12)
 - V16b seems to describe a power struggle. 'Desire', is used in 4:7 to speak of sins 'desire' to master Cain. It seems it refers in 3:16 to Eve's desire to dominate Adam, but he resists and seeks to 'rule' her.

- Human beings and creation
 - "cursed is the ground because of you" (v17). Works is a good part of God's creation (see 1:28; 2:15), but it will always involve frustration in a fallen world.
 -

- Human beings and God
 - They are ashamed and hide from God (v8-10)
 - They are banished from God and therefore from eternal life.

'cherubim' (v24) are winged lions with human heads. They appear elsewhere in the Bible as the guardians of holy places.

What signs of hope can be seen in this chapter?

- Despite their sin, God comes looking for Adam and Eve (v8-9)
- God promises that in the future a saviour will come who will crush Satan (v15)
- God shows his continued love for Adam and Eve by providing clothes for them (v21).

How can we be encouraged by this hope?

Verse 15 is a gospel promise that points to Christ. Paul teaches that he will finally crush Satan at his second coming (Rom 16:20), but he has already achieved the decisive victory on the cross (Col 2:15.)



Read Genesis 17:1-8

What is a covenant? (v2, 3, 7)

Covenant is a central theme in the Bible so it is important to ensure that everyone has understood the concept. A covenant is a solemn commitment, like a contract. God commits himself to his people by making a binding promise (e.g. Gen 9:9-11).

God confirms his covenant by repeating his promises.

List them under these headings:

- People
 - Abraham's descendants will be God's very own people (v6b, 8b).
- Land
 - v8
- Blessing
 - God will make Abraham 'fruitful'. He will not just be the Father of Israel, but of many nations

Genesis 15:6 describes Abraham's response to God's promises

Put it in your own words

Abraham trusted God's promises and, as a result, he was regarded as righteous before God. This righteousness (state of being in the right with God) was not something he earned by his own goodness, but rather as a gift of God through faith.

You could get everyone to look at Rom 4:1-5, where Paul explains Gen 15:6.

N.B. 17:1-2 needs to be read in the light of what has gone before. God has already made the promise in chapter 12, so it clearly does come in response to Abraham's obedience. God's promise is prompted by his grace alone and is to be received with faith. This faith will then be expressed in a life which seeks to be faithful to God.

How is that a model for us (see Gal 3:6-9)?

It is striking that Paul refers to God's word to Abraham in Gen 12 as 'the gospel' Those promises are finally fulfilled in Christ. God's way of salvation has always been the same: justification by faith in the gospel. Abraham's children are all those, whether Jew or Gentile, who are right with God by faith.

What would have been hard for Abraham?

He was called to make costly sacrifice of leaving his homeland and his wider family (Gen 12:1) to go to a strange place, Canaan, simply on the basis of a promise from God. And it would have been very hard to believe that he, aged 99 (17:1) and Sarah, aged 90 (17:17) would have a child.

When is it hard for us to believe God's gospel promises?

The answers will obviously vary from person to person. We too are called to live by faith as we journey to our ultimate homeland, God's new creation.

Why is it easier for us than Abraham?

We can look back on the wonderful history of God's faithfulness to his covenant promises throughout the Old Testament, culminating in the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.



Read Exodus 19: 4-6

What has God already done for Israel?

They are already God's covenant people, entirely by God's grace. In fulfilment of his covenant promises to Abraham (Ex 2:24-25) God has acted to redeem them from slavery to Egypt so they can belong exclusively to him (v4).

What role does God want the Israelites to play in the world?

Although all the nations belong to God, he sets Israel apart for a special purpose. They are to enjoy a unique relationship with God and, as his priests, to represent him to the rest of the world (v5-6).

How does this relate to his promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?

The blessing God promised to Abraham's descendants was never to be for their sake alone. They would glorify God by being a light to the nations, so that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3).

What must the Israelites do to fulfil the role?

The promises of v5-6 are conditional: "if you obey me fully and keep my covenant". Their status as God's covenant people is by grace alone, but their enjoyment of the blessings of that status depend on their response. "Status comes by the acts of God; enjoyment by the responsive commitment of obedience. Obedience is not our part in a two-sided bargain, but our grateful response to what the Lord has unilaterally decided and done" (Alec Motyer: BST on Exodus – IVP 2005 p. 200)

Read Exodus 20:1-17

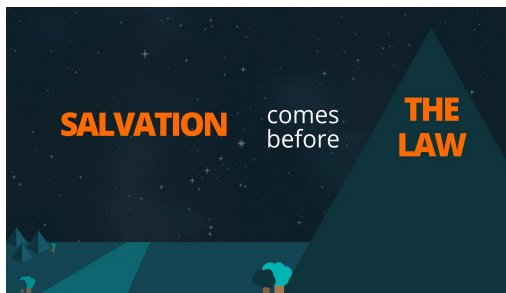
Group the commandments into different categories

This is designed to get everyone looking carefully at the commandments, so they are familiar with them. They are usually divided into two: our responsibility to God (Commandments 1-4) and to our neighbours (5-10). Jesus summarized them in this way (Mk 12:29-31).

Why do they begin as they do (v1-3)?

These verses establish some important principles about the commandments:

- Their source (v1). They are revealed by God. Moral law is not subjective, but is rather established by the eternal character of the true God, who is holy.



- Their context (v2). As has already been stated in 19:4, the giving of the law comes after the redemption of God's people.
- Their foundation (v3). If all of God's laws are contained within the principles expressed in the Ten Commandments, then all of the 10 principles are captured within the first commandment. As the only God, the only creator and the only redeemer, the Lord rightly has an exclusive claim to worship and obedience.

How does God's law reveal:

- Our sin?
 - In revealing God's perfect standards, the law reveals how far we fall short. Even if we have obeyed the letter of a law, we have certainly disobeyed its spirit and intent (see Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the mount: Mt 5:21-22, 27-28). Paul writes: "... through the law we become conscious of our sin" (Rom 3:20).
- Our Saviour
 - "The law was our guardian until Christ came" (Gal 3:24). Its role was to convict us of our sin and so help us to see our need of the saviour. Although he always obeyed the law, Christ faced the punishment for law-breaking in the place of others: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal 3:13).
- God's standards
 - God's moral standards never change, so the law continues to reveal how he wants us to live. Both Jesus (Mt 5:17-20) and Paul (Rom 13:9-10) command Christians to follow its demands.

Choose one or two commandments you find especially challenging

What will obedience look like in practice?

Try to ensure the applications are as concrete as possible, and that they deal with the heart, not just external actions.

How does the gospel of Christ help us do this?

- Christ's gracious love in dying for us, so we can be forgiven and accepted as God's people is a great motivation for grateful, costly obedience (Rom 12:1).
- In fulfilment of God's promise to Jeremiah, God's law is written on our heart by the Holy Spirit (Jer 31:33). Obedience no longer involves following laws on tablets of stone but "keeping in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25), who lives within us.



What are the different stages in the narrative?

The passage could be broken up in a number of different ways. The point of the question is not to establish one right answer, but rather to help people get used to the story.

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17

v1-3 David plans to build a house for God (with Nathan's approval)

v4-17 God speaks to David through Nathan

v5-7	1st message:	"I have never asked for a house before."
v8-11a	2nd message:	"Having established you as king, I will bless Israel greatly through you."
v11b-16	3rd message:	"I will establish an eternal house/dynasty for you thorough your offspring."

How will God act in fulfilment of his promises to Abraham in Genesis 12?

These verses refer to the three covenant promises made to Abraham:

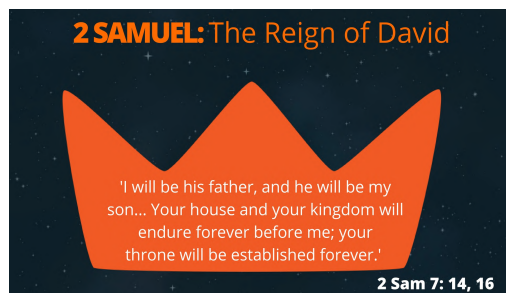
- People (v9b). God promised Abraham: "I will make your name great" (Gen 12:3). Now these same words are spoken to David. Israel's fortunes are identified with the King's. They (and the other nations) are blessed as God blesses him.
- Land (v10a). The people's hold on the land of Canaan (promised to them in Gen 12:7).
- Blessing (v10b-11a). See Gen 12:2. The blessing of 'rest' is an echo of the perfect harmony Adam and Eve enjoyed when they shared in the perfection of God's creation in the Garden of Eden.

What does God promise concerning the coming king (v11b-16)?

David offers to build a bricks and mortar house for God, but God graciously turns that on its head and promises to build a flesh and blood house (dynasty/lineage) for David.

- The future king:

- A descendant of David (v12)
- His kingdom will be established by God (v12)
- He will build a house for God (v13)
- He will reign for ever (v13, 15-16)



- A son of God (v14)
- Punished when he does wrong (v14b). This stands out, as it implies a normal sinful human being, whereas others suggest someone much greater. Like many Old Testament prophecies, 2 Sam 7 is fulfilled at more than one level. It is partially fulfilled by David's Son, Solomon, who builds the temple, but then falls into terrible sin (see 1 Kings 11). It is only finally fulfilled through Jesus. This can be likened to climbing a mountain. From the bottom of the mountain, the peak closest to you looks like the top, but when you get there there's another taller peak ahead. So from the vantage point of 2 Sam 7, it looks like Solomon is the fulfilment of God's promise, but there's another greater one to come.

How does Jesus fulfil these promises?

If time is short divide the group up, split the verses between them, and then get them to report back. Or just focus on one or two passages.

Matthew 1:1

Jesus is the 'son of David'

Mark 12:35-37

Jesus is certainly not denying that the messiah is the son of David. He is, rather, trying to get his hearers to see that he is greater than great king David, who call him his 'Lord' in Psalm 110:1. This points to his divinity.

John 2:18-22

Jesus claims that he is the fulfilment of the temple that Solomon built. He is God's dwelling place, so we must come to him if we are to meet with God.

Romans 1:1-4

Jesus Christ is both a descendant of David (2 Sam 7:12; Rom 1:3) and the Son of God (2 Sam 7:14; Rom 1:4). While it is true that Christ has always been God's son, enjoying a unique relationship with his heavenly Father (e.g. Jn 1:18), Paul is referring here to the time at the resurrection, when his reign as Messiah was inaugurated and announced.

How should we respond to king Jesus?

- With worship and adoration. The magi are a model for us (Mt 2:11).
- With humble dependence. We only receive the blessings of salvation through him.
- With gratitude. Although he is God's king, he was willing to become a servant to save us (Mk 15:26)



Read Hosea 1-3

Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the latter half of the eighth century B.C., in the period leading up to its destruction by the Assyrians in 722 (1:1).

What are the different stages in the relationship between Hosea and Gomer?

- The marriage
 - God commands Hosea to marry 'a promiscuous woman' (1:2). She is a very surprising wife for a holy man of God.
- The children (1:36-39)
 - We are explicitly told that the first child is Hosea's (v3b), but it is likely that the next two are not (see 2:4).
- The restoration (3:1-3)
 - We are not told that the details, but it is clear that Gomer is with another man. She seems to be owned by him as a slave, or bond-servant. At God's command, Hosea buys her back and takes her once more to his home, although they do not yet return to full intimacy.

What does God want the Israelites to learn about their sin from Hosea's marriage?

Israel's sin is not a breach of a set of impersonal rules, but a terrible betrayal of God. God's covenant relationship with Israel is often likened to a marriage. The holy God 'marries' a sinful people, who are unfaithful to him (1:2), by turning to other gods.

What do the children's names teach them about God's judgement?

- 'Jezreel' (1:4) was the site of a massacre (2 Ki 10:1-8). This is like calling a son 'Somme' or 'Hiroshima'. God will inflict terrible military defeat on Israel.
- The name 'Lo-Ruhamah/Not loved' (1:6) speaks of the fact that God will no longer relate to his people with love and mercy, as before.
- 'Lo-Ammi/Not my people' (1:8) describes God's judgement in the most serious terms possible. God often spoke of his covenant with Israel by saying, 'They shall be my people and I will be their God' (e.g. Gen 17:7-8; Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12). But now, because of their sin, he will break his covenant and no longer treat them as his people. God's judgement is a fulfilment of this warning through Moses that the Israelites would lose his blessings if they did not obey him (e.g. Dt 28:15ff).

What hope is there? (look for echoes of the promises to Abraham and David)

Although God's word through Moses makes it clear that there is a conditional element to his promises, there is also an unconditional element to them. His promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and David (2 Sam 7:11-16) will be fulfilled, despite Israel's sin. The judgement Hosea prophesies in 1:4-9 will be discipline, but not divorce.

- God will fulfil his promise to Abraham to make his descendants into a great people (Gen 12:2; 22:17; Hos 1:10).
- God will unite his divided people under one leader (1:11). Hosea 3:5 speaks of 'David their king', a reference to the Christ, the son of David (2 Sam 7:12), who will bring salvation to God's people.



What do we learn about God from this passage?

- He is gracious in choosing sinful people to be his bride
- He is holy and just in punishing sin
- He is faithful to his promises. Hosea's purchase of his wife foreshadows God's amazing grace in redeeming his people by the death of his son (1 Peter 1:18-19)
-

What impact should these chapters have on our lives?

The parallels between Hosea's marriage and God's relationship with his people help to reveal the awfulness of our sin and the wonder of God's love. The result should be deep repentance and a whole hearted determination to be faithful to God.



Read Luke 1:67-75

What do these verses imply about the situation before Christ came?

The reference to 'redemption' in v68 implies God's people were previously enslaved. They were under the oppression of 'enemies' (v71-74). These enemies are not defined. We are surely meant to understand that they refer in general terms to any anti-God power, which speaks to prevent people from knowing and serving him. This includes both spiritual forces (the Devil and his allies) and worldly opponents (e.g. godless authority or worldly society).

What do we learn about salvation?

- It is entirely God's work through Christ. He is the 'horn of salvation' (v69). The horn is a symbol of great strength and refers here to the mighty king of David's line, prophesied in 2 Sam 7:11-16.
- It is the fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament.
 - v70. A number of prophets refer to the coming Davidic King of 2 Sam 7 (e.g. Isaiah 9:7; Jer 33:15; Amos 9:11)
 - v72-73. Genesis 12:1-3
- God will redeem his people (v68) and then rescue them from their enemies (v71, 74). Christ achieved the decisive victory against sin, death and Satan through his death and resurrection. Salvation will only be completed at his second coming, when all his enemies, whether spiritual or worldly, will be fully and finally defeated.

How should God's people respond to salvation?

We should, like Zechariah, be full of praise (v67). Take time to dwell on this point. What holds us back from praising as we should?

We are saved to serve (v74-75).

- Again ensure the application is earthed. What will it look like in practice for us to serve God "without fear", to live "in holiness and righteousness" and to do so "all our days"? What gets in the way? How will an appreciation of what God has done for us in Christ help?

Read Luke 1:76-79

What more do we learn about salvation?

- John the Baptist is the messenger prophesied in Malachi 3:1 (v76). He will herald the coming of "the Lord", who brings salvation and prepares people for him.
- John will proclaim the forgiveness of sins, which Christ will offer (v77). No-one deserves salvation, but Jesus will make it possible, by taking the penalty for sin himself, so he can offer forgiveness as a gift.
- With the coming of Christ the dawn of salvation appears. He brings light into the darkness of the fallen world, which has been under the grip of sin and death (see Isaiah 9:2). Simeon praises God that this light is not just for Jews, but for Gentiles too (Luke 2:29-32). This is a fulfilment of Isaiah 49:6.

What are the implications for our lives?

- Now that Christ has come, we should live in his light and not in darkness. And we should walk on "the path of peace" (v79), in harmony with God.
- What will that look like in practice?
- What will help us live in this way?



GOD'S BIG PICTURE – LEADERS' NOTES UNIT 8 - THE PROCLAIMED KINGDOM (2 COR 4)

In 2 Corinthians Paul defends his apostolic ministry against criticism from opponents who dismiss it as weak and unimpressive. In Chapter 3 he has contrasted his new covenant ministry of preaching the gospel, which leads to righteousness and life, with the ministry of the old covenant, focussed on the law, which leads to condemnation and death. Although we are not apostles, all Christians have the privilege and responsibility of being involved in the ministry of evangelism, so these are valuable lessons for us.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

When are we tempted to use 'shameful ways' or 'distort the word of God' in evangelism?

The backdrop to the whole passage is the assumption that evangelism is difficult and will often be met with a discouraging response. It will therefore be tempting to 'lose heart' (v1; the same phrase used in v16) and, as a result stop being faithful to God. This may be expressed, not in giving up on evangelism altogether, but by doing it in improper ways (e.g. relying on technique and manipulation or adapting the gospel so that people receive a message they want to hear). This was the approach of Paul's opponents.

What can we learn from Paul's example?

- v2b: He resolved to 'set forth the truth plainly'. He knew that his responsibility was simply to be a fruitful messenger of the gospel God had entrusted to him.
- v5: He doesn't draw attention to himself. He doesn't want to be a distraction in any way. His role as a servant of Christ is to point people to him.

What response should we expect?

- v4: Many will not recognise the wonder of the gospel because Satan ('the god of the God of this age') has blinded them.
- v6: The God who created the universe with a word of command can use the same mighty power to bring light into spiritual darkness. He has already done this many times (for Paul on the Damascus Road and for us at our conversion) and we can expect him to do the same for others as we proclaim the gospel.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

Explain verse 7 in your own words

Jars of clay were inexpensive, disposable utensils, like plastic cups today. God has deliberately entrusted his precious gospel to weak, unimpressive people, so it's obvious that any fruit from their evangelism is because of God's power, not theirs.

To what extent do vs 8-12 reflect your experience of evangelism?

These verses illustrate the principle Paul has stated in verse 7. Paul really did face frequent exposure to the risk of death. Taking up our crosses and following Christ may not mean that for us, but at times it will certainly involve hardship, discouragement and ridicule.

Through this experience of 'death', God is at work to bring Christ's life to us (v11b), as we are conformed into his likeness, and also through us to others (v12), as they also come to know Christ.



Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

What do these verses tell us about what we can expect now, in this present age?

Refer to the diagram and check that everyone understands it. We live in 'the last days', in between the first and second comings of Christ. The kingdom of God is both 'now' (a present reality that can be entered today) and 'not yet' (it will only fully come at Christ's return). "Outwardly we are wasting away" (v16, because our bodies still experience weakness and illness. But as those who have been joined to Christ, we should expect inward 'renewal' as, by the spirit, we grow in the likeness of Christ (see 3:18)

What will we receive in the age to come?

We will be raised bodily, along with all God's people (v14) and experience 'eternal glory' (v17). God will restore everything in Christ.

What difference should this hope make to us now?

- It will spur us on to keep proclaiming the gospel (v13, 16)
- It gives us the perspective to see our suffering, however great, as 'light and momentary' (v17) compared to the glorious future that awaits us.
- We should focus on vision, not on the difficulties of this present age, which will not last, but on the eternal glory of the age to come (v18).



Read Revelation 21:1-8

What images are used to describe the perfected kingdom?

How do they build on previous passages in the Bible?

- New Creation (v1)
 - v1 echoes the first verse of the Bible. Having “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). God is determined to restore them after everything has been spoilt by the Fall (as prophesied in Isaiah 65:17). ‘The sea symbolises the forces of chaos and evil, which will be banished from the new creation.
- New Jerusalem (v2)
 - Jerusalem symbolises the kingdom of God, where he is worshipped and justice reigns. Jerusalem enjoyed a brief golden age at the time of Solomon, when the temple was built, but it was soon corrupted by the people’s sin and destroyed. The prophets pointed forward to the restoration of Jerusalem in the future (Is 40:1-2; 52:1-3; Lk 2:38).
- Bride
 - The Old Testament likens the relationship between God and his people to a marriage (e.g. Hosea 1-3). This marriage will be perfected in the new creation. Eden had been God’s ‘dwelling place’ (v3). The tabernacle and the temple were partial restorations of that blessing, but access to them was severely limited. But in the future Christ’s bride will enjoy unrestricted intimacy with him. They will enjoy the complete fulfilment of God’s covenant promise. ‘They shall be my people and I will be their God’ (v36, 7; Gen 17:7-8; Ex 6:7)

What will life be like in the perfected kingdom?

Much will already have been said in the previous discussion. Key points include:

- It is a physical place. We will not be disembodied souls!
- Its focus is a perfectly restored relationship with God (e.g. Ps42:1) and ‘those who are victorious’ (v7), because they persevere in following Christ.
- The ungodly are excluded (v8)

Read Revelation 21:22-22:5

What features of the perfected kingdom are described here?

Kingdom of God

God’s people

Perfected Kingdom

- People from all nations (21:24)
- Those in the lamb’s book of life (21:27)

God’s place

- No temple (21:22)
There is no need for one, as God is everywhere
- A new Eden (22:1-2)
As in Eden, there is a river flowing through it and the tree of life

God’s rule and blessing

- ‘The throne of the lamb’
God’s people reign with Christ (22:5) God’s creation purposes for humanity are fully restored (Gen 1:28)
- Perfect blessing
No Curse (22:3)
No night (21:23.25; 22:5)

Close with praise and intercession in the light of what you have learnt

This could be extended to include sharing about what the group has learnt from the course as a whole before a time of prayer.