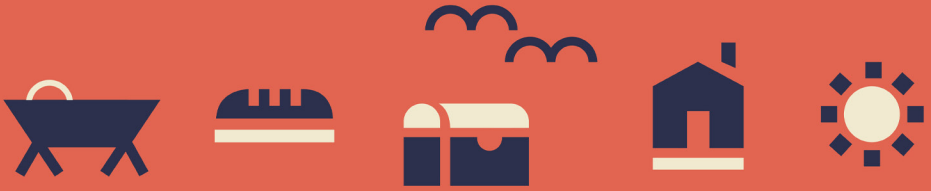


4 WEEKS



THE BIBLE





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last things first

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

How were you introduced to the Bible?

Big Idea:

Christianity is not the result of something that was written; it's the result of something that happened—the resurrection of Jesus.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 1:1-4

"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

1 John 5:13

"I write these things to you who

believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

Acts 2:32

"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it."

Acts 3:13–15

"You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."

Discussion:

1. Would you say that your current understanding of the Bible is based on what you've been told or based on reading it yourself?
2. What are your current feelings about the Bible?
3. When it comes to faith, the Bible, or God, have you ever found yourself saying, "I'm just not sure I believe it

anymore"? What is the "it" you struggle with believing?

4. Read Luke 1:1-4. In Sunday's message, the statement was made that the that the story of the Bible doesn't start at Genesis; the story of the Bible starts with the physician Luke setting out to create an orderly account of Jesus' life after the miraculous event of His resurrection. Jesus was seen alive, followers came out of hiding, and they went to Jerusalem and preached in the streets. Luke documents their message. If the resurrection had not happened, there would be no "Bible" (including preserving the OT texts), there would be no Christians, and there would be no Church. Discuss how this statement either affirms or challenges your current thinking.
5. Luke was a first-century Greek doctor. How do you think his background affects his account of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life and influence?
6. Read Acts 2:32 and 3:13-15. The documents that make up the Bible survived through violent and tumultuous

centuries because of early Christians' confidence that these documents, written by eyewitnesses, told the truth about something miraculous that happened in the first century when God showed up in the person of Jesus Christ. How does this change your approach to or confidence in the Bible?

7. Read 1 John 5:13. What was John's purpose in writing his account of Jesus' life and ministry? Discuss the similarities and/or contrasts of Luke and John's purpose for writing their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.

Wrapping It Up:

Pray together to be open in the next few weeks to how God might challenge your thinking on the Bible.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the middle school girls who attended the Beloved Conference this weekend; that what they learned might help them place their identity in Christ alone.

Memory Verse:

"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it." Acts 2:32

in the beginning

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Was religion part of your upbringing? Explain.

Big Idea:

You are here on purpose, with a purpose.

Key Scriptures:

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 1:26

"Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Genesis 1:27-28

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to

them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."

Psalms 139:13-16

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 1:1. What comes to mind when you think about this verse?
2. In Genesis, Moses is not trying to explain how God created the heavens and the earth. Moses is making the case that God (not the gods) created the universe, which was a radically, different, unparalleled, and untested

world view at the time. Does this distinction change the way you think about the creation account? If so, how?

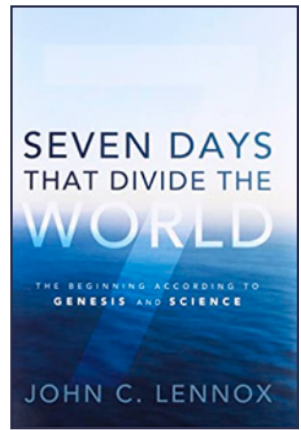
3. Share your reaction to the connection between the Big Bang Theory, which was introduced by a Belgian priest in 1927 (to contrast the long-standing belief that the universe had always existed) and the beginning lines of Genesis 1. Why do you think so many see these as a conflict?
4. Read Genesis 1:26. Genesis stands in startling contrast to other ancient creation narratives in that those stories speak of man appeasing the gods. But God said, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over- not worship, not make idols out of, not deify- the fish in the sea, and the birds in the sky, the livestock and all the wild animals. How does stewarding nature contrast with worshipping nature? Discuss how those ideas are relevant today.
5. Read Genesis 1:27-28. God determined that every man, woman, and child would be born with dignity because they were made in his image.

Other ancient theories perpetuated that the human race was an afterthought to lighten the load of the gods. Therefore, individuals had no rights, hope, or intrinsic value, and the violence and injustices of the gods justified the violence and injustice of human rulers. How does this statement resonate with you?

6. The dignity of men and women was established by God from the beginning, but as mankind departs from the worship of God alone and begins to embrace the worship of idols and other gods, that value and dignity is greatly diminished. Discuss how you see that to be true today.
7. Read Psalm 139:13-16. Does this passage offer you any helpful insights when it comes to life's big questions of "Why are you here?" and "Why do you matter?"
8. Through God's creation account, He is establishing the truth of His sovereignty, His established order, and His purposeful creation of men and women. Discuss your observations of that in the biblical account.

Wrapping It Up:

For further reading and study, consider
Seven Days that Divide the World by
John C. Lennox



Prayer Focus:

Pray for those who will be joining
Sunnybrook as new members this week.

MEMORY VERSE:

“ In the
beginning God
created the
heavens
and the
earth. ”

Genesis 1:1

the old testament

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Has any Old Testament story been a stumbling block to faith for you or someone you know?

Big Idea:

God played by the rules of the kingdoms of this world in order to usher in a kingdom not of this world.

Key Scriptures:

Isaiah 53

"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain

and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though

the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Galatians 4:4-5

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."

Discussion:

1. Has anything in the Old Testament ever caused you to question or doubt the existence and/or nature of God? If so, explain.
2. If you grew up learning stories from the Bible, did you ever encounter people who tried to "tidy up" or ignore parts of the Old Testament? How did they do so?
3. Consider the statement that "we don't need to tidy up the Old Testament because it's not a spiritual guidebook. It's the story of our God, who waded into the mess in order to write a story of redemption. That is, the story of God preparing the world for his Messiah." How does that impact the way you feel about God? About the Old Testament?
4. When Gentiles (non-Jewish people) became enamored with a particular Jew (Jesus), they immediately became enamored with the sacred text of the Jews- the Law and the Prophets- in order to understand the history of the Messiah. How is reading the Old Testament as a historical record of the Hebrew people different than reading it as a spiritual guidebook?
5. Read Isaiah 53. First-century Gentile Christians' interest in the Old Testament was Christological. That is, they went into the Hebrew Bible

looking for Christ. Discuss how Isaiah 53 clearly shows His presence there.

6. What other ways do you see the Old Testament point to Christ as the Messiah?
7. Read Galatians 4:4-5. Texts in the Old Testament tell the story of God's fulfilled covenant with the people of Israel; those living under God's Law. It chronicled God's redemptive sequential activity in history in the world. In contrast, God's New Covenant invited all nations to be included in this covenant, when the set time had come. Discuss how this might change, challenge, or reinforce your view of the Bible and/or God.

Wrapping It Up:

How has your life been marked by being redeemed and adopted into God's family?

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our Revive Counseling Ministry - for the volunteer counselors and those they are serving.

MEMORY VERSE:

“**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.**”



Galatians 4:4-5

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Talk about a time when someone was kind to you in an unexpected way.

Big Idea:

We can have peace with God without having peace with everything in the Bible.

Key Scriptures:

Hebrews 8:6-13

"But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said:

'The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of

Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.'"

John 13:34-35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Discussion:

1. Read Hebrews 8:6-13. Do you find yourself getting hung up on Old Testament ideas or applications? What expectations and standards can you let go of because of Jesus' New Covenant?
2. Consider this statement: "we should read the Old Testament for inspiration and motivation, but not application." Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Read John 13:34-35. Based on Jesus' New Covenant command, what should be the primary focus of Christians' lives?
4. What makes the idea of "loving one another as Christ loved us" difficult to embrace? How do Christians fall short in this area?
5. Jesus' early followers based their faith on his extraordinary resurrection. What would happen if you were to revisit or begin your faith there, too?
6. Paul was a scholar, skeptic, convert, leader, writer, thinker, and sufferer. Which part(s) of Paul's identity do you relate to?
7. Pastor Jeff explained that Paul's letters are a bridge between the Hebrew Bible and Jesus' New Covenant. How did you feel about the examples he gave? Did anything grab your attention?
8. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says it is "of first importance: that Christ died for our sins...that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day..." Is the resurrection typically of first importance in how Christians talk with skeptics or non-believers today?
9. What have you learned about the collection of documents we call the Bible that has changed the way you see God or your faith?

Wrapping It Up:

If you gave a Bible to someone today, what would you tell them about how they should read or think about it?

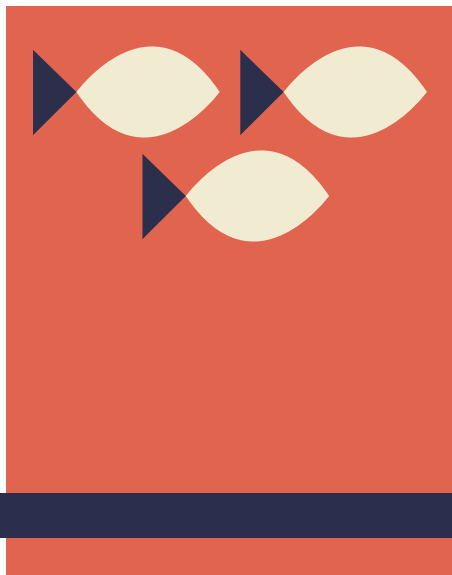
Prayer Focus:

Pray for those you might invite to our Easter service at the Tyson.

MEMORY VERSE:

“**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**”

John 13:34-35



Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?
Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?



SUNNYBROOK
community church

5601 Sunnybrook Drive
Sioux City, Iowa 51106
www.sunnybrookchurch.org