

Welcome to Foundations!

A six-week cohort discovering and unpacking what we believe to be some foundational pieces to encountering God and what it means for us, today.

What is a cohort? Simply, it is a group of people that enter into a study together and remain together for its duration. This cohort has a definitive starting point and end date. However, what we learn during the cohort continues on for a lifetime.

Everything introduced and discussed in Foundations are a mixture of Scripture along with ideas and explanations from multiple different people and sources.

A special “Thank You” to The Bible Project for their incredibly creative and informative videos.

Week 1: The Identity of God

Week 2: The Activity of God

Week 3: My Identity in Christ

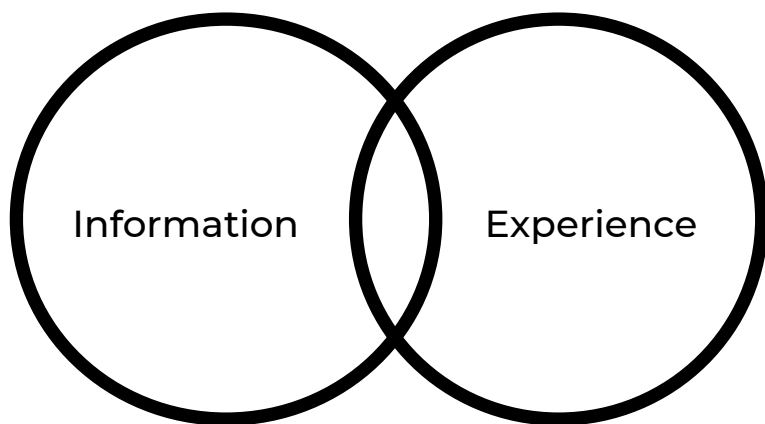
Week 4: The Purpose of Christ

Week 5: The Body of Christ

Week 6: The Purpose of the Church

WEEK 1

There are a lot of studies, books, seminars, conferences, etc. out there teaching on the things of God. He is endless and limitless. Ultimately, this entire life we experience ought to be lived out of the overflow of our daily encounters with the One whom created us. At least, that is what many of us believe.



What we read about God in the Scriptures and the other being our perception or experience of those things.

To know God is to *experience* God. The Bible has a word for it and that word is **GENESKO**.

It means *“to know by first-hand experience.”*

WEEK 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Take a moment for each person to write down different words they think describe God's character. Once everyone has written them down, take turns sharing them with others.

- What life relationships or experiences influenced the words you wrote down.

- What do you want to experience from God that you don't think you have already experienced?

- Describe your understanding of what it means to have faith in God...

*“Yahweh is a
COMPASSIONATE
and GRACIOUS God,
slow to
ANGER
and rich in
FAITHFUL LOVE
and
TRUTH,
maintaining
FAITHFUL LOVE
to a thousand
generations...”*

Exodus 34:6-7

VIDEO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Based on the video, what words did you write down that you heard in the video.

- If there were words used in the video that were not discussed at your table, what were they? What do you think of when you talk about that word and how it relates to God's character?

- Look at the words you wrote down and the words you remember from the video and think about them as they relate to God. Is God relating to us through the ways those words describe? Do you relate to God in the same way? If so, what does that look like?

- If there are characteristics about God that you want to encounter, but haven't yet, take a moment to pray about that for each other.

*Dear friends,
let us LOVE one another,
because LOVE is from God,
and everyone who LOVES has
been born of God and knows
God.*

*The one who does not LOVE
does not know God, because
God is LOVE.*

*God's LOVE was revealed
among us in this way:
God sent His One and Only
Son into the world so that we
might live through Him...*

No one has ever seen God.

*If we LOVE one another,
God remains in us and
His LOVE is perfected in us.*

1 John 4:8-9, 12

“Everybody experiences far more than he [or she] understands. Yet it is experience, rather than understanding, that influences behavior.”

- Marshall McLuhan

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Think about the things you believe, what you hold to be true about life. What are some of those things?

- Who are the people that have influenced those things?

- What are the places that have influenced those “truths?”

- Have your personal experiences ever caused you to doubt or change your beliefs? If so, is there one you would like to share with your group...

TO BE DONE BEFORE THE NEXT GATHERING:

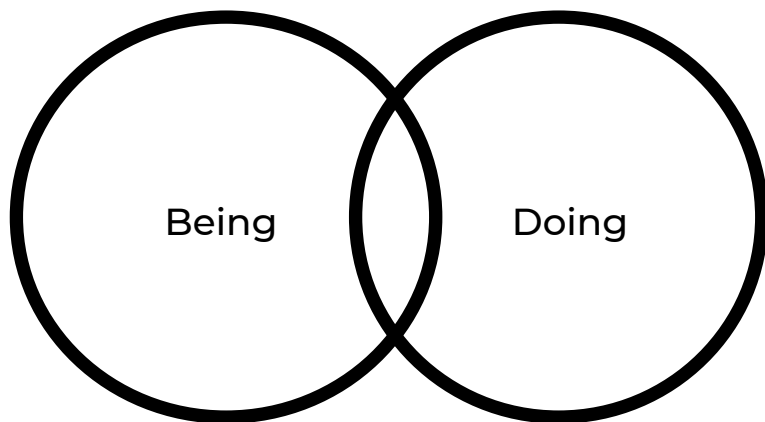
- What false or incomplete images of God do you have?

- What new thoughts do you have about God?

- Write a prayer to God asking Him to reveal Himself to you...

WEEK 2

In discussing God's identity, we talked about it through the lens of Information and Experience. It is one thing to be told something about God versus feeling known or experiencing an attribute of God's character or nature. Consider the Activity of God through the lens of Being and Doing.



“God created humankind. Not only did He create us, but He created us in His image.”

YOU ARE HIS SIGNATURE

WEEK 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Based on your reading of Genesis 1-3, what did God say about the things He created? If God were sitting with you at this table, what do you think He would say to you?

- God set all of this up for us to be in right relationship with four main spheres of living: God, others, myself, and my purpose. In our broken relationship with God, it is easier to think lesser of ourselves and project that onto God. In fact, our understanding of God's being is experienced through what we think He thinks about us. Whatever we messed up in our lives, God wants to fix and make whole. God doesn't look at us and feel disappointed, He looks at us and sees children wanting to be held, wanting to be healed. What one area in your life do you sense God wants to fix so that you can fully be in the right relationship with Him?

VIDEO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Last week we talked about the Identity of God through the lens of Information and Experience. This week we are discussing the Activity of God through the lens of Being and Doing. Who God is can be known by what God does. What are some things the video pointed out that God has done or is doing?

- What is one thing from the video that stood out to you, and why?

SCRIPTURES IN THE TALK:

He pursues us by speaking to us by His Creation, The Bible, and His Spirit whether directly to us or through others. Let's look at some Bible verses expressing this:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech; they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”

PSALM 19:1-4

“For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen...”

ROMANS 1:20A

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ...No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him know.”

JOHN 1:1, 14, 18

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you. Everything the Father has is Mine. This is why I told you that He takes from what is Mine and will declare it to you.”

JOHN 16:13-18

“This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need but closes his eyes to his need—how can God’s love reside in him?

Little children, we must not love with word or speech, but with truth and action. This is how we will know we belong to the truth and will convince our conscience in His presence, even if our conscience condemns us, that God is greater than our conscience, and He knows all things.”

1 JOHN 3:16-20

*God isn't looking
for you to DO
anything
FOR Him,
so much as He
wants to BE
and DO things
WITH you.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is one area of your life that you want to offer up to God, to make it new and right?

- Similar to the first question, but asked this way: If you could ask God to do a miraculous thing right now for you personally, what would it be? If you have time, pray for each other's answers to see God move in their life.

TO BE DONE BEFORE THE NEXT GATHERING:

Check out...

the other videos from the Bible Project's video series on YouTube on "What is the Bible"

Get into the Scriptures:
First John

Take a Risk:

Each time you step out in faith, it's a risk.

On Wednesday we asked God to work a miracle in our lives. We hope you had an immediate and visible answer to your prayer. In the meantime, what is something you can do to serve someone this week?

Last week the risk was to be intentional in living out one of the characteristics of God toward someone. This week, be intentional and go out of your way to serve someone.

It could be buying someone else's meal when out to eat. Or their coffee in the drive thru line.

It could be leaving a \$20-\$100 tip for a server on a disproportionately smaller tab.

You could write 'Thank You' cards to the team of people you immediately work with, thanking them for what you appreciate about them as a person.

You could offer to babysit your friends' children for free so they could have a night out.

These are just ideas, so pray and think through something you could go out of your way to do for someone else.

WEEK 3

WHAT DOES “SIN” MEAN?

Old Testament:

New Testament:

What does it mean to have faith and believe?

*“Faith is the
REALITY
Of what is hoped for,
the PROOF of what is not
seen.”*

Hebrews 11:1

Faith is the substance of all reality bringing to the light the unseen things.

If faith is what is invisible, believing is what makes it visible.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GET SAVED?

Greek word _____ meaning

_____, _____, & _____.

WEEK 3 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Before listening to today's explanation about sin, what were some words and pictures you had whenever you heard that word?

- Part of the saving process of believing in Jesus is to think differently about areas of our life that do not align with what God would want for us. Take some time to identify and write down some areas of your life that you need to bring to God. If you want to share with the group and pray about it, feel free to do so.

- If you believe in Jesus and what He accomplished, when did you first believe? What is one area of your life where you want to trust Jesus to heal and deliver you? This can be done silently in your journal or shared and prayed about with the group.

WHAT IS BAPTISM AND WHY DO WE DO IT?

“Then Jesus came near and said to them, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

MATTHEW 28:18-20

“Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life.”

ROMANS 6:4

WHAT IS THE NEW WAY OF LIVING?

Discussion Questions:

- If you have already been baptized, share your story of what led you to be baptized. If you haven't been baptized, based on what you heard, are you interested in being baptized? If so, let the facilitator know.

- What are some of the words you heard in the video that describe this new way of being human?

- What is one area where you feel you do really well at living like Jesus toward others...what is one area where you can improve? Pray for one another.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Type 1: _____

Type 2: _____

Type 3: _____

Type 4: _____

WHAT IS WORSHIP AND WHY DO WE DO IT?

"God you are holy, you inhabit the praise of your people."

PSALM 22:3

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER?

“Then a dispute also arose among them about who should be considered the greatest. But He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles dominate them... But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and whoever leads, like the one serving.”

LUKE 22:24-26

“...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.”

MATTHEW 20:26B-28

“A Living Sacrifice

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Gifts of Grace

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Marks of the True Christian

⁹ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* ¹¹ *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.* ¹² *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.* ¹³ *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

¹⁴ *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.* ¹⁵ *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.* ¹⁶ *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.* ¹⁷ *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.* ¹⁸ *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* ¹⁹ *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* ²⁰ *To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* ²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

ROMANS 12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How would you describe your prayer life? What do you think you do well? What is one area where you want to improve? Pray for each other.

- What is your favorite worship song? Why?

- What is one area of service that you think you do well? What is one area of service you could improve in?

TO BE DONE BEFORE THE NEXT GATHERING:

Check out...

the other videos from the Bible Project's video series on YouTube on "Royal Priesthood"

Get into the Scriptures:
John 1-6

33



Take a Risk:

Each time you step out in faith, it's a risk.

Ask God to meet you this week in a way you may not have experienced Him before. Pray with God about what He sees when He looks at you. What He sees is the wholeness of who you are in Him. Those thoughts may be different than the negative things you think about yourself.

Journal what you sense God telling you about you. Sift through the negative, self-condemning, or disqualifying thoughts that come to mind. Write those down and give them to God.

Pay attention to the word pictures you get in your mind. Things like, "You are my beloved son/daughter."

"I love you." "You are my child."

"I enjoy your sense of humor."

"You are a giver."

"I appreciate how you handled that situation the other day..."

Things like this are God encouraging your soul.

WEEK 4

Everything said about Jesus in the book of John is a blueprint for how we should view the work of Christ in us and the work we do in His name.

You were supposed to read the first six chapters of John, and this week's after meeting reading will be the remainder of John's Gospel. This is on purpose for what we are about to hear in this first video describing all the things said about Jesus in the first 12 chapters of John's Gospel.

VIDEO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Of the descriptive words and “I am...” statements, which one most resonated with you based on your experience with thinking about and praying to Jesus?

- Based on your reading of John 1-6 or something in the video, talk about something that stood out to you and why?

- One of the keys to growing in understanding is developing good questions in response to things you are being taught. What are some questions you have from the reading or the video?

“Christ’s Example of Humility

¹ If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal. ³ Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴ Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Christ’s Humility and Exaltation

⁵ Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.

⁷ Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.

⁸ For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name

that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus

*every knee will bow—
of those who are in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Lights in the world

¹² So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling and arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the message of life.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-16

Obedience can be defined as a courageous interdependence moving into action.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- When you think about Jesus, what are the first images that come to mind?

- What do you understand about the purpose of John the Baptist?

- What makes the role of a “witness,” important? What have you witnessed about the goodness of Jesus in your life?

- What other questions do you have? Write them down here:

TO BE DONE BEFORE THE NEXT GATHERING:

Check out...

the other video from the Bible Project's video on YouTube on "John 7-21"

Get into the Scriptures:
John 7-21

Take a Risk:
Each time you step out in faith, it's a risk.

This week, journal a specific prayer each day. Be intentional. Maybe pray for one specific thing every day. Write it down, though. Read it over, later.

What do you think God's answer is to your prayer? Have you felt prompted to pray differently about the thing you decide to pray about?

Writing them down and reading them later is a great way for us to see our growth.

Day 1:

Day 2:

Day 3:

Day 4:

Day 5:

WEEK 5

We cannot talk about the Body of Christ without talking about the Purpose of the Church and vice versa. They're inextricably linked and understood in relation with each other. Although, this week we will focus on what it means to be a part of the Body of Christ.

We will also explain what it means to be unified with Jesus and in recognizing this ONEness, we are like Jesus both here on earth and in Heaven.

This ONEness is not singular in the sense that I am more like Jesus than you or anyone else and we are supposed to be a bunch of little Jesus' running around.

Our ONEness with Jesus is in the unified expression of those whom believe the words, work, and ministry of Jesus.

That is what love is: the
dying to and emptying of
self for the sake of another.

“One Body with Many Parts

¹² *The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, Greek some are Greeks. some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Greek we were all given one Spirit to drink.*

¹⁴ *Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. ¹⁵If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?*

¹⁸ *But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ¹⁹How strange a body would be if it had only one part! ²⁰Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”*

²² *In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that*

should not be seen,²⁴ while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity.²⁵ This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

²⁷All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

WEEK 5 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- In the family of God, we are all equal. Based on your life experiences, have you always felt this way? If not, share with the group your feelings of inequity when compared to others.

- By ourselves, we cannot be a full picture of the embodiment of Jesus, this is a together thing. It takes all of us to make up the Body of Jesus, His words, work, and ministry. Consider the skills and experiences you enjoy, now consider them through the lens of what they mean to be connected with other people. What do you do well, or what really interests you, that you bring as one part of the body to bless the whole?

Tribalism is defined as _____

Loyalty is defined as _____

Should tribalism exist within the Body of Christ?

It's diversity, not SAMEness.

Together-ness & ONEness.

"The prophet recorded what he heard God say, "My own life is the guarantee of my conviction, says the Lord, every knee shall freely bow to me in worship, and every tongue shall spontaneously speak from the same God-inspired source."

Thus the logic of God will find its personal expression in every person.

There remains no further cause for judging anyone. Rather determine that you will not allow suspicion or prejudice to snare your brother or sister in a trap."

ROMANS 14:11-13

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:13-14. Share why it is important for us to understand our identity within the church.

- Read John 17:22-23. Share what stands out from this John passage. What thoughts or feelings does Jesus' prayer stir in your heart?

- Pastor and Theologian Tim Keller said this about "unity" as a key characteristic that should describe the church. In summarizing John 17: "...one of the most crucial ways that the Christian church embodies the gospel is in the unity of Christians who are different from one another—economically, culturally, racially. In general, the job of the church is to show the world that people who cannot live in love and unity outside of Christ can do so in Christ." Describe a way you can contribute to a unity that reflects Jesus' heart for the church.

- One of the key characteristics about being in the Body is transparency, vulnerability, and honesty. It is hard to be in right relationship with each other if we do not feel we are safe with each other. Read the following quote, listen for key phrases, words, or sentences that stand out to you. “By becoming a Christian, I belong to God and I belong to my brothers and sisters. It is not that I belong to God and then make a decision to join a local church. My being in Christ means being in Christ with those others who are in Christ. This is my identity. This is our identity. If the church is the body of Christ, then we should not live as disembodied Christians.”

- Talk to God about your identity as part of the church. Thank Him for the family placed around you in your faith journey.

WEEK 6

If it helps, think of this cohort as a cornerstone, we couldn't cover everything there is to cover, but we hope this starts you out in the right direction. It gives you a healthy lens through you which you can better grow in your experiential knowledge of God, your identity, and our mutual connection through the word, work, and ministry of Christ Jesus.

This week, we close it out by talking about the Purpose of the Church. Last week we pointed to the idea the Body of Christ and the Church are overlapping in their explanation, experience, and understanding. We cannot help but talk about both when referencing the other.

The Bible uses the word church in two different ways.

First _____

Second _____

Two ways we can talk about someone's experience with church

_____ versus _____

WEEK 6 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What are some thoughts you have about why believers should meet together?

- Take some time to read the following verse references and write down what each verse reveals about the purpose of the church:

- Luke 4:8

- Luke 22:19-20

- Acts 2:42

- Matthew 28:16-20

- 1 Timothy 2:15

- John 13:35

- Titus 2:11-12

- Based on the verses, which of these purposes do you feel you need most from the church at this stage in your faith journey? Share it with your group and explain why.

- Based on what was said and the verses you just read, share with each other how living out these purposes reveals Jesus to those who do not yet have a relationship with Jesus...

"...when you call, the Lord will answer; when you cry out, He will say, 'Here I am.'

If you get rid of the yoke among you, the finger-pointing and malicious speaking,

and if you offer yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night will be like noonday.

The Lord will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry."

ISAIAH 58:9-11

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be build up."

EPHESIANS 4:11-14

“Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings.”

- Bryant Myers

Shalom means _____, _____,
_____, and _____,

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What are your thoughts about the call to help bring shalom to our world? Is it overwhelming for you or does it excite you?

- Take a moment to thank God for the gift of His shalom-peace and love. Ask Him to show you ways you can reach out to people with a heart to bring peace to the community and culture. If you sense or hear any words or pictures, share them with the group.

VIDEO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Go around the group and take turns sharing the biggest thing you took away from each video.

Take a Risk:

What if your group kept meeting?

Whether you keep this day and time, set a new one, or took a break and then started back up again. What would it look like for you and group, or someone else to journey with, kept growing?

Here are a few options to consider:

- <https://www.disciplepathway.com/>
- <https://www.churchofthehighlands.com/files/groups/2016/ask-curriculum.pdf>
- <https://www.churchofthehighlands.com/groups/my-story>