

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the first video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series.

I. Change Of Plans

Plans change. It’s a reality of our present existence. Yet we still make plans in hopes that some things happen the way that we hope. In our present time, a lot of plans have changed, and it seems like the more plans we make, the more they will have to adapt as we learn more.

Q. What was supposed to happen today for you before all this happened? If you have a planner, look it up and see.

Q. How do you react when things don’t go according to plan?

Q. Take some time to think about and discuss plans that have changed as a result of the pandemic.

Q. Think and discuss times in your life where something didn’t go according to plan.

II. God Isn’t Surprised

God isn’t surprised with what is happening in our world. Because of this, we want to utilize the unique time that we are living in to form a better understanding of how God is at work in the world.

READ Romans 8:18-28

Q. Does it bring total comfort to you that God is not surprised by the present suffering? Why or why not? If you find yourself still wrestling with doubt and concern over the present circumstances, read this passage again and notice in what ways God is involved with His people.

Q. How can we reconcile God’s goodness and perfection with all that is happening that seems so out of control?

Q. What are ways you can see God working in your life right now during the pandemic? What are ways that God might be at work in the mess locally, nationally, and globally?

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the second video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series. For this discussion, it may be helpful to read through Genesis 1-3 on your own to see the whole picture.

I. The Good

We want to dive deeper into the fact that God had an Original plan for Creation. In Genesis 1-2, God creates everything out of nothing. As the creation week progresses, the world becomes more developed, until the 6th day where God creates humans in His image, says it’s all “very good,” and then rests on the 7th and final day.

Q. What were God’s plans for humans in Genesis 1-2 before the fall? How can we still function in these ways today? Scan through Genesis 1-2, noting all the expectations/duties/responsibilities/prohibitions that were placed on the first humans, and discuss them.

Q. Take some time to use your imagination and discuss what the world might be like if we still lived in the Genesis 2 world?

Q. God still had instructions and prohibitions for humans before sin entered into the world. What might this say about what we will be doing when we are together with Him again in eternity?

II. The Bad

In Genesis 3, plans change. Not God’s plans, because He actually continues the same plan even after the fact. But the plans of the humans come into play, because they are given a deceptive alter-opportunity from the serpent to reject God and become their own “gods.” But as soon as the simple yet profound action takes place, they realize quickly just how far they’ve fallen.

Q. Jesus says in John 8:44 that the Devil is a liar and the father of lies. Satan hasn’t changed his tactic from the beginning, because he still deals in deception. In what ways are we still being deceived, like Adam and Eve were?

Q. If God said that the consequence of breaking the one prohibition was that they will surely die the day they ate it, why are they still alive afterward?

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the third video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series. For this discussion, it may be helpful to read through Genesis 1-3 on your own to see the whole picture.

I. The Curses

In eating from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve didn't just break the rules; they rejected God and His good gifts that He had already provided. Sin is far more than just doing something you shouldn't, or not doing something you should. Sin is participation in the destruction of God's good Creation. To understand the severity of sin, we have to understand first, who God is, and second, who we are in light of Genesis 1-3.

Q. Why did God give the curses? Do you see the curses as too severe, or not severe enough? Who is God (what is His position/status)? Who are humans (what is their position/status)?

Q. Within the curses we also see glimpses of God's grace buried in the mess. This is where we see God continuing with His plan to dwell with humanity forever. How does God continue with His plan, in spite of the actions of His creation? How can we see this plan come up continually through different places in Scripture?

Q. Knowing how Jesus would be impacted by these curses in the future in His crucifixion and death, we also realize that in laying curses on all parties, God was also in a way laying curses on Himself. In what ways do we see these curses coming to fruition in Jesus' life and death? What does this mean for us?

II. The Dismissal

The curses were only the beginning of the end of Paradise, because God would ultimately remove the two humans from the Garden of Eden.

Q. Why did God make them leave the Garden according to the text (Gen. 3:22)? What would the world be like if humans were given access to the tree of life after their fall from God's presence?

Q. God's provision of sacrificial clothes was a pure gift of grace given from God. God provides for His people, even in their worst days. In what ways does God continue to provide for His people out of His grace in Scripture? In what ways does He do so today?

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the fourth video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series. For this discussion, it may be helpful to read through Genesis 37-50 to see the whole picture.

I. Joseph and God’s Work Within The Mess

Joseph’s story begins with a complicated family background. As the family grows and develops, we quickly find out that even the 12 sons of Israel are not immune from the moral degeneration that sin has spread throughout humanity. This reality of sin is ultimately what leads to Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers. But all along the way, God is involved in Joseph’s life and what will ultimately happen in his future.

Q. Joseph went through a lot. How could he still trust God? Put yourself in his shoes and answer that question for yourself too.

Q. What are other ways that you see God’s involvement in Joseph’s story? Think also about his brothers, father, and the other people he interacted with along the journey.

Q. Are there any similarities or connections you can think of between Genesis 1-3 and the Joseph story?

II. Joseph and Our Present Life

One thing that Joseph’s life and story should communicate to us is that God is actively working in the lives of His people in order to bring about His good purposes.

Q. In Joseph’s endeavors in Egypt, his success was tied directly to God’s blessing on His life. Practically, how can we become more presently focused on how God’s is blessing us so that we can see what God intends to do in us for His good purposes?

Q. What are ways God has been/might be involved in your life? How has God developed you through your times of suffering and difficulty? How has God developed you through your times of plenty and good?

Q. Does God still raise up people like Joseph today? If so, how? How can we be more like Joseph? Think about his character/morality and about his connection to God as his story progresses.

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the fifth video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series. This video and discussion material covers from 1 Samuel 16 all the way to 2 Samuel 12.

I. David’s Goodness

When we first meet David, he is presented as an unlikely candidate for the next King of Israel. However, God chooses him saying that He was looking at David’s heart and not at his stature or appearance. We quickly see why God chose David, because with every move he makes beginning with Goliath onward, he relies on God for his decision making and strength.

Q. What are some godly qualities that you know about David? What are ways that we can emulate David’s godly qualities?

Q. How can we practically cultivate a desire to allow God to take control in our daily endeavors as David did?

II. David’s Fall

At the height of David’s career as King, it seems like David could basically do no wrong. Everything he puts his hand to succeeds because up until this point, David considers God in all he does. But at some point, David’s connection to the heart of God is lost, and he begins to follow his own desires. This leads ultimately to his sexual sin with Bathsheba and the attempted coverup in the murder of Uriah. Though David falls, he is restored to God, but this scandal changes the rest of his life in many ways.

Q. Discuss/think about the reasons why David fell in the way that he did. What could he have done differently?

Q. READ Psalm 51. Summarize for yourself or with others the meaning and purpose of the Psalm. With what do you identify most in this Psalm?

Q. How does David live up to his God given title, “a man after God’s heart,” even after his fall? What kind of encouragement and warning should we take from this?

Q. Ultimately, David is a prefigured representation of Jesus, though he is an imperfect one. Think of/discuss the connections and similarities between David and Jesus.

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the sixth video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series.

I. The Messiah

When the Messiah arrives on the scene in the Gospel accounts, He doesn't arrive in a vacuum. Instead, He is born into a culture and a moment in History when there is a lot wrong with the world. And with a lot of things going wrong, there's a pretty high view of how a Great King would operate in order to fix what is wrong and kick out the bad guys to bring peace.

Q. Discuss some of the characteristics of what you think a “Great King” would be like. Think of examples from scripture, and even from secular history.

Q. What are ways that Jesus turns the concept of a “Great King” on its head?

II. Immanuel

When Jesus comes into the world, He does so in such a way that may leave us scratching our heads. We might think that the eternal God would use His power in order to create the best life possible once the time for incarnation has come. But instead, Jesus is born to a poor family in unpleasant conditions. Jesus became one of us, not in order to put Himself over us, but instead to submit to a life defined by humility.

Q. Why is it significant that the Messiah (Jesus) became incarnate? How should this change our perception of God?

Q. When we think about the passage of time and God having a plan, many people ask the question, “why did God send Jesus when He did? Why not today?” READ Galatians 4:4-5. Discuss what Paul meant by “the fullness of time,” and what made that time the “right time.”

Q. When Jesus comes to earth as the Messianic King of Israel, He comes in a way that the people largely didn't expect. How is the reality better than the expectation?

Q. From what we know in Scripture, in what significant ways will Jesus' second coming differ from His first?

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the seventh video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series. It covers the Triumphal Entry, Arrest, and part of the Trials of Jesus during His last week.

I. The Triumphal Entry

When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem for His final week, He’s welcomed as a King coming into His rightful city by His followers. As many of us know the rest of Jesus’ story, we know that He does not ascend the kind of throne the crowd was hoping for. Instead, He enters Jerusalem, with His eyes and heart set on His purpose, to lay down His life and to save His people.

Q. Immediately after coming into Jerusalem, Jesus goes to the Temple and drives out the money changers and sellers in Luke 19:45-46. How does this fit with what a Godly King would be expected to do? How does this act go against what the people might have expected Him to do (think about the Romans)?

Q. Do you think of Jesus as a King? How might this change the way we live and behave if we became more willing to think of Him as and call Him our King?

Q. If a King riding on a donkey is a symbol of bringing Peace, and Jesus knew what was going to happen at the end of the week, what kind of Peace was Jesus planning to bring?

II. Arrested and Tried

At the end of the week, Jesus gathers His disciples together and celebrates the Passover Meal with them, where He uses the elements of the Passover to institute a new celebration; the Lord’s supper. After this, they walk out to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prays in agony because of the anticipation of what was coming next. A mob arrives, and after not so many words, Jesus is taken as a captive of the mob.

Q. If the guy you believed to be the next King was arrested and taken away from you, how would you react? As misguided as he was, do you identify with Peter’s reaction? Why or why not?

Q. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:7 and identify and discuss the connections you see between what happens to Jesus and what is written in Isaiah.

This is a discussion guide that goes along with the eighth video of our “Change of Plans” Wednesday Night Series. It covers the Trial, Sentencing, Execution, and Resurrection of Jesus.

I. Trial and Crucifixion

At the conclusion of Jesus’ trial, we see Jesus finally convicted of a false crime, and a guilty man go free at His expense. As Jesus is led to His crucifixion, He maintains His resolve to lay down His life in order to fulfill the plan that God set before Him.

Q. Why was Barabbas allowed to go free? How is Barabbas’ freedom at the expense of Jesus’ conviction similar to our relationship to Jesus? How is it different?

Q. How was the Crucifixion of Jesus a terrible thing? How was the Crucifixion of Jesus a wonderful thing?

Q. When Jesus died, 10 of His 11 remaining disciples were nowhere to be found. Why is this so? If you were one of them, where would you be and why?

II. Resurrection

After the darkness of Friday, and the silence of Saturday, Jesus is raised from the dead on Sunday. This is a surprise to His disciples, even though they were explicitly told it would happen! In the Resurrection, the Kingdom hope is restored, and God moves forward in His plan to redeem the world.

Q. How do you think you would have responded if you were in the disciples shoes the first time they heard what the women said happened at the Tomb?

Q. How is the Resurrected King Jesus better than the Mortal King Jesus? Why and how is His “not of this world” Kingdom different than an earthly Kingdom?

Q. Do you think of yourself as belonging to an eternal Kingdom? How can we better have a “Kingdom” mindset in our lives?

Q. What “plans” exist in your own life that need to be Crucified in order to be Resurrected with Jesus?