

The background of the cover is a detailed painting of hands holding a scroll. The hands are rendered in warm, earthy tones, and the scroll is a light, aged parchment. The overall style is classical and religious.

5

Seeing Jesus
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

.....
A 10-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

The Word of the Lord

*Seeing Jesus in
the Prophets*

LEADER'S GUIDE

nancy guthrie

The Word of the Lord

Seeing Jesus in the Prophets

Leader's Guide

(for use with both the book only study or the
book combined with video study)

nancy guthrie

“The Word of the Lord: Seeing Jesus in the Prophets” Leader’s Guide

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An Introduction to *The Word of the Lord* for Leaders

The Word of the Lord: Seeing Jesus in the Prophets is an in-depth study of the Prophetic Books in the Old Testament, with the goal of understanding them in the way that Jesus himself taught the disciples to read and understand the Old Testament: with him at the center. This guide will equip you to plan and lead a study of *The Word of the Lord* using either the book alone or the book along with the video series. Teaching experience or gifting is not required to lead this study—just a willingness to organize, oversee, and facilitate a meaningful discussion time, as well as personal enthusiasm for knowing Christ more deeply through the study of his Word.

Determining Your Schedule for Studying *The Word of the Lord*

This study has been put together in a way that offers flexibility in how you use it and flexibility in how you schedule your time for working through it. Everything that is needed by participants is provided in the book. Each week's lesson includes:

1. Personal Bible Study
2. Teaching Chapter (with a "Looking Forward" addendum at the end of each chapter)
3. Discussion Guide

It is divided into ten weeks of study. But you may want to carefully consider dividing the material in a way that would extend the study over twenty weeks, giving your participants more time to think through and talk through the truths presented. Expanding the study may also be beneficial when you have only one hour or less to meet together each week and also want to incorporate time for worship, prayer, or personal

sharing into your small group time. Following are outlines for how the study would work for different schedules.

A 10-Week Book Study—Participants would need to have books in advance of the first week you meet, with instructions to read the chapter in Week 1, "An Introduction to the Prophets," before they arrive the first week. There is no Personal Bible Study portion of the lesson for Week 1. When you get together that first week, you can spend some time getting to know each other, communicating the format you will use, and discussing the chapter you've all read, using the Discussion Guide for Week 1. From then on, participants will be asked to come to the group time having completed the Personal Bible Study section and having read the Teaching Chapter of that week's lesson (unless your group's style will be to read the chapter aloud as a group, which some groups elect to do). You may want to suggest to participants that they put a star beside questions in the Personal Bible Study that they want to be sure to bring up in the discussion, and underline key passages in the chapter that are meaningful or that raise questions for them that they'd like to discuss. During your time together each week you will discuss the big ideas of the lesson using the Discussion Guide, bringing in content from the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter as you see fit.

Sample Weekly Schedule for a 1-Hour Study:

- 7:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing
- 7:10 Open discussion using the "Getting Started" question found in the Discussion Guide, working your way through the Discussion Guide

questions, bringing in comments and questions from the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter as desired.

7:50 Take prayer requests and pray.

7:59 Close

An 11- or 12-Week Book Study—You may prefer to meet the first week and distribute the books at that point, using that first week solely to get to know each other and get organized. Assign the group to read the chapter in Week 1 for discussion the following week and then proceed as outlined in the ten-week book study. If you want to extend the study to twelve weeks, you might set a week following the last lesson to come back together, asking each member to plan to share the truths and take-aways from the study that have been most meaningful, or perhaps to talk through any lingering questions from the study.

A 20-Week Book Study—There is a great deal of material here, and you may want to take your time with it, giving more time to discuss its foundational truths and allowing them to sink in. To expand the study over twenty weeks, you would break each week into two parts. You would spend one week on the Personal Bible Study section—either doing it on your own and discussing your answers when you meet, or actually working through the questions together when you meet (which would lessen the amount of time required outside of the group time and perhaps diminish barriers to participation for those who struggle with working through the questions on their own). Then, you would ask group members to read the Teaching Chapter on their own before the next meeting and use the Discussion Guide to discuss the big ideas of the lesson the following week. If you meet once for Week 1 (since there is no Personal Bible Study section for the first week), and meet for a final week to share big-picture truths taken away from the study, it will add up to twenty weeks.

Sample Weekly Schedule for a 1-Hour Study

Week A (Personal Bible Study):

7:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing

7:10 Work your way through the questions in the Personal Bible Study, looking up the answers together and allowing various members to share what they are writing down.

7:50 Take prayer requests and pray.

7:59 Close

Week B (Teaching Chapter):

7:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing

7:10 Open discussion using the “Getting Started” question found in the Discussion Guide, working your way through the Discussion Guide questions, bringing in comments and quotes from the Teaching Chapter and reading the “Looking Forward” section together.

7:50 Take prayer requests and pray.

7:59 Close

A 10-week Book Study Using the Video—

If you’re using the book in combination with the video series, group members will be asked to complete the Personal Bible Study section of each week’s lesson in the book before they come. On the videos, Nancy presents virtually the same content as the Teaching Chapters minus the “Looking Forward” addendum found at the end of each chapter. So if you are using the video series, participants have the option to:

1. Read the chapter in advance as a preview of what will be presented on the video.
2. Just listen to Nancy teach the content of the chapter on the video and read only the “Looking Forward” as part of the group discussion time or on their own.
3. Go back and read the chapter after watching the video, if needed or desired, to seal in or clarify what was presented in the video.

When group members miss a particular week, you may want to encourage them to go to the website, www.SeeingJesusintheOldTestament.com,

where they can download the video they missed, or they can simply read the chapter in the book.

It is a good idea to encourage participants to take notes during the video even though the content of the video is in the book. For each video presentation, note-taking pages that you may copy for your group members are included at the end of this Leader's Guide. Note-taking during the video is a good idea because something transpires when we process words and ideas through a pen or pencil onto paper that aids us in processing and retaining the words and ideas. But those taking notes may also rest easy if they miss something significant because the complete content is also in the book.

*Sample Schedule for 2-Hour Study
Incorporating the Video*

- 9:00 Welcome, get settled, announcements, maybe singing
- 9:10 Watch video teaching session.
- 9:50 Respond to video with various women praying as they feel led in response to what they've heard (not general prayers, but responding to what was presented). Because the lessons end each week in some poignant ways, it will be helpful to be able to be quiet and also respond to what was presented before rushing off to hallway conversation and small group discussion.
- 10:00 Break to go to small groups.
- 10:05 Welcome, connecting and checking in with each other time
- 10:10 Start discussion using the Discussion Guide and bring in Personal Bible Study questions group members want to discuss as well as points made in the video.
- 10:50 Take prayer requests and pray (be sure that the prayer time is not only about personal needs but also praying through the truths presented in the passage you're studying. This will likely need to be modeled by the leader and/or assigned to one of the people praying).
- 10:59 Close

Making the Most of the Personal Bible Study

The question is often asked, "How long should it take to complete the Personal Bible Study questions?" The answer is: there is no set time frame. We all approach this differently. Some participants love to luxuriate, think through, look up, and write out. Others have the approach of simply looking for the answers and making short notations rather than writing long answers to questions. So how should you answer the question, "How much time should it take?" I suggest you say that it takes as much time as a person chooses to invest in it. Certainly some weeks they may have more time than others, and we all know that we get more out of a study the more we put into it. The depth of thinking through the lesson is not necessarily reflected in the length of answers written on the page or the time spent according to the clock. What is most important is not how much time it takes but planning a time to work through the Personal Bible Study and keeping that appointment. In fact, in the first week, you might ask each member to share with the group when she intends to work on the Personal Bible Study in the coming week. This will help everyone to think about her own schedule and set a time. One person's strategy may serve to be helpful to someone else who has not been successful in the past in carving out time for personal study. You might ask those who have done similar studies if they prefer to do it in one sitting or to break it up over several days. Also suggest they consider using Sunday, a day set aside for God, to study God's Word.

Included in the following pages of this Leader's Guide is a copy of each week's Personal Bible Study that includes possible answers to the questions. This is provided for you as the leader to assist you in dealing with difficult questions, but it should not be provided to group members. I also encourage you to avoid having this Leader's Guide open as you work on the Personal Bible

Study yourself just as your group members are doing. We all know that it is a challenge to resist looking for the answers to a crossword puzzle in the back of the book while we're working on it. And likewise, as the leader, it may be a challenge for you to resist working through the questions with this resource at your fingertips. After completing the Personal Bible Study yourself, you may want to look over the suggested answers in this Leader's Guide and add notes to your own answers as desired in preparation for the group discussion rather than having this guide in hand during your group time, which cannot help but imply that these are the "right" answers. You will find what I hope will be some helpful suggestions for encouraging your group members in regard to completing the Personal Bible Study in the "Dealing with Common Challenges" section of this Leader's Guide.

Incorporating the "Looking Forward" Section

I grew up in church and have spent most of my life in the evangelical culture with lots of sound Bible teaching for which I am so grateful. But for most of my life I have had a very limited, and less than fully biblical, understanding of heaven and eternity. I thought of heaven primarily being a place away from here where our spirits go to be with God forever after we die. Honestly, I think I never really thought through what the difference would be in that existence when what we repeatedly read about in the New Testament in terms of the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4) comes about at the return of Christ. Additionally, I always thought of God's purposes of redemption being really only about people. I did not have an understanding of God's intentions to redeem all of creation, including this earth, making it the place where we will live forever in our resurrected bodies with Christ. But this is clearly the future hope that all of the Bible is directed toward. The purposes of God

are not merely about Christians going to heaven when we die but about his intentions to restore all things, about heaven coming down to earth, and about living forever with God in its perfection and beauty as Adam and Eve once did in the Garden—except even better.

I assume there are a lot of other people who have had a similar experience to mine, and that is why I have made the consummation a part of every chapter in this study. To truly understand what God is doing in the smaller bits of Scripture we study, we have to have a sense of the big picture of the purposes of God. We must see every aspect of Scripture in context of the Bible's larger story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. To reorient how we've understood heaven and eternity, we've got to see it not just in a handful of passages that we think of as telling us about the return of Christ and "end times," but rather throughout the whole of Scripture and in fact every part of Scripture. When we see it from all of the various angles as we work our way through Scripture, it completes the picture and solidifies our grasp on what is revealed about what is yet to come. That is one reason I've included it in the "Looking Forward" section of each chapter. But another reason I have done so is because this is the essence of our Christian hope. Growing in our grasp of future realities in Christ helps us to face present difficulties with confidence in Christ.

If this understanding of what is ahead for us as believers is new to you as it was to me only a few years ago, or if you feel you need a firmer grasp on it, a few resources you might find helpful are:

The Restoration of All Things (A Gospel Coalition Booklet) by Sam Storms (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

From Creation to New Creation: Making Sense of the Whole Bible Story by Tim Chester (Good Book Company, 2011).

How should you incorporate the "Looking Forward" section in your group time? The

“best” way is going to be whatever works best for your group. You may do it differently on different weeks. It may be more of a time issue than anything else. And it may depend on whether your group is reading the chapters in the book or watching the video presentation of the Teaching Chapter. The video presentation is the content of the Teaching Chapter minus “Looking Forward.” So if you are using the video, you may be more inclined to want to include reading and/or discussing the “Looking Forward” section in your discussion time, perhaps working it in with the final question in the Discussion Guide each week (which is always about how the particular passage being studied fits in with the larger story of the Bible). Or, since every person attending the video study will have a copy of the book, you might simply suggest that participants read that section of the chapter on their own sometime after watching the video but before they go on to the next lesson. In this way they can really think it through and take it in, bringing together all that they learned in that week’s lesson.

Using the Discussion Guide

Oftentimes in Bible studies in which we’re given a series of questions to work through on our own, our group discussions consist primarily of sharing the answers we found to the questions. But this study is different. While each week you will want to ask participants if they have any lingering questions from the Personal Bible Study section, or aspects of it they would like to talk about, the Discussion Guide for *The Word of the Lord* is designed to facilitate a discussion about the broader themes from the passages being studied. In this way we will be seeking not just more information but to develop deeper understanding. As the leader, you should make it your goal to draw out the members of your group, creating an environment that is safe for personal struggle, difficult questions, discovery, and even ambiguity.

Because the discussion questions don’t always lend themselves to simple answers but provide for more interaction with the themes and challenges of the passages being studied, as the leader you may want to spend some time working your way through the questions in the Discussion Guide prior to the group time to anticipate where the discussion will be headed. You will find each week’s Discussion Guide in the pages that follow in this Leader’s Guide, along with a few notes from me. Since these questions are designed to bring out various perspectives, there are not “suggested answers” as I provide in the Personal Bible Study. However, where appropriate, I’ve made notes about issues that might come up in the discussion or goals for particular questions where clarity might be helpful.

You can use the Discussion Guide as a script to lead you through the discussion time. Or you can use it simply as a resource, picking and choosing the questions you think will be most effective with your group. You may also want to plan each week to invite participants to share something that was significant or meaningful to them from the Personal Bible Study, determining ahead of time at what point in the discussion you will invite those comments. On some weeks, you will find that a question is already included in the Discussion Guide, connecting back to the Personal Bible Study that week.

Each week the discussion begins with a question called “Getting the Discussion Going,” which is designed to make people comfortable with talking and sharing personally from their lives. If someone does not have enough confidence in their understanding of the Bible to want to talk much on the more biblical questions, this is a question you may want to use to invite that person’s participation. If discussion comes to your group quite easily, or if you’ve just watched the video presentation of the teaching and sense the group is ready to dive directly into the heart of the lesson, you may want to

skip this question. Admittedly, many of them are very lightweight, but they are offered for the purpose of giving those who may be hesitant to talk about the biblical material an opportunity to talk in the group setting. Feel free to skip it, if you'd like, and instead head directly to the heart of the matter. Depending on the amount of time you have, you may want to work through each of the "Getting to the Heart of It" questions, or you may want to select only a few of these questions to save time for the final two key questions.

While the bulk of the discussion questions center around the biblical storyline and the theology presented in the passage at hand, each week there is also a "Getting Personal" question. This is where you will want to be especially sensitive to encourage a number of people to answer and not allow the discussion to simply follow the flow of the initial comments. Be sure to go back to the original question at some point, asking other participants to share their thoughts and experiences that may be different from those shared first.

The Discussion Guide presents a final question each week that will help participants to grow in their grasp of the larger story of the Bible and how the passage at hand fits into that larger story. If your experience is like mine, this is the part of Bible study that has been lacking for most of my life. Often in studies we have

jumped quickly to personal application to the life of faith, and we haven't stepped back to develop our understanding of the implications of the particular passage we are studying in light of the larger story of God's redemption of all things through Christ. But as we develop our understanding of how God has worked and is working to bring about his plans, we find that it actually helps us to understand and apply parts of Scripture that otherwise would be difficult to grasp. If you want to develop more of your own understanding of the larger story of the Bible, you may want to supplement your study with one of the following books that I have found helpful:

According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible by Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry by Michael Lawrence (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption by Michael Williams (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005).

God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible by Vaughan Roberts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010).

The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative by Christopher J. H. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

Ideas and Resources for Discussion Group Facilitators

Thank you for your willingness to lead a group through this study of these important books in the Old Testament. I always find that when I lead, I learn far more than I do when I'm just a member of the group, because I know I must invest more effort to truly "own" the material. I hope that the extra investment in this study of these books of the Bible will be a blessing to you as you seek to effectively lead your group.

Leading Your Discussion Group Well

What is your goal or role as a discussion leader? I suggest you make it your goal to guide your group through a time of open and authentic discussion of the biblical truths presented in the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter or video, seeking to clarify challenging concepts, solidify the group's grasp of the truths presented, and apply those truths to real life. Sometimes we have anxiety about leading or are reluctant to lead because we know we don't have all the answers, and we're afraid someone will come up with a question we can't answer or will take the discussion in a direction we can't handle. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by the false expectation that if you step up to facilitate the discussion you must have all of the "right" answers. Too many times in our discussions of the Bible, someone in the group (and oftentimes it is the leader) feels he or she must sum up every part of the discussion with the "right" answer. But as you lead your group, I encourage you to avoid the compulsion to come quickly to the "right" answer to every question. Don't be afraid to let some questions hang for a while or to allow members to struggle with the issues involved

in the series of questions. Keep asking for the input of other participants. Also, there's nothing wrong with admitting, as the leader, that you don't know something or don't fully understand something and need to do some more study on it or want to invite someone on the pastoral staff to help answer the question. Determine to lead your group as a fellow learner and not as an expert who knows all. Expect God to use his Word not only in the lives of your group members but in your life as well!

Also be careful, as the leader, that you are a facilitator and not a dominator. Our goal as a facilitator is to encourage other people to talk and discuss. Sometimes, because we are so enthusiastic, we, as leaders, can tend to dominate the discussion. For some of us, it requires significant effort to limit our own input in the discussion so that others will be encouraged to talk.

While you do not want to dominate the group, you do want to lead effectively and efficiently. I assure you that you will have group members who will want you to lead with strength to create an environment that fosters meaningful discussion. As the leader, you set the tone for authenticity and openness. You set an example of giving short answers so that others can talk and of being a good, responsive listener. Being an effective leader also means that it is up to you to bring reluctant talkers into the conversation and to redirect the conversation when it has gone off track. Few people want to be part of a group that is inflexible, restrictive, or rules-oriented, but they do want to be part of a group that is organized and purposeful, in which expecta-

tions are unapologetically communicated and stated guidelines are respected.

Using Your Time Effectively

As the leader, you have the responsibility for directing how to use the time for group discussion. While some participants may be very casual about how the time is used, others in your group are very aware of the time and become frustrated when they feel their valuable time is being wasted. There are several issues, I've found, that have a significant impact on using the time allotted for small-group discussion effectively:

Getting Started

So often we run out of time because we are slow to get started. We are waiting for latecomers, or chatting, or enjoying some food together and simply let valuable discussion time get away from us. All groups develop a culture; members learn whether the group will really start on time or not, and they adjust their sense of urgency in regard to arrival time accordingly. Certainly you need to allow some time for participants to greet each other and to share their lives with each other, but you will want to determine how long that will last and give the group a firm start time for the discussion. If you set a culture of starting on time regardless of whether or not everyone in the group has arrived and not allowing latecomers to interrupt your discussion when they arrive, you may find that group members become more punctual. On the first day you meet, be sure to ask members to join the group and enter into the already-commenced discussion as unobtrusively as possible when they arrive after the discussion on the lesson has started. When we stop the discussion while everyone greets the late arriver, perhaps hearing the story of what caused the lateness, it can be challenging to get started again. You as the leader will need to manage this area with a blend of appropriate firmness and grace.

Prayer Requests

Many times, we want our small-group discussion times to include a time of sharing prayer requests, which is a meaningful way of sharing our lives together and exercising our trust and relationship with God. But we also know that sometimes sharing requests can turn into telling long stories and lengthy discussions as other members offer advice or input. One way to handle this, if the use of time for prayer requests is a concern for your group, is to provide notecards for people to write down their requests and share them at the end or simply have members swap cards with someone else. Or you may simply want to determine a time to bring your discussion to a close that will allow time at the end for sharing requests, praying together over those requests, and praying through the truths presented in the lesson.

Getting Stuck along the Way

So often we give too much time to earlier questions and simply don't have time to work our way through all that we want to cover. I strongly suggest you look over the Discussion Guide before your group time to determine how you will use the time. Mark the key questions you must get to. Make a note beside each question you want to be sure to include, indicating an estimate of how much time you want to give for discussing that question, and then watch the clock along the way to keep on track.

Keeping the Focus on God's Word

People come to a Bible study for many reasons, from many situations and struggles, and with varying levels of knowledge of and interest in the Bible. Sometimes our groups can easily slip from being a Bible study group into becoming more of a personal support group. Finding that right balance between biblical study and personal support is a significant challenge for every small-group leader.

I've sometimes heard group leaders say that

when a group member arrives with a significant struggle or sorrow, the leader feels she must set the study aside to listen and give input to that hurting person. Perhaps there are situations where this is the best thing to do, but we must also remember that the Word of God speaks into every need and situation in our lives. It heals, it gives perspective, it instructs, convicts, restores, and renews. Be sure that you do not assume that the advice and input of group members has more power than your discussion of the truths of God's Word to help that hurting person.

Keep in mind that while some participants may come more for the fellowship and sharing of their lives with each other, many other participants are hungry to feast on biblical teaching and discussion of God's Word. If, over time, these participants find that the Word is often set aside or given short shrift, they may look for another forum in which to study God's Word with others.

Ending On Time

Because participants have plans after the study, people to meet, children to pick up from child-care, etc., it is important that you end on time so that participants will not be slipping out one-by-one, or be unable to focus on the discussion because of the distraction of needing to be somewhere else.

Dealing with Common Challenges

Sharing of Opinion without Regard to God's Word

It is only natural that group members will often begin their input in the discussion with the words, "Well, I think . . ." And in fact, you will notice that many questions are phrased in a "what do you think" manner. This is purposeful, not only to get people thinking, but also to emphasize that there isn't necessarily a right or wrong answer and that varying perspectives may be helpful. But we also want to cultivate a sense

of the authority of Scripture in our discussions. Though it is not a welcome perspective in our culture, every opinion does not have equal value or weight with every other opinion. The revealed truth of God's Word is what must carry the greatest weight in our discussions. While you don't want to embarrass someone in the group setting who states something that is clearly unscriptural, it may be a good idea to gently challenge a questionable opinion with something like, "That's interesting. I wonder how you would support that from Scripture?" Or you might want to find a time outside the group setting to discuss the issue, using biblical support to gently challenge error.

The Discussion Gets Lively but Off Track

Sometimes one person answers, and then another person answers, and the discussion can quickly get away from the original question and onto an interesting but perhaps not directly related issue. When this happens, it may be wise to state the obvious and then turn the focus back to the content at hand by saying something like, "We could certainly talk a long time about X, but we have so much important material to discuss in our lesson this week, let's get back to that." If you haven't gotten to some of the key truth involved in the question, go back and state the original question again, asking perhaps, "Did anyone see it differently or have another idea?"

Group Members Are Quiet and Slow to Respond

It is important as a leader to become comfortable with silence, especially at first. Sometimes people are just slow to get going in the discussion and don't want to appear to be a know-it-all or a dominator of the discussion time. Some people fear having the "wrong" answer or revealing their biblical illiteracy, especially if they are surrounded by people they perceive to have more biblical knowledge than they do. One way

to deal with an awkward silence is to make a joke about the silence without coming across as chiding your group. Humor is always a great way to diffuse discomfort. I have a friend who sometimes says, "I can wait you out!" Don't be afraid to call on people to answer questions. You probably don't want to do that with every question, but some people simply don't like to answer a question unless they're invited to do so. Often these people have very thoughtful answers that will benefit the group. You might want to turn to the reluctant participant and say, "What do you think about that, Joan?" or, "Is that how you see it, Katie?"

You will also want to develop the habit of affirming the answers and willingness of those who share in your group. Set the example of being a responsive and attentive listener and commenting on their input as insightful, something you've never thought of before, or as personally helpful to you. Make sure you are focusing on the person who is sharing rather than on how you will ask your next question. Resist the temptation to sum up or add to every answer given, though it may be helpful to restate some answers if you can help to clarify something that someone may be struggling to articulate. You can also help to generate genuine give-and-take by asking a follow-up to someone's statement or by asking that person to tell you more about what she has said.

One Person Dominates the Discussion

If you have someone who tends to answer every question or dominates the discussion, you might begin the next question with the statement, "I'd love to hear from someone who has not shared yet today; what do you think?" Or you might direct your next question specifically to another group member. Sometimes, when a participant is speaking too long, you do a service to the group and the discussion to discreetly interrupt, perhaps saying something

like, "What you're saying is helpful, and I'd love to hear someone else's thoughts," or summarize what they've said in a concise statement and use it as a transition to the next question. Another method is to interrupt with a question such as, "What verse or phrase helped you to see that?" Remember, the other group members want and need you to take charge in this situation to lead effectively. You might also want to pull that person aside at some point and tell her that you really want to create an atmosphere in the group in which everyone is sharing. Ask her if she would be willing to pick two or three of the questions that she really wants to share and to refrain from answering questions less important to her, so that others in the group might become more willing to take part in the discussion.

Participants Habitually Do Not Complete the Personal Bible Study

Everyone has weeks when her schedule or a sick child makes it difficult to complete the lesson. But when group members are habitually not completing the Personal Bible Study, it is a problem. If you are using the video study, the content of the lectures assumes participants have a great deal of familiarity with the passages, as there is not enough time to read all of the applicable Scripture; therefore, participants will not be prepared for what is being presented without having completed the Personal Bible Study. If you are using only the book for your study, there will be little foundation for group discussion if the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter have not been read prior to the group time. Be sure to emphasize the importance of completing the assignments. Do this at the beginning of your time together on the first week and again the second week you meet. Without being rigid or lacking in grace, you want to call participants to follow through on their commitment to the study rather than give them an easy out every time. As

humans we all need accountability, and sometimes in Bible study groups we are so afraid of offending or embarrassing participants that we do not fulfill our role as leaders by encouraging faithfulness, punctuality, and full participation. If someone repeatedly struggles to get the lessons done, you might:

- ≈ Suggest that instead of hoping to find some time during the week, she should make an appointment for a specific time on her calendar to complete the lesson during the week and then commit to keeping the appointment, as she would for a lunch date with a friend or for a doctor's appointment. Maybe you can even ask if she would like for you to check in with her to see if she kept her appointment prior to next week's meeting.
- ≈ Explore the possibility of her setting a time during the week to get together personally or by phone with another group member to work through the questions together. Or offer to do this with her.
- ≈ Consider expanding the study to twenty weeks so that the group does the Personal Bible Study together every other week.

If a group member continues to be unable to complete the work, don't worry about it if it does not adversely affect the rest of the group or the discussion time. We cannot always fully grasp what another person's life is like, and if the best she can do is get there, you might decide that is enough. If it does adversely affect the group's morale, attitude, or discussion time, you might ask her if it would be better to withdraw and participate in a study requiring this level of commitment and preparation at a later time when she can devote herself to it more fully.

Disagreement with What Is Being Taught

Sometimes seeing things a little differently can be very productive in a group discussion. We learn from each other as we discover and discuss the differences or nuances in how we see things. There are many matters in this study that allow for a breadth of perspectives, and there are some matters that challenge what may be dearly held perspectives. What is not welcome in the group is a repeatedly argumentative spirit or combative approach to what is being presented. If areas of disagreement come up that cannot be productively resolved in the group, you may want to say something like, "I appreciate your perspective on that. We need to move on in our discussion, but let's get together, just the two of us, or with Pastor _____, and talk this through some more. I'm sure we both can learn more about this."

Because we are humans dealing with other humans, we will likely have areas of disagreement, different experiences, and different preferences. But that never means that we cannot have unity as we seek to submit ourselves to God's Word. This and every other aspect is a matter of prayer as you prepare to lead your group. God always equips us to do what he calls us to do. Ask God to give you the wisdom to work through whatever may come up in your small group. Ask him for insight into the personalities of the people in your group and the backgrounds that have made them who they are and shaped their perspectives about the Scriptures. Ask God to fill your heart with a burden to love your group members as you lead them through this study of his Word.

Week 1

An Introduction to the Prophets

Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Nancy mentioned several things that make studying the Prophetic Books challenging: the fact that we are unfamiliar with the historical and geographical setting, that the oracles are repetitive and confusing, and that we misunderstand the nature of prophecy. Can you relate to any of those, or are there other aspects of the Prophetic Books that you find intimidating or challenging?

2. Many of us have Bibles that include maps to help us with the geography, and timelines of the kings and prophets to help us with the flow of history. Let's take a minute to look in our Bibles to see and share with each other what resources we might have at our fingertips to help us overcome this challenge to studying the Prophetic Books. (For example, on page 1232 of the *ESV Study Bible*, there is a timeline entitled "Activity of the Writing Prophets during the Reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah." In the back, map 6 displays the divided kingdom, and map 7 displays the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that took Israel and Judah into exile.)

Getting to the Heart of It

3. While the priests in Israel were all from the tribe of Levi, and the kings descended from other kings, none of the prophets became a prophet because his father was a prophet. Some of the prophets were priests, but most were ordinary people called by God in a variety of ways, from a variety of backgrounds, to speak for God. Read

the following verses and note the different ways God called and instructed his prophets.

- ≈ Isaiah 6:1–9
- ≈ Jeremiah 1:1–9
- ≈ Ezekiel 1:1–3; 2:1–3; 3:27
- ≈ Hosea 1:2
- ≈ Amos 7:14–15
- ≈ Jonah 1:1

4. In 2 Peter 1:21 we read: "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." How does this help to explain why the content of the Prophetic Books is somewhat repetitive and never contradictory, although it varies in style and setting?

5. Turn to 1 Peter 1:10–12. Discuss what these verses reveal about:

≈ the subject of the Prophetic Books

Salvation, the grace that was to be yours in Christ

≈ the limits to the prophets' understanding

Didn't know exactly who the Christ would be or when he would come

≈ the source of prophets' message

The Spirit of Christ

≈ the specifics of what was revealed

The sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories

≈ the reason the prophets wrote down their prophecy

To serve those who would come to faith in Christ through the preaching of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit

Getting Personal

6. What did you read or hear in the teaching that helps you to believe that what the prophets had to say to the people of their day might also speak to you today? And what do you think is required for you to hear that message?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

7. We're going to see, as we work our way through the Prophetic Books, that much of what the prophets said was going to happen, did happen shortly after the prophecy was given. Some of it was fulfilled in the incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. Some of it is

being fulfilled now as the gospel of Christ brings life to peoples and nations throughout the earth. And some of it is yet to be fulfilled, when Christ returns to establish the new heaven and the new earth. What does this tell us about the value of studying the message of the prophets?

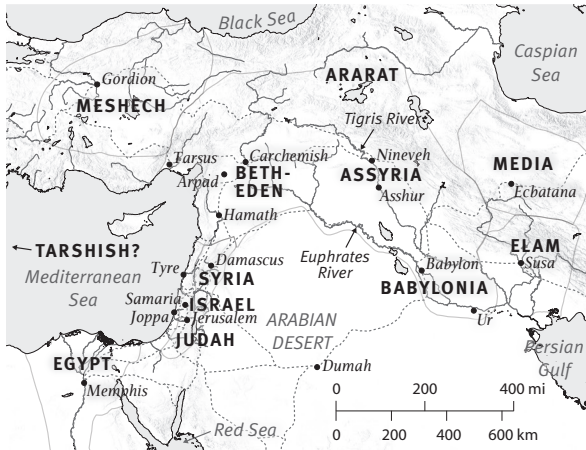
It tells us that these are not just ancient books with nothing to say about the reality we live in now and our future reality when Christ returns. These books actually provide pictures and understanding for us of what God is doing in us now by his Spirit and what he will bring about in the new heavens and new earth that can help us to persevere and endure as we live in a world impacted by the curse of sin.

Week 2

Jonah

Personal Bible Study

To get a sense of the geography of this story before you begin to study it, find the key cities mentioned in the story of Jonah on a map, including: Joppa, Tarshish, and Nineveh.



The Setting of Jonah

1. Read Jonah 1:1–2. What two things did God tell Jonah to do and why?

(1) Arise, go to Nineveh and (2) call out against it. Their evil has risen to the level that God can no longer tolerate it.

2. Read Jonah 1:3–16. What did the captain tell Jonah to do, and do you find any evidence that he did it?

“Arise, call out to your god!” There is no evidence that Jonah called out to God until he called out to God from the bottom of the sea.

3. In Jonah 1:8, the sailors ask Jonah a series of questions, and his answer is found in verse 9. What is interesting about his answer, considering the situation he was in?

He doesn't answer the question about his occupation because he has effectively resigned from his job as prophet. He claims to “fear the LORD,” though he is running away from the Lord and is assuming it will work. He says that his God is the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, which is interesting since they are in the middle of the sea with a storm that has been hurled on them from heaven and they must have been anxious to see the dry land.

4. According to Jonah 1:11–13, what did Jonah tell the sailors to do so that the storm would stop, and what did they do instead?

Jonah told them to “hurl” him into the sea so that the sea would become quiet, but they didn't want to do it and just rowed harder.

5. The sailors, who had all been praying to their gods for help, did something amazing. According to Jonah 1:14–16, what was it?

They “called out to the LORD” asking for mercy. They threw Jonah into the sea. They feared the Lord exceedingly, offered a sacrifice, and made vows.

6. If we had never read the story of Jonah before and had no idea what would happen to him, we might expect to read that Jonah was never heard from again. But instead something surprising happened. According to 1:17, what was it, and what or who caused it?

The Lord “appointed” a great fish to swallow Jonah.

7. Jonah 2 is written in the form of a psalm, describing Jonah's prayer to God in his distress. Consider that Jonah may have written this later as he reflected on his desperate prayer and miraculous salvation rather than this being a record of the text of his prayer from inside the

fish. According to verses 2–7 write phrases that indicate:

What Jonah did:

He “called out to the LORD” (v. 2), “went down” to the place of the dead (v. 6), and “remembered the LORD” and prayed (v. 7).

What God did:

He “answered [Jonah]” (v. 2), “cast [Jonah] into the deep” (v. 3), and “brought up [Jonah’s] life from the pit” (v. 6).

8. Jonah’s prayer psalm ends with a statement that is likely intended to be the crescendo or key point of his entire book: “Salvation belongs to the LORD!” (2:9). Some theologians say that this could actually be the key point or summary message of the entire Bible. How has this truth been evident in Jonah 1 and 2; and, from what you know of Jonah’s story, how will it also prove true in Jonah 3 and 4?

God saved the pagan sailors even though they heard about God from the world’s worst witness—a disobedient, former prophet who was unwilling to call on God for mercy. God reached down to save that disobedient prophet when he finally cried out to God after he had gone as low as he could go.

God will save an entire city of wicked Gentiles through the limited message of pending judgment delivered by a reluctant prophet. The sailors couldn’t row hard enough to save themselves. Jonah could not save himself from the bottom of the sea. The Ninevites did “not know their right hand from the left” (4:11) and therefore could not find their way to God. They all needed a God who initiates, carries out, and accomplishes salvation.

9. Read Jonah 3:1–4. In these verses we have the entire sermon Jonah preached or at least a concise summary of his message. What is it?

“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

10. According to Jonah 3:5–8, how did the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah’s sermon?

They believed God (v. 5). They fasted and mourned their sin (v. 5). They called out to God (v. 8). They turned from their evil ways and violence (v. 8), and they hoped that God might relent and not destroy them.

11. According to Jonah 3:10, how did God respond to the real change in the lives of the people of Nineveh, and how is this a demonstration of the truth found in Jeremiah 18:7–10?

The people of Nineveh repented and God showed them mercy. This is the sure character of God: when people repent, God no longer plans to punish or destroy them.

12. If we were writing Jonah’s story, we would probably end it differently from what we read in Jonah 4. We would like it to end with Jonah celebrating that God had turned away his wrath from the Ninevites after they repented. But Jonah’s response was very different. According to Jonah 4:1–3, what was it and why?

Jonah was “displeased exceedingly.” He was angry because God showed mercy to Nineveh instead of destroying Nineveh—just as he knew God would do since he is “a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”

13. How is the way Jonah felt when God showed mercy to the Ninevites different from how he felt when God showed him mercy by sending the great fish to save him?

Jonah was grateful and full of thanksgiving when God showed him mercy. But he was angry and full of resentment when God showed mercy to people he hated.

14. Read Jonah 4:4–11. What point do you think God is making to Jonah by providing a plant for shade and then sending a worm to destroy the plant?

Jonah’s heart was very different from God’s heart, and the experience with the plant revealed that. He cared more about his own comfort than he cared about people, more about a plant that perished than about 120,000 who would have perished apart from God’s mercy.

15. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that the people of Nineveh repented when Jonah preached but that someone “greater than Jonah” was preaching to them, and they did not repent (Matt. 12:38-41). Let’s consider some ways that Jesus is “greater than Jonah.” Read the following statements about Jonah and write a corresponding or contrasting statement about Jesus, following the examples given for the first two. The statement about Jesus should be worded similarly to the statement about Jonah.

Jonah	Jesus
“The word of the LORD came to Jonah.” (1:1)	John 1:14 <i>Jesus is the Word of the Lord who came.</i>
Jonah was sent by God to deliver a message of condemnation to a people deserving judgment. (1:2)	John 3:17 <i>Jesus was sent by God to deliver a message of salvation to a people deserving judgment.</i>
When God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, Jonah turned and went in the other direction. (1:3)	Luke 9:43–44, 51–53 <i>When God called Jesus to go to the cross, “his face was set toward Jerusalem.”</i>
Because he had been disobedient to God, Jonah offered himself up to die in the sea so that everyone on the ship would live. (1:12)	Heb. 7:27 <i>Out of obedience to God, Jesus offered himself to die on the cross so that everyone who trusts in him will live.</i>
A guilty Jonah was thrown off the ship to die by sailors who said, “LORD, don’t make us die [changed from “pay”] for this man’s sin.” (1:14 NLT)	Matt. 20:28; Heb. 9:28 <i>An innocent Jesus gave himself up to death, willing to pay for the sins of many.</i>
Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights before being vomited onto dry land. (1:17)	Matt. 12:40 <i>Jesus was in the belly of the earth three days before emerging from the tomb.</i>
Jonah was powerless to save his own life at the bottom of the sea and in the belly of the fish. (2:6)	John 10:18 <i>Jesus had the authority to lay down his life and the authority to take it up again.</i>
Jonah preached to Gentiles who were quick to repent. (3:4–5)	Matt. 11:20 <i>Jesus preached to Israelites who refused to repent.</i>
Jonah was angry as he looked over the city that repented and was saved. (4:1, 5)	Luke 19:41–42 <i>Jesus wept as he looked over the city that refused to repent and be saved.</i>
Jonah wanted to die rather than live in a world where people he hated experienced God’s mercy. (4:3)	Ephesians 2:3–5 <i>Jesus was willing to die so that people in the world whom God loves can experience his mercy.</i>

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Most of us have heard the story of Jonah taught before, and we might have taught it to children in Sunday school. As you think back, what are the usual lessons that have been taught from this story, and now what do you think is the main lesson we are intended to learn from the book? How might you title the story of Jonah?

As the leader, you may want to find a children's storybook on the story of Jonah and compare how it tells the story and what it emphasizes with what the story is really about.

Getting to the Heart of It

2. What did Jonah know about the Ninevites and about God that made him decide to defy God's instruction to go to Nineveh, and what did Jonah evidently not understand about God?

He knew the Ninevites were evil and cruel and that God shows mercy to evil, cruel people and brings them to repentance. Evidently he did not understand that nothing can hinder God's intentions to save and that God cares deeply about those who are trapped in sin.

3. Talk through the scene on the ship in Jonah 1. What are some of the ironic and interesting things about it?

(1) The storm of judgment rages and Jonah sleeps. (2) The pagan captain has to tell Jonah, the prophet of God, to pray. The captain seems to have more faith in God's power to save them from perishing than Jonah does. (3) Jonah is supposed to speak for God, but the men on the ship have to ply him with questions to get anything out of him about God. (4) Jonah says he fears the Lord, the God of heaven, but the sailors are the ones who respond in great fear of God's judgment instead of Jonah. (5) The pagan sailors are more compassionate than Jonah, not wanting to throw him in the sea. (6) The pagan sailors, with little understanding of Yahweh, call out to him to save them and seem to welcome his sovereign power to do as he pleases. Though Jonah is arguably the world's worst witness, the sailors come to faith.

4. Who are the various people who repent in this story and what does their repentance look like?

The sailors "feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows" (1:16).

Jonah was saved from death in the bottom of the sea and saved from his rebellious running. The story ends with us not really knowing how Jonah is saved from his self-righteous indifference to people who don't know how to find God, but since we have this book, likely written by him, the book seems to be a confession of his wrong.

The people of Nineveh believed God, called for a fast, and put on sackcloth. The king proclaimed they should "call out mightily to God . . . turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands" (3:8).

5. Jonah's response to Nineveh's repentance and to God's relenting is not what most of us would like to record for posterity to read about us. Why do you think it was important to Jonah to include this in his book and to end his book this way?

It called on his people—and us—to examine ourselves for the same self-absorption and lack of compassion. His final question lingers, calling us to come to a conclusion about the heart of God toward sinners.

6. What evidence would support the suggestion that "salvation belongs to the LORD" is the main message of the book of Jonah? Why is it good news that "salvation belongs to the LORD"?

See, and perhaps read together, the "Looking Forward" section.

7. Open to the page in your Personal Bible Study on which you wrote statements contrasting or comparing Jonah with one greater than Jonah, Jesus. Which of these was particularly significant to you?

Getting Personal

8. In what ways do you see yourself in Jonah and long to be more like Jesus and less like Jonah?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. When we come to the New Testament, we see some of Jonah's attitude in assuming that God's mercy is just for the Jews. Read together the following verses and discuss how each expands upon the message of the book of Jonah: Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 10:34–43; 15:1–21.

Week 3

Hosea

Personal Bible Study

Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, which he addresses by several different names in his book—Samaria, Jacob, and Ephraim. Each of these names emphasizes particular aspects of Israel's sins. Samaria was the center of idol worship, Jacob was known for his deceit, and Ephraim, the largest tribe in Israel, was the leader in rebellion.

1. In Hosea 1:1, Hosea lists those who were kings of Israel during the days when he prophesied. While this helps us to establish the time in which he prophesied, it also emphasizes the spiritual climate in which he ministered. Five of those seven kings are said to have continued in the sin of the first Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:21–23). According to 1 Kings 12:26–29, what was this terrible sin that Jeroboam committed?

Jeroboam set up golden calves in two cities in the northern kingdom, an alternate religion to that of worshiping Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem.

2. God's first message to his prophet Hosea must have been hard to hear and harder to obey. What did God tell him to do in Hosea 1:2 and why?

He was to take to himself a wife "of whoredom" and have children born from her whoring to be a living demonstration/illustration of the Lord's marriage to his unfaithful wife, Israel.

3. Read Hosea 1:3–9. Each of the names in this story is rich with meaning. The name Hosea means "savior," and he is presented in this story as a picture of Christ. The name Gomer, his wife,

means "consumption," and she represents Israel, consumed by sin. What prophetic pronouncement is made by the names of each of Gomer's children?

Jezreel, which means "seed of God" or "scattered":
God will scatter his people in judgment.

Lo-ruhamah, which means "no mercy":
God will no longer show compassion or mercy to his people.

Lo-ammi, which means "not my people."
God will disown the people who were his own possession. They will no longer be his covenant people.

4. As is typical in prophecy, the text throughout the book of Hosea moves back and forth between threatened judgment for continued disobedience and anticipated restoration as a result of repentance. What is the hope held out to God's people in Hosea 1:10–11?

God will fulfill his promise to Abraham of a vast number of descendants. When they repent, they will be restored, gathered, reconciled, and secure.

5. Read Hosea 2:1–13 and listen to God speaking in poetic form through Hosea as an offended husband calling his unfaithful wife to repentance through threatened judgment. Note several words or phrases that indicate how Israel has offended the Lord.

Adultery (v. 2), played the whore (v. 5), gone after lovers (v. 5), idol worship (v. 11), burned offerings to Baals (v. 13), and forgot the Lord (v. 13)

Note several words or phrases that indicate what the Lord intends to do to Israel:

“Strip her naked” (v. 3), “make her like a wilderness” (v. 3), “kill her with thirst” (v. 3), “hedge up her way with thorns”(v. 6), “build a wall against her” (v. 6), take back grain, wine, oil they sacrificed to Baal (v. 9), uncover her lewdness (v. 10), put an end to her idolatrous revelry (v. 11), lay waste her vines (v. 12), and punish her (v. 13)

6. Once again, this oracle of judgment transitions quickly to an oracle of hope and restoration. Note several words or phrases from Hosea 2:14–23 that indicate what the Lord intends to do to restore Israel.

Allure her, bring her into the wilderness, speak tenderly to her (v. 14); give her vineyards, make the Valley of Achor a door of hope (v. 15); remove the names of the Baals from her mouth (v. 17); abolish war from the land (v. 18); betroth her to himself forever (v. 19)

7. What will Israel do, according to Hosea 2:16?

Israel will call God “My Husband” meaning that she will love the Lord exclusively.

8. In Hosea 3:1 the story of Hosea and Gomer picks up again with the Lord speaking to Hosea. What did God tell Hosea to do this time and why?

He is to go again and love Gomer even though she is adulterous with another man. This is to demonstrate the Lord’s faithful, pursuing love to Israel, who loves other gods.

9. What did Hosea do, according to Hosea 3:2–3?

He bought Gomer back for the price of a common slave, even though she already belonged to him. He insisted that she live with him and love him exclusively.

10. Just as Gomer was to purify herself by living with Hosea without giving herself to another man, what, according to Hosea 3:4–5, did Israel need to do to purify herself?

She would need to return to loyalty to the Davidic king, rather than having a king who was not a descendant of David. She would need to abandon worshiping the Baals through offering sacrifices, practicing magic, and having household idols. Most of all, she needed to come, in fear, to the Lord.

11. Hosea’s pursuing, redeeming, and sanctifying love for Gomer provides us with a vivid and moving picture of Christ’s love for us, his bride. Look up the following New Testament verses and write a sentence about Christ and his bride, the church, that corresponds to Hosea and his bride, Gomer.

Hosea and his bride, Gomer	Jesus and his bride, the church
Hosea took to himself a bride who was altogether unworthy of him and totally without regard for him. (1:3)	Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:12–13 <i>Christ took to himself a bride who was altogether unworthy of him and totally without regard for him.</i>
Hosea pledged his faithfulness to his bride, Gomer, not because he knew she would be faithful but knowing she would not be faithful. (1:2–3)	2 Tim. 2:13 <i>Christ is faithful to his bride, the church, not because we are faithful but in spite of our unfaithfulness.</i>
Gomer’s pursuit of other lovers brought her into bondage, slavery, and utter ruin. (3:2)	John 8:34; Rom. 6:20–23 <i>Our sin has brought us into bondage, slavery, and utter ruin.</i>
Hosea redeemed Gomer by paying the ransom price of silver and barley. (3:2)	1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18–19 <i>Jesus redeemed his bride by paying the ransom price of his own blood.</i>
Hosea redeemed Gomer, sanctifying her to himself. (3:3)	1 Thess. 5:23–25 <i>Christ redeemed his bride, sanctifying her to himself.</i>

Hosea and his bride, Gomer	Jesus and his bride, the church
Hosea loved his bride, Gomer, who was not pure, with the intention of making her pure. (3:3)	Eph. 5:25–27 <i>Christ loves his bride, the church, who is not pure, with the intention of making her pure.</i>
Out of great love for Gomer, Hosea brought her home to live with him, where he could show kindness to her over the years to come. (3:3)	Eph. 2:4–7 <i>Out of his great love for us, God has seated us in heavenly places with Christ so that he might show kindness to us over the ages to come.</i>

12. Chapters 4–14 of Hosea are a cycle of oracles—covenant-lawsuit oracles that detail Israel’s sin, judgment oracles that describe how God will deal with Israel’s sin, and salvation or restoration oracles that describe what God will do to save his people from their sin.

a. Note a word or two from the following verses that detail Israel’s sin:

4:1–2 *No faithfulness, no steadfast love, and no knowledge of God; they only curse, lie, murder, steal, commit adultery, and break all bounds; bloodshed follows bloodshed*

6:9 *Priests band together and murder.*

7:7 *None of the kings call on God.*

8:12 *God’s law was strange to them.*

9:10 *Consecrated themselves to idols and became detestable like the idols*

11:7 *Bent on turning away from God*

12:1 *They multiply falsehood and violence, make a covenant with Assyria, and carry oil to Egypt.*

13:9 *Against God, their helper*

b. What are some of the consequences of Israel’s infidelity found in the judgment oracles in these chapters?

4:6 *God will forget their children.*

5:9 *Israel will become a desolation.*

7:11–12 *God will bring them down and discipline them.*

8:14 *God will send fire upon the cities and devour her strongholds.*

9:12–14 *God will bereave them, give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.*

10:15 *The king of Israel will be utterly cut off.*

c. Even though his people are unfaithful to him, the Lord has yoked himself to Israel and will not give up on them, just like Hosea did not give up on Gomer, even in the face of the rampant unfaithfulness. What does God promise to do to restore them?

6:1–3 *He will heal them, bind up their wounds, and come down on them like the refreshing rains.*

8:10 *Though they have sold themselves among the nations, he will gather them together.*

11:10–11 *His children will return to him in trembling when he roars; they will come like birds and doves; and the Lord will settle them in their homes.*

14:4 *The Lord will take the initiative, will heal their waywardness, and love them freely.*

14:5 *He will be like dew to Israel, causing them to blossom abundantly.*

13. As we read about God’s promises of healing and restoration, we need to realize that while some of the promises may have been partially fulfilled when a small remnant of God’s people returned to the land after the exile, all of these promises are ultimately and completely fulfilled in Christ. Hosea’s prophecy presents God’s

loving commitment to preserve not solely Abraham's physical descendants but also his elect from every people and nation—Abraham's spiritual descendants, the Israel of God. Read the prophetic promise found in Hosea 1:10 and 3:5. How is it fulfilled, according to Romans 9:23–25; 11:25–26; and 1 Peter 2:10?

Hosea promises that those who were “not my people,” will be called “my people.” Peter and Paul proclaim the prophecy is fulfilled not only by Jews who put their faith in Christ but also by Gentiles who, through faith in Christ, have become spiritual sons of Abraham. God's people, now made up of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews, fulfill Hosea's prophecy of those who were “not my people” being called “my people.”

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Nancy talked about her list making in regard to what she wanted in a human husband. What are some aspects of Christ that make him a desirable divine husband?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. In the Personal Bible Study, you went through Hosea 4–14 and found specific sins that Israel had committed. What were some of them, and why would those particular sins break God's heart?

3. Why do you think God would ask his prophet Hosea to do something so difficult and painful? If you lived in his day and observed his life, what message do you think you would have gotten from observing his life and hearing his prophetic oracles?

Sometimes we have a hard time seeing the truth about ourselves and seeing our attitudes and behaviors reflected in a story outside of ourselves can help us to see what we need to see. That was what God intended for the Israelites. The people of his day should have seen the offensive nature of their idolatry in Gomer and the faithfulness of God in Hosea's pursuit of her.

4. What would it have meant to the Israelites in Hosea's day to hear that God will call them “Not My People” and “No Mercy”?

This would have been a complete loss of identity and hope.

5. In Hosea 3:1–3 we see several aspects of the salvation we receive through Christ illustrated by Hosea's saving Gomer from slavery. How do we see: election, redemption, adoption, and sanctification?

Election—he chose her, not for any good quality or potential in her.

Redemption—though she was his, he paid a ransom to redeem her from slavery.

Adoption—he brought her into his home, into his family.

Sanctification—Hosea set Gomer apart from all other lovers and bound her to himself. Over a period of time he intended to cleanse away her inclinations toward other lovers and the impact her whoring had on her.

6. The oracles in Hosea 4–14 go through cycles of detailing Israel's sins, predicting the judgment to come, and promising a future restoration. In the closing chapter, the Lord says to Israel, “I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them” (14:4). How would you explain why God would do this when his people clearly deserve the judgments described throughout the book? (See Rom. 3:21–26 for help.)

God's anger can turn away from them only because it will be poured out on Christ. By Christ's stripes they will be healed. God will turn away from Jesus when he is on the cross so that God can welcome sinners.

Getting Personal

7. As you think about your own faulty faithfulness in relation to Christ, what does it mean to you that he writes across your life in the red letters of his own blood: “Cleansed,” “Forgiven,” “Beloved,” “Accepted,” “Mine”?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. Read through the “Looking Forward” section of this chapter. How does this help you to understand when and how all the promises of restoration and blessing described throughout Hosea are being kept and will be kept?

Key here is the way the promises are being kept now. In this life, we experience the newness of life in Christ, which will come to completion and perfection in the life to come when Christ returns, and we are purged of sin and able to love our Bridegroom purely forever even as he loves us.

Week 4

Micah

Personal Bible Study

Micah 1:1 reveals where Micah was from, the kings who were on the throne over Judah when he prophesied, and who he was speaking to in his prophecy. While the prophecy concerns “Samaria and Jerusalem,” meaning both the northern and southern kingdoms, we’re going to see that Micah primarily used God’s judgment against the northern kingdom, Samaria, through Assyria’s invasion and imposed exile as a warning to the southern kingdom, Judah, encouraging them to repent so that they would not face the same fate.

1. When we read Micah, we need to recognize that it is not one letter or message. It is more like a collection of excerpts from Micah’s prophetic oracles over the course of his seventy years of ministry. It can be divided into three sections. Note the similar way each section begins as well as the particular group being addressed in each section of his prophecy:

1:2 *Hear, all the peoples of the earth.*

3:1 *Hear, corrupt leaders and rulers in both the northern and southern kingdoms.*

6:1–2 *Hear, God’s covenant people.*

2. In Micah 1:2–9, Micah describes what is about to happen in the northern kingdom and eventually in the southern kingdom. What is going to happen and why?

Israel is going to be utterly destroyed because of its idolatry.

3. Micah 2:1–5 describes those who lie awake at night thinking up ways to take land from their fellow Israelites (remember that land was allotted to families by Joshua when the Israelites entered the Promised Land). What key words describe these oppressors, and, according to verse 5, what will their judgment be?

Wickedness and evil.

They will be excluded from the “assembly” of those who are allotted an inheritance in the land when the faithful remnant returns from exile.

4. According to Micah 2:6–11, what was the essence of the message the preachers in Micah’s day were preaching?

Unprincipled prophets were telling those who corrupted justice and oppressed the poor that because they were Israelites, God would bless rather than judge them.

5. In Micah 2:12–13, we have the first oracle of hope in the book. What does God promise in these verses?

Like a shepherd he will gather the remnant of Israel into his protective fold and lead them like a king into his city.

6. According to Micah 3:1–4, though the civil leaders of Judah were responsible to execute justice, their cannibalistic exploitation of the poor and powerless revealed that they had no interest in walking in God’s ways. What will their judgment be, according to 3:4?

Their refusal to listen to God or to the cries of his people meant that their cries for help would not be heard by God.

7. In Micah 3:12–4:5, Micah predicts what will happen in Jerusalem in the near future and then in the latter days. What is it?

Jerusalem and its temple will be destroyed because of Israel's sin, but in the latter days, the city and temple will be rebuilt so that peoples from many nations will flow into it to be taught by God and walk in his ways. In that day there will be abundant provision and restful security instead of war.

8. How was prophecy in Micah 3:12–4:5 fulfilled, according to the following verses?

John 2:19 Jesus, the true temple, was raised up from the grave through resurrection.

John 12:32 Jesus, lifted up on the cross and now risen and glorified, draws people from every nation to himself.

9. In Micah 4:6–5:5 we discover that though the enemies of God's people are coming to destroy their cities, defile their temple, and humiliate their king, God is going to raise up for himself a king in Israel who will also be a shepherd. What are some details about this shepherd King, given in Micah 5:2–5?

This ruler will be born, not in a place of power, but in unimpressive Bethlehem. He will be the fulfillment of the ancient promises—the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the blessing for all of the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3), and the son of David (2 Sam. 7:12–13). This ruler will rule as a shepherd who gathers, tends, and protects his flock in the power and authority of God himself. He will be their peace.

10. How do we see this prophecy of a shepherd fulfilled in the following verses?

John 4:14 Jesus gives his people living water.

John 6:35 Jesus feeds his people the bread of heaven.

John 6:37 Jesus preserves and secures his people.

John 10:15 Jesus loves his people by laying down his life for them.

John 10:27 Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gathers his flock to himself.

John 10:28 Jesus protects his people from being taken from him.

1 Peter 2:24–25 Jesus heals his people's wounds.

11. In Micah 6:6–7, Micah asks what God wants from sinners, escalating from less costly to more costly sacrifices. List the sacrifices Micah considers.

A young calf

Rivers of oil

My firstborn (human sacrifice)

12. What does Micah say that God really wants, according to Micah 6:8?

God wants his people to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with him.

13. In Micah 6:9–16, a sentence is passed on those who engage in deceitful business practices that take advantage of the poor and weak. What is it?

Desolation, dissatisfaction, futility, hissing, and scorn

14. In Micah 7:14–17, Micah offers a prayer on behalf of his people. What does he ask God to do?

Micah asks God to shepherd his people with the loving authority of his staff, feed them, work miracles among them, and defeat their enemies as he did when they came out of Egypt.

15. According to the following verses, how was Micah's prayer answered?

Mathew 7:29 Jesus spoke with authority.

John 6:27 Jesus fed his sheep with food that endures.

John 20:30 Jesus worked miracles among them.

Hebrews 2:14 Jesus defeated their greatest enemy.

Hebrews 13:20 Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep.

16. In Micah 7:18–20, Micah wonders how God can pardon iniquity, pass over transgression, and no longer be angry toward the repentant remnant of his people. How do Romans 3:24–26 and 8:1–4 help us to understand how this is possible (even more clearly than Micah could have understood it)?

God can pardon and pass over the transgression of those who put their faith in him only because those sins were put upon Christ (Rom. 3:24–26). He does not retain his anger because his wrath against the sin of those who belong to him was exhausted at the cross. Just as decisively as he dealt with the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, so has God dealt with the sins of his people through Christ so that they are no longer under condemnation (Rom. 8:1–4).

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. The prophet Micah prophesied during a time in Israel and Judah that was marked by bribery, dishonesty, oppression, shameless idolatry, judicial corruption, and vain religiosity. And on top of all of this, the Assyrians, known for their cruelty to conquered lands, were an ever-present threat. Imagine if you had lived in Judah during this time. What might your life have been like?

If you're a wealthy, powerful person, perhaps you are obsessed with taking the land of others and plotting how you will get it. If you are a less powerful or wealthy person, perhaps you live in fear of having your land and possessions taken and having no recourse in the courts because of corruption.

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Micah was clear that God was about to judge the sin of Israel and Judah by using the Assyrians and Babylonians, who would take them into exile. But he was also clear that there was hope. What was the hope that Micah presented to God's people of his day?

God would preserve a remnant that would be faithful to him. He would bring them back and send to them a shepherd King who would be unlike the corrupt leaders they had. He would forgive and remove their sin.

3. Perhaps the most well-known verse of this book is Micah 6:8. Is this still what God requires of his people? What does it mean?

Yes, this is what God requires, but we are unable to live perfectly in this way. In kindness, he has made it possible for the perfect righteousness of Christ to be transferred to our account as we are united to Christ by faith. And as we are united to Christ, abide in Christ listening to his word, and are being changed by his Spirit, his righteous ways increasingly become our ways so that more and more, we do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

4. Micah promised that God would come as a shepherd, and in 7:14 Micah prayed for God to come and shepherd his people. How was this prophecy fulfilled and prayer answered?

See the answers to question 10 in the Personal Bible Study on Micah.

5. Read Micah 7:18–20. What does this reveal about how God will deal with the sin of the “remnant of his inheritance”?

See answer to question 16 in the Personal Bible Study on Micah.

6. Micah, whose name means, “Who is like Yahweh?” concludes his book with the question, “Who is a God like you?” What about God is revealed in this book that leads to this rhetorical question?

God's promises to bless his people, his commitment to justice and mercy, his ability to bring about his plans for his history, and his willingness to pardon sin by placing it on his own Son

Getting Personal

7. Jesus is presented to us in this book as our shepherd King. How have you or would you like to experience his shepherding care and his kingly rule?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. Read through the “Looking Forward” section and then look back at Micah 4:1–7. How were various aspects of the verses fulfilled in the coming of Christ the first time, how are they fulfilled in the era in which we now live, and how will they be fulfilled when Christ comes again?

When Christ came and was lifted up on the cross, he made it possible for people from all nations to come to him, to be united to him, and to walk in his ways. Beginning at Pentecost, the word of the Lord, the gospel, began going out from Jerusalem in power bringing peace with God and among his people and bringing the abundant blessings that are ours now in Christ. When Christ comes again, he will be lifted up so that all will bow before him. We will know perfect peace and experience complete satisfaction and be absolutely secure. In the new heavens and new earth we will “walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever” (v. 5).

Week 5

Isaiah

Personal Bible Study

1. Isaiah begins (1:1) by telling us about the kings who ruled over Judah during Isaiah's prophetic ministry. Note several things about each of these kings from the following passages:

Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:1–5, 16–23):

Uzziah ruled over Judah for fifty-two years. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and “set himself to seek God” in the days of Zechariah. He prospered. Then he became proud, presumed to act as a priest in the temple, and was struck with leprosy.

Jotham (2 Chronicles 27):

He did what was right except that he didn't enter the temple. The people still followed corrupt practices under him. He reigned sixteen years.

Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28):

He burned his sons as an offering to the Baals and made offerings on the high places. He cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God and shut up the doors of the temple. Judah experienced defeats from Syria, Israel, Edom, Philistia, and Assyria because of his sin.

Hezekiah (skim 2 Chron. 29–30; 31:20–21; 32:22–26):

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He opened the doors of the temple, brought back the priests and Levites, and reinstated the Passover celebration. He followed God's law, sought God with all his heart, and prospered. The Lord saved Judah under him from Assyria. He became sick, prayed, and was given more years, during which he became proud.

2. Isaiah 6 tells us about the vision Isaiah was given “in the year that King Uzziah died.” Since

Uzziah ruled for fifty-two years, he would have been the only king Isaiah had thus far known. With that in mind, why might Isaiah have needed to see the vision, recorded in Isaiah 6:1–7, at that time?

It was likely a time of uncertainty and anxiety about the future. Isaiah needed to see the King on the throne of the universe who provides his ultimate security. He also needed to see that this divine King was holy—in fact holy, holy, holy—unlike the human kings. The glory and rule of this king extends, not just throughout Jerusalem or Judah, but throughout “the whole earth.”

3. Read John 12:37–41. What does this reveal about who Isaiah saw on the throne?

John makes it clear that it was the glory of Jesus that Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6.

4. Isaiah 9:2–7 speaks of a king who is going to come. “A child is born” speaks of the king's humanity, while “a son is given” speaks of his deity. What are the four titles given to this God-man king, and what does each reveal about what it will be like to live in his kingdom?

Wonderful Counselor—nothing will be too difficult for him; he will be wise and know what to do.

Mighty God—he will have the power to create, sustain, save, and destroy.

Everlasting Father—he will be a benevolent protector, caring for his people.

Prince of Peace—he will bring ultimate reconciliation and blessing.

5. Isaiah 11:1–5 speaks of the reign of a greater David. Think about the kind of kings who sat on

David's throne after David. What aspects of this greater David stand out as a welcome contrast to the kings who had ruled over them?

This king will be wise and understanding instead of foolish. He will know what to do and have the power to accomplish it instead of depending on advisors and having no real power. He will know and fear the Lord rather than ignore and disobey the Lord.

6. God's answer to the needs of his people is not just a king to rule over them but a servant to serve them. How will the servant serve God's people, according to the following passages?

42:1–7: Empowered by God's Spirit, he will bring justice to the nations, deal tenderly with the weak, persevere in his mission to bring justice until it is accomplished, draw Gentiles into the blessings of the covenant, and release people from bondage to sin.

49:1–6: Set apart from his birth and uniquely equipped for his mission, the servant is a prophet. As a weapon in the hand of God, he will speak the truth of salvation and judgment, he will bring Jacob (Israel) back to the Lord, and he will be a "light for the nations" bringing salvation to all the peoples of the earth.

50:4–9: He will sustain the weary with his wise words, he will not rebel (and so will be able to transfer to us his perfect record of obedience), he will offer himself to bear the reproach we deserve, he will be determined to be faithful to what God has called him to do (in contrast to our unfaithfulness).

52:13–53:12: He will take their sin upon himself, so that they can experience God's blessing and healing. Offering himself as a sacrifice for sin, his offering will be accepted by God, satisfying God's justice.

7. In chapters 55–65 of Isaiah, we are introduced to the great conqueror. What do the following passages reveal about the person and work of the conqueror?

55:3–5 (understand that "him" in v. 4 refers to King David, and "you" in v. 5 refers to the conqueror): While David was a great commander over God's covenant people, the conqueror, the Son of David, Jesus, will bring peoples from other nations, in fact from every nation, into the covenant.

61:1–3: He will be anointed by God's Spirit to bring the goodness of the gospel to those who do not have what they need to be acceptable to God, those who have been broken down by the effects of sin, and those bound up by sin's power. He will pay the debt so that all of God's people will receive their inheritance from the Lord. He will bring about the Lord's vengeance eliminating evil and ushering in the time when there is no more crying or pain.

63:1–6: He will come to save through judgment, accomplishing the Lord's vengeance against his enemies.

8. Read Luke 4:16–21 and Revelation 19:11–21. What do these verses reveal about when the conqueror has or will fulfill the prophecies in Isaiah 61:1–3 and 63:1–6?

Jesus fulfilled the first part of Isaiah 61:1–3 in his first coming, but he did not proclaim the day of vengeance or comfort all who mourn. When he comes again, as revealed in Revelation 19, it will be the day of vengeance and an elimination of mourning.

9. Throughout Isaiah's book we find the word "behold" repeated again and again. This is an instruction to look carefully, examine, take it all in. For each of the verses below, write a statement about what we are to "behold" and what it reveals about Christ?

Isaiah 6:7 with Hebrews 9:26 and 1 John 2:2:

The burning coal taken from the altar represents an acceptable sacrifice that removes guilt and atones for sin. Christ is the acceptable sacrifice which removes guilt and atones for sin that all of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed toward.

Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:20–23:

A sign is going to be given to King Ahaz to strengthen his faith: a virgin who will conceive and give birth to a son whose name (and therefore his person) means "God with us." Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, born of a virgin, Mary.

Isaiah 28:16 with Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6:

Jesus is a sure foundation, the cornerstone on which God is building his "house," the church.

Isaiah 32:1 with Romans 14:17–18:
Jesus is the king who will reign in righteousness.

Isaiah 35:4 with 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9:
When he comes a second time, Jesus will come with vengeance toward his enemies and salvation for his people.

Isaiah 42:1 with Matthew 3:17; 12:18–20:
God's chosen servant, Jesus, pleases the Lord and has the Lord's Spirit upon him.

Isaiah 52:13 with John 3:14–15; 12:38–41:

God's servant, Jesus, was wisdom incarnate and was lifted up—exalted in the cross, in his resurrection, and in his ascension.

Isaiah 62:11 with Matthew 21:5:
God's work of salvation will be complete when Christ comes again to reward those who have waited for him.

Isaiah 65:17 with 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1:

When Christ comes he will usher in the new heavens and new earth.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Most of us have memories or actual photographs of an event or a person that we can't unsee—something or someone that shaped who we are and the path our life has taken. What something have you seen that you will never unsee?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. In the Personal Bible Study, you were asked why Isaiah might have needed to see this vision of Christ as the divine King. Why do you think he needed to see it, and what difference do you think it makes for us to see it through the pages of Scripture?

In the insecurity of his situation after the death of King Uzziah, Isaiah needed to see the real King was not dead and reigns on this throne. As we see this picture through the pages of Scripture, we, too, can find comfort and recognize our ultimate security and future is not based on circumstances here but on Christ's reign and rule over all.

3. How does Isaiah's God-given vision of Christ on the throne of the universe (Isaiah 6) differ from some of the stories we hear from people

today who claim to have had a supernatural or died-and-came-back-to-life experience of seeing Jesus? How does Isaiah's response to this very real vision of Christ differ from the response of modern-day people who claim to have seen him?

Isaiah does not testify about seeing people who have died in heaven. He doesn't speak of Christ as a cuddly person who takes him on his lap. His description does not center on any peripheral things about heaven's throne room but only upon the one seated on the throne. Seeing Christ on the throne made him gravely aware of his own sin and God's provision for his sin. It made him wholly available to God's service.

4. In the hymn about the servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, Isaiah asks, "Who has believed what he has heard from us?" (53:1). Looking over the passage as a whole, what aspects of it would the people of Isaiah's day, and the people of our day, find difficult to believe?

That one so humiliated will ultimately be exalted, that one so beautiful would allow himself to become so marred, that we rejected and refused to esteem him, that he would be willing to carry our sorrows, that he would be willing to be our substitute and take the punishment for sin we deserve, that he would so silently submit to such injustice, and that he who is life would be willing to be cut off from the land of the living.

5. The people who lived between the time Isaiah wrote his prophecy and the first coming of Christ anticipated the coming of the divine King and the suffering servant Isaiah wrote about, but they didn't anticipate that he would be one and the same person. How did Jesus demonstrate in his first coming that he is both the divine King and the suffering servant?

Jesus came announcing that the kingdom of God was among them because the king was among them. His healing ministry and other miracles demonstrated his sovereign authority over nature and sickness and death. His teaching centered on how life was to be lived in his kingdom. But Jesus also came as a servant—to humble himself and serve even to the point of death, saying that he did not come to be served but to serve.

6. This picture of Jesus coming again as a conqueror and doing the work of destroying his enemies is uncomfortable for us. In fact, many today want to rid our understanding and proclamation of the gospel of this offensive imagery and reality. Why is it important that we not do that?

We diminish the goodness of God and the purposes of God if we make them simply about his blessing for those who are joined to him and leave out his judgment on those who reject him. We diminish his justice if we eliminate his intentions to punish and rid this world of evil.

Getting Personal

7. Isaiah called us to turn our gaze toward Christ as the divine King, suffering servant, and coming conqueror. In which of these ways do you think you most need to see and refuse to unsee Christ today, and why?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. Like so much of Old Testament prophecy, aspects of Isaiah's prophecy were fulfilled in his day, some soon thereafter, and some at the time of Christ, while some are yet to be fulfilled. For each of those categories, what examples from Isaiah can you think of?

Isaiah prophesied about the judgment of exile that was going to come upon Israel and Judah, and the judgment that would fall on other peoples in Isaiah's time. He prophesied about the glory of the Lord that would be revealed in the coming of the servant who was our sin bearer and in the gospel going out to all nations as it did after Pentecost. But he also prophesied of a greater glory that would come, a greater judgment than experienced by the exiles, and a greater restoration than experienced by the returning exiles. These prophesies are yet to be fulfilled when Christ comes again and restores all creation to be enjoyed by all those whose sins have been borne by the servant, all those who have come under the loving authority of the King.

Week 6

Habakkuk

Personal Bible Study

While most of the Prophetic Books are made up of oracles or messages given to a prophet to declare to God's people, in the book of Habakkuk we get to listen in on Habakkuk's personal back-and-forth with God (in the first two chapters) and his song to God (in the third chapter). To understand the things Habakkuk is talking to God about, we must know that he was a prophet in Judah, the southern kingdom, after the northern kingdom had been taken into exile by the Assyrians but before the southern kingdom was taken into exile by the Babylonians. Sadly, the people of Judah have not learned from watching their northern brothers and sisters be taken off into exile and have continued in their rebellion against God's law.

1. Read Habakkuk 1:1–4. What is Habakkuk's question or complaint regarding the situation in Judah in his day?

Evidently Habakkuk has been praying for God to do something about the moral depravity, rampant violence, ongoing conflict, and perverted justice that defines Judah in his day. And, in his view, God is not responding by not doing anything about it.

2. Read Habakkuk 1:5–12. In the Lord's answer to Habakkuk's complaint, Habakkuk discovers that God is doing something about Judah's evil. What is it?

God was raising up the armies of the Chaldeans (Babylonians), fierce and brutal warriors, who are going to invade and crush Judah to "gather captives" (v. 9), whom they will take into exile in Babylon.

3. Read Habakkuk 1:13–2:1. Habakkuk recognizes that God has ordained to use Babylon to bring judgment upon Judah. How would you summarize Habakkuk's problem with God's plan, expressed in verse 13?

Habakkuk is trying to reconcile God's holiness with his willingness to use a wicked nation to punish a less wicked nation. To Habakkuk it just doesn't seem like the "holy" thing to do.

4. In Habakkuk 2:1–3 what does Habakkuk determine to do, and how does the Lord respond?

Habakkuk determines to wait and listen for God to answer his question and address his complaint. And the Lord does answer him, telling him to write down what the Lord shows him so that others can read it and, with Habakkuk, be willing to wait for it to come about in God's timing.

5. As is typical in Hebrew literature, we find the key point of the book at the very center, in Habakkuk 2:4. God is about to tell how and why the wicked are going to perish under his judgment. What is the contrast to the reality that God presents in this verse?

The righteous shall live by his faith.

6. This key phrase in Habakkuk (2:4) summarizes the path of life God sets out for his people and is quoted three times in the New Testament, highlighting a different aspect of its meaning each time. Read each of the New Testament passages that quote Habakkuk 2:4 and describe what you think is being communicated.

Romans 1:16–17:

Paul uses the words of Habakkuk to define how believers receive salvation—the glorious benefits of the gospel

of Christ. Faith is the way we enter into a right standing before God and the way we continue to live in it.

Galatians 3:11–14

Paul quotes Habakkuk's words to illustrate that a person is declared righteous not by keeping the law but by faith in Christ, who both lived righteously in our place and endured the curse for disobeying the law in our place.

Hebrews 10:38

The writer of Hebrews quotes Habakkuk's words to encourage perseverance in the life of faith in the midst of difficulty, in the time between promise and fulfillment.

7. In Habakkuk 2:6–19 the Lord pronounces a series of “woes” on the wicked, describing what their wicked ways will lead to. Try to put into your own words the wickedness that is addressed in each woe as well as what those who practice that wickedness can expect.

2:6–8: Woe to him who . . . abuses power to accumulate wealth. He will find himself abused and end up with nothing.

2:9–11: Woe to him who . . . takes advantage of others and then uses the money to isolate himself from the needy. The stones in the walls of his house are going to testify against him at the judgment.

2:12–13: Woe to him who . . . counts human life as having little value as long as he gets what he wants, and uses people without a thought to create his own comfort. He is going to find everything he collected has been taken from him and his comfort is gone for good.

2:15–17: Woe to him who . . . gets someone drunk in order that he might take advantage of that person sexually. This woe is upon the seducer, the rapist, the pornographer and those who think their looking at pornography does no one any harm. He is going to be the one who ends up exposed and ashamed.

2:18–19: Woe to him who . . . worships the business he's created, the lifestyle he's bankrolled, the body he's chiseled, and the reputation he's built. He will not find life there, but only death.

8. In the midst of these woes, Habakkuk is also a prophet of hope. What hope is found in verses 14 and 20?

The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea when evil is gone for good. The Lord is in his holy temple in contrast to the worthless idols that have no life or power.

9. The third chapter of Habakkuk is really a song, as indicated by “according to Shigionoth,” in verse 1, which likely indicates the tune or tone of the song, and the notation at the end, “with stringed instruments” (v. 19). Read Habakkuk 3:1–15 in which Habakkuk recalls and celebrates God's actions in the past to rescue Israel, focusing especially on his saving acts when he brought Israel out of Egypt. Notice that salvation for God's people is accomplished through judgment on God's enemies. How might recalling God's past salvation through judgment be helpful to Habakkuk and those he ministered to in his day?

Recalling God's use of a wicked nation—Egypt—to enslave God's people as well as God's judgment on those people while bringing about Israel's salvation would encourage them to believe that once again God would punish those who enslaved his people and he would also deliver his people from their bondage.

10. The final section of Habakkuk's song (3:17–19) is the declaration of a righteous person who is resolved to live by faith. Understand that since Habakkuk lived in an agrarian society, the fig tree not blossoming, the olive crop failing, and the cattle dying represent a total loss of livelihood and a way of life. Try your hand and your heart in expressing your resolve to trust and rejoice in God, despite whatever may happen in the future, following Habakkuk's pattern in verses 17–19. You might begin by thinking through your greatest fears and what it would look like to trust God even if those fears become reality.

*Though our income dries up
and our savings are gone,*

*Though we face a devastating diagnosis
And lose our dignity in the process,
Though our integrity is questioned
And our reputation ruined,
Yet we will choose daily to be happy in Christ;
We will smile at the future because we are
protected and provided for in Christ.*

*None of these things is the source of our
strength or security, but God alone.
Our confidence in Christ enables us to navigate
dangerous and difficult circumstances.
Because of Christ, we know that our future is
always and only glory.*

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Though we hate to admit it, we all have certain people we look at and say to ourselves, “I may not be perfect, but I’m better than them.” Can you think of people or situations in which you struggle to understand how God could seemingly give a particular person or group the upper hand over “good people”?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Did you notice what Habakkuk did with his frustration over God’s seeming lack of concern and then what he did with his disappointment over God’s seemingly unjust plan? How does this instruct us in regard to what we should do with our frustration and questions for God?

Habakkuk took his questions and disappointment in prayer to God rather than turning away from God in resentment.

3. When Habakkuk heard that God was going to appoint the Babylonians to execute his judgment on Judah, he couldn’t reconcile how a holy God could allow the wicked to swallow “the man more righteous than he” (Hab. 1:13). What must we come to understand in order to make sense of this?

God, in his sovereignty, is able to use the greatest sin and the greatest sinners to accomplish his holy purposes. The greatest example of this is his ability to use the great evil of the crucifixion of Christ for his salvation purposes.

4. Habakkuk was given a revelation that “awaits its appointed time” (Hab. 2:3). What was revealed

to Habakkuk that he and the people of Judah would have to wait to see come to pass?

They would have to wait to see God’s salvation purposes coming to pass in the person of Christ over the course of history.

5. Habakkuk was given insight on what had happened in the past, which gave him confidence about the future (Hab. 3:1–15). What did God do in the past that Habakkuk anticipated God would do again?

Deliverance from Egypt’s bondage (3:5), safe passage through the Red Sea (3:8), defeat of Canaanite enemies (3:11), and establishment in the Promised Land under the Davidic king (3:13). The final Davidic king, Jesus, was yet to come.

6. Habakkuk asked God to remember mercy in his wrath. How did God answer that prayer for his people later exiled in Babylon? How did he answer that prayer when Christ died on the cross? How is he still answering that prayer today?

Though in his wrath, God used the Babylonians to execute judgment on Judah, he showed mercy in preserving a faithful remnant who would one day return to the land. Through his wrath that came down on Christ on the cross, he extended mercy to sinners. Today, though we live in a world that is under judgment, those who are joined to Christ are made alive and protected from the judgment to come.

Getting Personal

7. In the Personal Bible Study you were asked to write your own version of what the prophet expressed in Habakkuk 3:17–19. Would some of

you be willing to read your personal declaration of your intention to live by faith?

It may be challenging to get participants to read what they've written, but keep inviting to get several to share, if possible. Encourage those who have not done the exercise to do so before they go to bed that night.

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. God gave Habakkuk the ability to see the day when “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover

the sea” (Hab. 2:14). How is the earth being filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord today in a way it wasn't in his day? And how will the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord in an even greater way in the future?

The earth is being filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the gospel goes out to people of every tribe, tongue, and nation. When Christ comes again to establish the new heaven and new earth, there will be no corner of this earth that will not be filled with the knowledge of his glory.

Week 7

Jeremiah

Personal Bible Study

1. Read Jeremiah 1:1–8 and list several things you learn about Jeremiah and his call to prophesy.

He was the son of a priest. He began to prophesy in the days of King Josiah, and his prophetic ministry continued under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. He prophesied through the beginning of Jerusalem's exile in Babylon. God appointed him to be a prophet even before he was born. He would be a prophet to the nations, not just Judah and Israel.

2. Jeremiah 1:10 summarizes Jeremiah's message throughout his forty years of prophetic ministry, using six key words that are repeated throughout Jeremiah's book (see also Jer. 18:7–11; 31:28; 45:4). What are these words, and what do you think they mean?

Pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant

Jeremiah is going to prophesy about the plucking up of God's people from the land, and the breaking down, overthrow, and destruction of Jerusalem. But he will also have a message of hope about rebuilding and replanting back in the land after exile.

3. In addition to the six words about planting and building, God gave Jeremiah three pictures of what he could expect in regard to his prophetic ministry. What do you think is being communicated by each image in verses 1:11–19?

An almond branch (it is helpful to know that buds on almond trees were the first sign of spring in Judah):

He could be as sure that his prophecies would come true as he was sure that the almond trees would bloom in the spring. They would bring new life to those who listened.

A boiling pot facing away from the north:

Judgment was going to come from the north, as Babylon came to destroy Judah.

A fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls:

Though Jeremiah would be persecuted by the kings, priests, and people, God would protect and sustain him.

4. A few years into Jeremiah's prophetic ministry, something significant happened. Skim 2 Kings 22–23:25. Describe what happened in two or three sentences.

The Book of the Law (Deuteronomy) was found in the temple after being lost for sixty years. When it was read to Josiah, the king, he launched a campaign of reformation, getting rid of idols and places of false worship and reinstating the Passover.

5. Jeremiah 2 is representative of the message of Jeremiah during Josiah's reign. The chapter begins with God's fondly remembering the love his people once had for him as his bride in the wilderness. But then he begins to work his way through all the good reasons he now has cause to divorce his bride. Summarize his charges against Judah, found in the following verses:

2:4–8 Since they have come into the land, they have ignored and forgotten God, taking its good things for granted.

2:10–12 They have stopped worshiping the one true God and have begun to worship gods that are not gods.

2:18–19 They are going to other lands to look for protection and provision instead of going to God.

2:20–22 They said they would not serve God even though he freed them from slavery to serve him, but they

have been willing to serve other gods in ways that enslaved them again.

2:23–25 Like a wild donkey in heat, Israel has gone after the Baals.

2:26–28 They have worshiped other gods but then called on Yahweh when they needed to be saved.

2:34–35 They have harmed the poor.

6. Sadly, the reforms Josiah brought in Judah lasted only as long as Josiah was king. When his son took his place on the throne, Judah went back to all of her evils of the past. What was the source of the problem, according to Jeremiah 3:10?

The change in Judah was mere pretense, not a whole-hearted repentance.

7. Jeremiah becomes more specific about the problem in Jeremiah 17. What is the problem, according to Jeremiah 17:1, 9–10?

Judah, like all of humanity, has a deceitful, sick heart. Sin has been engraved on her heart with a pen of iron.

8. In Jeremiah 25 we have “the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah” (v. 1). Read Jeremiah 25:1–14 and summarize in a sentence or two what Jeremiah says is going to happen and why.

Because they have not listened to the word of the Lord, God is going to “send for” the tribes of the north, Babylon, who will take them into exile for seventy years.

9. In Jeremiah 30–33, after many chapters about the sins of Judah and the judgment to come upon her, Jeremiah speaks of what is to come beyond the exile, when God will act to restore his people. How is God promising to bring restoration in each of the following verses?

30:3 He will bring them back to the land and they will take possession of it.

30:8–9 He will break the yoke of slavery so they can serve the Lord.

30:17 He will restore health and heal their wounds.

30:19 He will multiply them, honor them, and fill them with songs of thanksgiving and celebration.

30:22 He will be their God and they will be his people.

31:4 He will restore virginity to Judah who has played the harlot.

31:5 He will make her fruitful.

31:8–9 He will gather them and lead them back to the land.

31:12–14 He will make them radiant, nourished, merry, joyful, glad, and satisfied.

31:27–28 The same God who has plucked up and broken down, overthrown and destroyed, will build and plant.

31:31 He will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

31:38–40 He will rebuild the city of Jerusalem, making it sacred, and it will never be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever.

10. In Jeremiah 31:33–34, Jeremiah details four aspects of the new covenant. What are they?

He will write his law on their hearts.

He will belong to them and they will belong to him.

They will all know him.

He will forgive their sin and remember it no more.

11. Jeremiah says that the new covenant will not be like the covenant God had made with Israel at Mount Sinai, when he gave them his law. This leads us to ask how it will be different. Work your way through the following verses to discover what makes the new covenant superior to the old covenant.

	Old Covenant	New Covenant
Mediator	Ex. 20:18–19; Heb. 9:19–20 <i>Moses</i>	Heb. 8:6; 9:15 <i>Jesus</i>
Ratification	Ex. 24:8; Heb. 9:18–20 <i>Blood of animals</i>	Matt. 26:28 <i>Blood of Christ</i>
Obligations	Deut. 13:4 <i>Obedience to the law</i>	Rom. 3:21–25 <i>Trusting in the perfect obedience of Christ received by faith</i>
Promises	Ex. 19:5; Deut. 28:1–14 <i>Prosperity, national security, become God's treasured nation</i>	Jer. 31:33–34; Heb. 9:12, 15 <i>Law written on heart, belong to God, know God, forgiveness, redemption, eternal inheritance</i>
Conditions	Ex. 19:5–6; Deut. 30:16–17 <i>If you obey, then you will live.</i>	John 5:24; Rom. 10:6–11 <i>If you believe, then you will live.</i>
Where written	Deut. 4:13 <i>Tablets of stone</i>	Jer. 31:33 <i>Hearts of believers</i>
Relationship with God	Heb. 5:1 <i>Through human priest, could not go near Most Holy Place</i>	Jer. 31:34; Heb. 4:14–16 <i>Through heavenly priest, can draw near to God's throne</i>
Way of dealing with sin	Heb. 9:9–10; 10:2–4 <i>Sin was covered but never taken away, and conscience was never clear.</i>	Jer. 31:34; Heb. 9:14, 26; 10:10, 14, 18 <i>Conscience is cleansed, sin is put away, forgiven, believer is perfected, sanctified.</i>

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. What do you think about Jeremiah's observation of the human heart, that it is deceitful above all things and desperately sick? How does this fit with the prevailing wisdom that says people are basically good?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. In the Personal Bible Study we saw that Jeremiah's prophetic ministry was centered on God's promises to pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant. How did that happen in Judah's actual experience as a nation?

3. What do you think about the image of sin as being engraved on the human heart? How does this imagery help us to grasp the impulse to sin, the tyranny of sin, and the difficulty we have in turning away from sin?

4. How would you explain the difference between having God's law written on tablets of stone, which you have to impress on your own heart, and having it written on your heart by the Holy Spirit?

This is the difference between rules being imposed on us from the outside and a desire for holiness that wells up within us.

5. Imagine that you were a Jew living in Jerusalem at Pentecost. You heard Peter's sermon and were one of those who was "cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37). How would your life change as you began to live as a partaker of the new covenant instead of the old covenant?

You would stop taking animals to be offered for sacrifice at the temple because the once-for-all sacrifice had been offered. You could rest in knowing that your sin was finally and fully dealt with. Rather than always feeling the weight of your own ability to live up to the law, you could celebrate Christ's perfect life of obedience transferred to your account. Instead of looking at the law as an unbear-

able burden imposed on you, you would discover an internal desire to be pleasing to the Lord in this way as well as a fresh power to obey. Instead of depending on a priest at the temple to take your concerns before God, you could approach God's throne directly and personally through prayer, knowing that you were heard and accepted on the basis of your connection to Christ.

6. While God has begun his work in our hearts, giving us new hearts to obey him, the reality is that we still struggle with sin. Clearly there are still some deep impressions left on our lives by sin that will not be completely gone until "he who began a good work" in us "will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). If we are experiencing an ongoing struggle with sin, is that evidence that perhaps we have not experienced this miracle of the new birth? Why or why not?

Coming under conviction of sin, desiring to forsake it, and maintaining the battle or struggle to defeat it is evidence of the new birth. Christians will always struggle with sin in this life. However, when there is no struggle, no desire to forsake, no sense of sadness over the offense caused to God, this gives a person reason to question whether or not he or she has experienced the miracle of new birth.

Getting Personal

7. Let's open our Bibles to the Ten Commandments found in Deuteronomy 5. When you look over this list of commands, can you give testimony to the way in which the Holy Spirit has worked in your life to write one of these on your heart? How have you experienced God at work, giving you the desire and the power to obey one of these commands?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. The story of the Bible begins in the garden of Eden where everything was good. Then Adam and Eve sinned, and the world became filled with dysfunction, disorder, disease, disobedience, and death. But right there in the garden God promised that the seed of the woman would

one day crush the head of the seed of the Serpent so that the perfection of the garden paradise would be restored. Look back at the promises of restoration God made in Jeremiah 30–31 that you listed in the Personal Bible Study. How did these predictions of the glorious state of blessing after the exile begin to be fulfilled at Christ's first coming, how have they continued to be fulfilled in part today, and how will they finally be realized beyond imagination when Christ returns?

30:3 He will bring them back to the land and they will take possession of it. Jesus has made us coheirs of all he stands to inherit when he returns—the whole world.

30:8–9 He will break the yoke of slavery so they can serve the Lord. Jesus accomplished this on the cross, and it is becoming more and more of a reality in our lives as he does his work of sanctification in us by his Spirit.

30:17 He will restore health and heal their wounds. Jesus is bringing healing to our lives now to the wound sin has left. When he returns that healing will be complete.

30:19 He will multiply them, honor them, and fill them with songs of thanksgiving and celebration. Jesus is building his church, drawing people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who will one day gather around his throne with songs of celebration.

30:22 He will be their God and they will be his people. Jesus came as Immanuel—God with us—to make it possible for us to be God's people. But when he comes again, the fullness of all God has intended in regard to dwelling with his people will be the reality we will live in forever.

31:4 He will restore virginity to Judah who has played the harlot. In the cleansing work of the new birth, Jesus makes us a new creation. And when he comes again we will be fully clean, no longer unfaithful to him.

31:5 He will make her fruitful. The Holy Spirit is generating fruit in our lives now, and the harvest will be complete when Christ comes again.

31:8–9 He will gather them and lead them back to the land.

31:12–14 He will make them radiant, nourished, merry, joyful, glad, and satisfied. Jesus is doing this work in us now, in part. We will be utterly radiant and joyful, fully satisfied on that day we are finally with him.

31:27–28 The same God who has plucked up and broken down, overthrown and destroyed, will build and plant. He is building his church made up of living stones—the lives of ordinary believers. And one day his work will be complete, and we will no longer be vulnerable but will be firmly planted in the new heaven and new earth.

31:31 He will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Jesus established this covenant with his blood on the cross. We live in the richness of relating to God under this new covenant. All of its promises will be complete when he comes again.

31:38–40 He will rebuild the city of Jerusalem, making it sacred, and it will never be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever. What a great promise! Once Satan and sin are dealt with finally and forever, once evil is ended, the people of God will no longer live under threat but will be secure forever in his presence.

Week 8

Daniel

Personal Bible Study

Up to this point, all the prophets we've studied have been prophesying to the northern kingdom of Israel or the southern kingdom of Judah prior to Israel's exile to Assyria and Judah's exile to Babylon. The message of the prophets has usually included a call to the people to repent so that the people would not face exile. But when we come to Daniel, the time for that has passed. The setting of Daniel is Babylon, where the people of Judah are living in exile.

Daniel can be divided into two halves. The first six chapters of Daniel tell us the story of Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who as teenagers were in the first of three waves of exiles taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. The second half of the book, chapters 7 through 12, presents to us the visions Daniel had regarding the future. Though the two halves are very different kinds of literature, each section helps us to understand the other. The two distinct halves of the book of Daniel combine to show God's people how to live as strangers and exiles in a world that is not their home and to reassure them that God is in control and that his kingdom will ultimately prevail over the kingdoms of the world.

1. Read Daniel 1:1–2. If you were a citizen of Jerusalem trusting in Yahweh, what would you find troubling about what is revealed in these first two verses of Daniel?

The Lord, who they thought was committed to care for them, is the one who gave the king of Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon has taken away the holy vessels from the temple where God dwells

to be stored in the temple to a false God in Babylon. This would seem to be the end of the story of God's people. It is hard to imagine that God is in control of this or that anything good will come of it.

2. Read Daniel 1:3–7. From these verses list four or five things the king of Babylon did and what his strategy or goal for each of them might have been.

(a) Took young, skilled nobility to Babylon—taking the best and brightest would both cripple Jerusalem and strengthen Babylon

(b) Taught them the literature and language of the Chaldeans—so they would forget the Scriptures and replace that cultural foundation with Babylon's stories and myths

(c) Intended to provide lavish meals for them—so that they would come to depend on the king, become loyal to the king, and become addicted to the comfort he provided

(d) Educated for three years—thorough indoctrination in Babylonian ways and values making them useful in his kingdom

(e) Gave them Babylonian names based on Babylonian gods—so they would lose their sense of identity as sons of Judah and people of Yahweh, and would become sons of Babylon, embracing the gods of Babylon

3. Read Daniel 1:8–21. Why do you think Daniel asked that he and his friends be able to eat vegetables instead of the king's food? (Notice this is a "why do you think" question, since there may be a number of possible reasons.) What kind of impact do you think that had on them and those around them?

He did not want to consume or buy into everything being served up to them in Babylon. Not eating the king's food

would be a daily reminder of his true home and his true source and comfort. Having the support of each other probably helped them to persevere in being different from everyone else and likely generated some respect as well as some derision among the others being educated along with them.

4. Read the account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation of it in Daniel 2. How would you summarize the point of the dream, according to Daniel 2:36–45?

After Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom in Babylon would come four other kingdoms and finally a stone that would break all of the other kingdoms in pieces and would never be destroyed.

5. What light does the parable Jesus told in Luke 20:9–18 and the words of Peter in Acts 4:10–12 shed on who or what the “stone . . . cut out by no human hand” might be?

Jesus and the kingdom he brings is the stone that crushes all the human kingdoms of the world that persist in rejecting him. He is the cornerstone, the foundation stone of the kingdom of God, the church.

6. Certainly Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew about Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image that represented successive human kingdoms being crushed by the “stone . . . cut out by no human hand” (Dan. 2:34). How do you think that image might have played a part in their refusal to bow down to the image Nebuchadnezzar set up, as recorded in chapter 3?

They saw human power for what it is—fleeting, in rebellion toward God, and doomed to destruction by God—and saw God's power for what it is—in the coming rule of his Messiah, represented by the stone.

7. According to Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were accompanied in the fire by one “like a son of the gods” (Dan. 3:25) and emerged with the hair of their heads un-singed, cloaks unharmed, and no smell of smoke. What does this reveal about the nature of God's deliverance?

God does not always protect us from experiencing trouble or persecution, but he is present with us in it and will deliver us through it. Their emergence from the fire unharmed is a picture of resurrection from the dead, deliverance from death whole and unharmed.

8. In Daniel 5 we read about a new king in Babylon, Belshazzar, holding a great feast, when a human hand appeared and wrote on the wall of the palace. According to verses 24–30, what was the message, and what was the result?

The message was that the days for this king and his kingdom were numbered and about to come to an end. He had been weighed and found wanting. His kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Daniel was made third ruler in the kingdom. Darius the Mede became king.

9. Daniel was likely in his eighties or nineties at the time of the events described in Daniel 6. What evidence do you see in this story that his determination not to defile himself and to retain his identity as a citizen of Jerusalem (revealed in Daniel 1) has continued throughout his life?

He is beyond reproach in the way he conducts his duties to the king. He still depends on Yahweh as his king and God, praying to him three times a day toward Jerusalem. Just as the kindnesses and comforts the king offered in chapter 1 could not corrupt him, so the cruelties of the king in chapter 6 could not intimidate him.

10. Daniel's experience of facing the lion's den prefigures Jesus's experience of facing the cross. Write a sentence about Jesus in the second column below that parallels the sentence about Daniel in the first column.

Daniel	Jesus
Though Daniel was living in the kingdom of Babylon, he was from the kingdom of Judah. (Dan. 1:3-4)	John 6:33; 18:36 <i>Though Jesus was living in the kingdom of the world, he was from the kingdom of heaven.</i>
Daniel was without fault yet opposed by envious leaders who corrupted the justice system to condemn him. (Dan. 6:5-10)	Mark 14:1, 55, 64 <i>Jesus was without fault yet opposed by envious leaders who corrupted the justice system to condemn him.</i>
Darius wanted to release Daniel instead of sending him to the lions' den. (Dan. 6:14)	Luke 23:13-16 <i>Pilate wanted to release Jesus instead of sentence him to crucifixion.</i>
Daniel is not recorded as having said anything in his defense. (Dan. 6:16)	Mark 15:5 <i>Jesus was silent before his accusers.</i>
Daniel was placed in a den, or cave, which was sealed with a stone so that he could not be saved by human intervention. (Dan. 6:17)	Matt. 27:59-66 <i>Jesus was placed in a tomb, or cave, which was sealed with a stone so that his body could not be stolen by his followers.</i>
Daniel willingly faced the threat of death. (Dan. 6:10)	Matt. 26:39 <i>Jesus willingly died.</i>
When the stone was removed, Daniel came out of the den, metaphorically brought back from the dead. (Dan. 6:23)	Matt. 28:5, 6; 1 Cor. 15:3-4 <i>When the stone was removed, Jesus came out of the tomb, literally brought back from the dead.</i>
When Daniel emerged from the lions' den, he came alone. No one else was saved by God's deliverance of Daniel. (Dan. 6:23)	1 Cor. 15:20-24 <i>When Jesus emerged from the grave, he did so as the first of all who belong to Christ who will rise from their graves.</i>
All of those who opposed Daniel perished in the lion's den. (Dan. 6:24)	John 15:6; Rev. 20:15 <i>All of those who reject Jesus will perish in the fire.</i>

11. Daniel's vision of four great beasts in chapter 7 parallels the dream King Nebuchadnezzar had in chapter 2 in its revelation of the future course of history in regard to the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. Read Daniel 7:1-18. Looking past the details of the vision,

what would you say is its primary impression or message?

Kingdoms are going to rise and fall, but "one like a son of man" is going to come from heaven to establish his kingdom over all of the peoples of the earth, which will never be destroyed.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. What kind of pressures does the world put on us in modern-day life to be citizens of the kingdom of the world?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Daniel drew a line that he would not cross in his resolve not to be defiled by the world. In our day Christians draw lines in different places. And some really don't draw any lines at all. What difference do you think it makes if we ask, Is this wise? rather than, Is this right or wrong?

3. Daniel 2 and 7 are similar in what they show of dreams and visions of the rise and fall of human kingdoms and the promised coming of a kingdom that will bring an end to every human kingdom. If you had been living in exile in Babylon in Daniel's day and heard about these dreams and visions and Daniel's interpretations of them, how do you think it would have impacted you?

You would be less fearful of the kingdom of Babylon, knowing that it would one day come to an end, and bolder in your allegiance to the kingdom that will never end.

4. Just as Daniel 2 and 7 are parallel, so are Daniel 3 and 6—one telling the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being put in the fiery furnace, and the other telling the story of Daniel's being put in the den of lions. Both stories put the faith of the men as well as the deliverance of God on display. What did they know that served as the foundation for their faith and confidence in God's deliverance?

They knew from the history of God's intervention in the lives of their people that God is a deliverer and that he is committed to the salvation and preservation of his people.

5. When we read the stories of God's delivering them from the furnace and from the lion's den, we can't help but also think about the Christians who were later killed by lions in the Roman Colosseum as well as Christians today who are tor-

ured and killed for their faith in various parts of the world. How do we reconcile the stories of deliverance with the reality that God does not always seem to deliver his saints from harm?

God has not promised and does not always accomplish a physical, here-and-now deliverance, but that does not mean that those who perish in this life are not ultimately delivered. The Bible makes clear that those who are persecuted for Christ's sake will be rewarded. We see throughout the Bible God's commitment to crush all of his enemies who have mistreated his people. Those who put their faith in Christ recognize that there is a greater deliverance than being spared hardship or physical death; it is being delivered from eternal death into eternal life in his presence.

6. How does the book of Daniel help us to understand more clearly who Christ is and what he came to do?

Since the book is all about the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom God is bringing that will overcome and outlast all human kingdoms, it points to Christ as the King who will accomplish the destruction of human kingdoms and establish his kingdom that will never end.

Getting Personal

7. The examples that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego set before us as citizens of Jerusalem living in exile in Babylon are challenging. What are some of the ways their examples challenge you personally?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. If you had only the scroll or book of Daniel but not the rest of the Bible, what would you know about what God is doing in the world and how he is going to do it?

You would know that history is not a matter of fate or human power. Instead, you would be confident that God is working out his plans for the world, that though human power may be impressive, it doesn't last, and that he is at work establishing his kingdom in the world that is not established through human effort but through divine power. You would know that a king and kingdom is coming that will put an end to human kingdoms, that the kingdom will be good, and it will be eternal.

Week 9

Ezekiel

Personal Bible Study

Up to this point in our study we've heard from prophets who prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel prior to their exile to Assyria, including Jonah and Hosea, and from prophets who prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah long before and then right before they were taken into exile, including Micah, Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah. Last week we studied Daniel who prophesied to exiles living in Babylon. This week we study another prophet who prophesied to God's people living in exile, not inside the city of Babylon, where Daniel was, but just outside the city in what could be described as a refugee camp where ten thousand exiles from Judah were taken to live.

1. Read through Ezekiel's first vision, found in Ezekiel 1, and note a few details (not necessarily every detail) about each of the following:

The storm (v.4):

Stormy wind out of the north, great cloud with brightness around it, fire flashing forth, gleaming metal in midst of fire

The four living creatures (vv.5–14):

Human likeness; each had four faces, four wings, and straight legs; sparkled; human hands; their wings touched; face of human; lion; ox; eagle; appearance like torches; lightning; darted to and fro

The wheels (vv. 15–21):

Gleaming beryl; wheel within a wheel; rims full of eyes; went where the Spirit wanted to go

The expanse (vv.22–25):

Shining like crystal; spread out above heads; held up by wings; a voice came from above expanse

The throne (vv.26–28):

Like a sapphire; likeness with a human appearance on throne; fiery, gleaming appearance; surrounded by bright rainbow

2. In verse 28 we're told that what Ezekiel has seen is "the likeness of the glory of the LORD." If we look back at the previous verses, we see the word "likeness" is used ten times in the chapter. What do you think this might communicate about Ezekiel's description of what he saw?

He is struggling to find words to capture and describe something he has seen that he has no real categories for—it is beyond human experience and beyond mere words. He's doing the best he can to describe it in terms his audience will recognize.

3. Ezekiel 4–24 is primarily oracles preached about the judgment on Jerusalem. In the midst of these chapters Ezekiel has another vision that reveals how God views what is taking place in Jerusalem. List several things that Ezekiel saw in and around the temple, according to chapter 8.

Great abominations: idols engraved on the walls, elders burning incense to these idols, women weeping for Tammuz (a cultic practice), and men near the altar worshipping the sun

4. Ezekiel 9 describes Ezekiel's vision of the judgment that will come down on all in Jerusalem except for a small remnant of repentant people who will be saved. Then, in chapter 10, the glory of God, which Ezekiel saw in his earlier vision, is on the move. In what way does the glory of God move in 10:18–19 and 11:23?

The glory of God moved from the threshold of the house, out the east gate of the house, and finally out of the city, and stood on the mountain on the east side of the city.

5. Though the people of Judah living in exile saw themselves as far removed from God's presence, which had earlier been with them in the temple in Jerusalem, what reality is revealed to Ezekiel in 11:16?

The Lord has been a sanctuary (or temple) to them where they have gone. The essence of the temple—his presence—is wherever his people are.

6. Ezekiel 25–33 contains a series of sermons preached throughout the three years of Babylon's siege of Jerusalem, with Ezekiel stressing that the surrounding nations will be judged in the way Judah is being judged. According to 33:21, how did the siege of Jerusalem end, and how do you think this impacted the exiles, who had been longing to go home to Jerusalem for twelve years?

News came to Ezekiel that Jerusalem had fallen completely to the Babylonians and was destroyed, so there was now no real home to go back to. This must have dashed whatever little bit of hope the exiles had regarding going home.

7. Up to this point, Ezekiel's message has not really communicated any hope. But as soon as he hears Jerusalem has fallen, he begins to preach a message of hope, assuring the people that although the exile would not be as temporary as they had originally thought, it would come to an end. What hope is held out to the exiles in the following passages?

34:11–16, 23–24: God will be a shepherd to his people; he will seek them out from all of the places they have been scattered and bring them home to feed and care for them. He will set up a shepherd over them—"my servant David."

36:24–32: God will cleanse his people, giving them a new heart and a new spirit, and will put his Spirit within them. He will bless them with abundance. He will dwell in the land with them.

36:33–38: God will bring them back to a renewed land that will be like the garden of Eden and will be fortified and inhabited. The people will increase in number.

37:1–14: God will give them new life out of death.

37:24–28: God will make a new covenant with his people and will put a shepherd King over them. His sanctuary will be in their midst forevermore.

8. We've seen that God has promised a new king, a new heart, a new spirit, a new land, and a new life to his faithful remnant. Now, in Ezekiel 40–48, God promises through his prophet Ezekiel a new temple in which the people will enjoy a new experience of God's presence. In previous visions Ezekiel had seen the glory of God in the Jerusalem temple, and then he saw the glory of God depart from the Jerusalem temple. Now he sees the glory of God return to a new temple that far supersedes the old Jerusalem temple. What is the first thing we learn in Ezekiel 40:2 about this new temple?

It was a structure like a city.

9. In Ezekiel 47:1–12, the new temple is described as less like a city and more like something else. What does the description of the temple here remind you of? (You might also refer back to Ezekiel 36:35.)

It is like the garden of Eden with a river and trees and fruitfulness.

10. Ezekiel 40–42 details the perfectly square structure of the new temple. Then we come to the most important thing about the garden-like city in the shape of a temple in 43:1–9, which is reiterated in 48:35. What is it?

The glory of God entered the temple from the east and filled the temple. God said that there he intends to dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. The most important thing about this garden-like city in the shape of a temple is the Lord's personal presence in the midst of his people forever.

11. What does Hebrews 8:1–5 reveal to us about the Old Testament tabernacle and temple?

They were a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things.” They were designed according to the pattern God gave to Moses so that they would accurately reflect the original or substance, which is heaven itself.

12. What do we learn from Jesus in the following verses about the new temple Ezekiel saw?

Matthew 12:6: “Something greater than the temple is here,” meaning Jesus himself.

John 2:13–22: Jesus is the true temple of which the architectural temple was only a shadow. The true temple is Christ himself. When he rises from the grave, the new creation will have begun as he will embody Ezekiel’s vision of the new temple.

13. What do the following verses reveal about where or what form this new temple takes in the present?

1 Corinthians 3:16–17:

Individual believers are God’s temple as his Spirit dwells in them.

Ephesians 2:19–22:

The church is being built together into a dwelling place for God.

14. Revelation 21:1–22:5 describes the new heaven and the new earth. Read through this passage and list as many examples as you’d like of aspects of the new heaven and the new earth that reflect a garden, a city, and the temple (keeping in mind that a whole book could be written on this!).

21:2 It is the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

21:3 The temple was where God dwelt with his people.

21:8 Uncleanness and sinners are kept out just as they were kept out of the temple.

21:11 The glory of God is there.

21:12–15 It has a wall, gates, foundations, and dimensions like a city.

21:16 The city is a perfect cube like the Most Holy Place was in the temple.

21:19–21 The jewels resemble Eden and also the high priest’s breastplate he wore into the temple.

22:22 There is no architectural temple in the city, but there is a temple—God himself is the temple.

21:24 The doors of the temple have been thrown open to invite people from all nations in.

22:1 The river of the water of life flows from the throne as Ezekiel described.

22:2 The tree of life like in Eden has leaves for healing as Ezekiel described.

22:3 This will be a place of worship.

22:4 Worshipers will see God’s face in a way they never have before. They will all be like priests in the Old Testament who had their Lord’s name on their turbans.

22:5 No lampstand is needed in this temple as the Lord is its light.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. If we think of ourselves as sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, we realize that we all have a longing to get back to the house that built us—the home we once enjoyed in the garden of Eden. How do you think that life as it once was in the garden of Eden helps to explain the sense of disappointment we have with life in this world and how our lives have gone?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. If we consider that the garden of Eden was the first temple or sanctuary, what echoes of Eden do we find in the design and function of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple?

In Eden there were gold and onyx stones (Gen. 2:12). Gold and onyx stones were used in the design of the tabernacle (Ex. 25:3, 7). Solomon adorned the temple with settings of precious stones (2 Chron. 3:6).

Eden was filled with every kind of plant (Gen. 1:29). Woven into the tabernacle and carved into the walls of the temple were cherubim, flowers, and fruits (Ex. 26:31; 1 Kings 6:29). In Eden stood a tree of life (Gen. 2:9). In the tabernacle and temple stood a lampstand that was designed to look like a blossoming tree (Ex. 25:31–33; 1 Kings 7:49). God dwelt with his people in Eden (Gen. 3:8). God descended to dwell with his people in the tabernacle and temple (Ex. 29:45–46; 1 Kings 8:10–11). Two cherubim guarded the entrance to Eden (Gen. 3:24). Two gold cherubim were placed on the mercy seat as if guarding the throne of God (Ex. 25:17–22; 1 Kings 6:27).

3. Let's consider Ezekiel's first vision of the glory of God found in Ezekiel 1. Imagine you were with Ezekiel as an exile from Jerusalem. What do you think you would have been able to learn from that unusual vision?

God comes on the kind of royal seat a king would ride in when he went into battle. He sees and is on the move for his people. It is also a throne constructed of enormously valuable stones, which speaks of his supreme royalty reigning over even the powerful and wealthy empires of the world. The rainbow speaks of his promise to keep his

covenants. God has arrived in power so that no other god can stand before him and no distance or geographical limitation can keep him away from his people.

4. When news reached the exiles in Babylon that Jerusalem had fallen, it must have been a very distressing time. That's when Ezekiel began to prophesy of the new things God was going to do, which we saw briefly in the Personal Bible Study concerning Ezekiel 34–37. Let's work our way through those passages to consider not only why these promises would be good news to the exiles but also how and when these promises have been, are being, or will be fulfilled.

34:11–16, 23–24: God will be a shepherd to his people. He will seek them out from all of the places they have been scattered and bring them home to feed and care for them. He will set up a shepherd over them—"my servant David." Jesus came as a shepherd and will return as the "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4).

36:24–32: God will cleanse his people, giving them a new heart and a new spirit, and will put his Spirit within them. He will bless them with abundance. He will dwell in the land with them. This cleaning began at the cross; this new heart and Spirit were given at Pentecost. Even now God is doing these things in the lives of his people. In the new heaven and new earth we will be perfectly clean, have a completely pure heart, and will enjoy abundance like never before as God will dwell with us like never before.

36:33–38: God will bring them back to a renewed land that will be like the garden of Eden and will be fortified and inhabited. The people will increase in number. The church is increasing in number day by day as people take hold of and believe in the gospel. When Christ returns he will open up the gates to Eden 2.0, a new garden that will be perfectly secure and filled with his people.

37:1–14: God will give them new life out of death. Through Christ, we who were dead are made alive. When he comes again, he will give life to our mortal bodies that are in the grave.

37:24–28: God will make a new covenant with his people and will put a shepherd King over them. His sanctuary will be in their midst forevermore. Jesus is our shepherd caring for us and our King ruling over us now and into eternity.

5. Where or what or who is the temple now, and what are the implications of that?

Jesus is the ultimate temple and all who are united to him by faith are living stones being built up as a spiritual house called the church. This keeps us from being lone ranger Christians with a privatized faith. As individual believers our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Embracing this truth instills in us a desire to live pure lives of holiness.

6. In the final question of the Personal Bible Study, we were asked to read through Revelation 21:1–22:5, noting how the new heaven and the new earth are presented to us as a garden-like city in the shape of a temple. What are some of the things you discovered?

21:2 *"The holy city, new Jerusalem"*

21:6 *"I will give from the spring of the water of life."*

21:12 *"It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates."*

21:14 *"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations."*

21:22 *"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."*

22:1 *"The river of the water of life, bright as crystal"*

22:2 *"The tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month"*

22:3 *"The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him."*

22:4 *"His name will be on their foreheads." (Like priests in temple whose turbans said "Holy to the Lord.")*

Getting Personal

7. God's covenant promise throughout the Bible is that he will be our God and we will be his people. Over and over he announces his intention to dwell with his people. Does that sound like a good thing to you? Why or why not? What do you think could help you to set your heart on this promise?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. In the "Looking Forward" portion of the teaching chapter, we read that God's original intention was for Adam to be fruitful and multiply and expand the borders of Eden so that eventually the entire earth would be filled with the glory and beauty and abundance of the Lord that they enjoyed in Eden. How did the second Adam succeed where the first Adam failed? And how does this help us to understand God's purposes for creation and redemption, which make up the story of the Bible?

The work of Jesus, the second Adam, on the cross was fruitful so that those who are joined to him by faith are multiplying, and there will be people from every tribe and tongue and nation who glorify him. This helps us understand that we are not the center of things, but God and his glory are at the center of his creative and redemptive plans.

Week 10

Malachi

Personal Bible Study

1. Malachi was a prophet in Israel after the return from exile in Babylon. He prophesied around the time of the events that take place in the book of Nehemiah. In the first verse of Malachi we learn that what follows is an oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. *Oracle* could also be translated as “burden.” Considering the messages we have read throughout this study that were given through the prophets and the message Malachi is about to deliver, why do you think it could be accurately described as a “burden”?

The message Malachi and the other prophets were given was weighty and serious. The message came from a weighty or glorious God and concerned matters of life and death. It was a burden because it mattered how people responded to it, and the prophets likely knew that many or most would reject the message and the messenger.

2. The book of Malachi is made up primarily of a series of disputations between God and the collective voice of his people as evidenced in their attitudes toward him. In each disputation God deals with a particular problem. Read through the following passages in Malachi and summarize the problem God is confronting in each.

1:2–5 They don't really believe that he loves them. They don't recognize that he has loved them by choosing them for salvation based on nothing in themselves. His love for them becomes clearer as it is contrasted with those whom he has not chosen.

1:6–14 They don't truly honor or fear the Lord as evidenced by the fact that they bring lame or sick animals to offer as sacrifices, which they would never present to any human authority.

2:1–9 The priests are not only accepting unacceptable sacrifices, they are breaking the covenant God made with Levi to walk with God and instruct the people in truth.

2:10–16 The men are divorcing their Israelite wives for no cause in order to marry foreign wives who worship other gods and are therefore not producing children who know and walk in the ways of God.

2:17 They are full of complaints about how evil people are getting away with wickedness and God is not dealing with it.

3:6–12 They are robbing God of his due by not tithing and contributing to the temple.

3:13–15 They are questioning whether it is worth it to serve God and whether God is just, since evildoers seem to enjoy more prosperity than they do.

3. Malachi uses the title “LORD of hosts” for God twenty-four times in this short book. To call God “LORD of hosts” recognizes him as having a large contingent of heavenly beings at his command as well as authority throughout the earth. Considering the political situation of the people in Malachi’s day, as well as the people’s attitudes and actions toward God, why might Malachi have wanted to emphasize this aspect of who God is?

It would have brought comfort to this downtrodden people who had no army at the time as they were living under the rule of the Persian empire. But it would have also brought rebuke and correction to people who were treating God with so little respect or honor.

4. In Malachi 3:1–4 God provides an answer to the people’s question, “Where is the God of justice?” (Mal. 2:17). See if you can put God’s response into your own words.

I am going to send my messenger to get things ready, and then I'm coming to my temple as the messenger of the covenant, the Messiah you've been looking for. But you are going to get more than you bargained for because when I come in justice, some sinners—those who fear me—I will purify and cleanse, and other sinners—those who do not fear me—I will judge.

5. In Malachi 3:16–18 it appears we are reading the record of the remnant who responded to Malachi's message. What does it reveal about what can be expected by those who fear the Lord?

God heard them as they talked with each other about him. Their names and the record of their fear of the Lord were written in a book of remembrance. They will belong to the Lord. They will be his treasured possession. They will be spared when the wicked are punished.

6. In Malachi 4:1–2 the prophet describes what will happen in the Day of the Lord, and there is clearly a difference between what evildoers can expect and what those who fear the Lord can expect. What is it?

Evildoers can expect to be burned and destroyed in the fires of God's judgment while those who fear the Lord can expect the sun of righteousness to bring healing and newness of life.

7. In Malachi 4:5–6 the prophet tells us more about the messenger he mentioned in 3:1, calling him "Elijah the prophet." What do these verses tell us about what he will be like, when he

will come, and what will be the hallmark of his ministry?

He will be like Elijah, he will come before the great and awesome day of the Lord, and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.

8. After God spoke through the prophet Malachi, he did not speak directly to his people again for four hundred years. Then, finally, an angel appeared and spoke to a priest named Zechariah, who was burning incense in the temple. What was the angel's message, according to Luke 1:13–17?

His wife, Elizabeth, was going to have a son they would name John, and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit and would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord and toward each other. He would come in the Spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers to children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to prepare people for the coming of the Lord.

9. In Matthew 11:7–15 what insight does Jesus provide about Malachi 3:1?

Malachi was speaking about John the Baptist who prepared the way for the Lord to come.

10. In John 1:31–34 what testimony does John the Baptist provide about the aim of his ministry?

He baptizes with water that Jesus would be revealed to Israel. He bore witness that Jesus is the Son of God.

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Discussion Guide

Getting the Discussion Going

1. Imagine yourself as one of the people living in Jerusalem a number of years after the exile in Babylon. You've read all the promises the prophets have made, and yet life is hard. Your country is still ruled by a foreign power, the economy is not good, and, honestly, the rebuilt temple and the city are a bit of a disappointment. What would you be thinking and feeling about God and his promises and plans for your people?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Isn't it interesting that God begins this final message to his people before four hundred years of prophetic silence by saying, "I have loved you." But perhaps even more interesting is how he defines that love. How has he loved them, according to Malachi 1:2–5?

By choosing them before they were born to be his, just as he chose Jacob over Esau before they were born. This is a challenging truth for many of us, but it runs throughout Scripture and so must be accepted and not denied. Yes, we must choose him. But anyone who does so does so because he first chose them.

3. The priests of Malachi's day were allowing people to bring sickly, injured animals to offer as sacrifices. What did that kind of offering reveal about their hearts?

4. What are some ways we dishonor God in how we approach him in worship and in what we give to him? What does this reveal about our hearts?

5. When we hear the Lord's indictment regarding marriages to foreign wives and divorcing covenant wives, we jump quickly to making it about

marriage and divorce in our day. And certainly there are implications here about marriage to unbelievers and about divorce. But as we first try to think through what God was getting at in their day and situation, why was God displeased?

The indictment ends by stating what God wants: godly offspring. Once again, God intends for the earth to be filled with people made in his image who love and worship him. This is the calling of the Israelites to love the Lord and to be fruitful and multiply as Adam was supposed to do. But by divorcing their Israelite wives and marrying pagan women, they are not bringing up children who will love and worship God.

6. What is Malachi's answer to the people's desire that God come and execute justice?

Malachi points out that they may not be ready for God to come as a judge. It will be a day that those who practice sin and have no delight in God will not be able to endure.

Getting Personal

7. Malachi promises that Jesus is going to come to refine and cleanse and heal. How has the Lord worked in your heart and your life to refine and cleanse and heal during the course of this study?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. One of the reasons the people of Malachi's day were so disillusioned with God was that they had read all the promises of the prophets and they didn't see them becoming reality. What would you want to tell them, if you could, from your perspective of having the whole of the Old and New Testaments?

Wait on the Lord. All of his promises prove true. Sometimes he takes a very long time to work out his plans, but he can be trusted. He is, even now, at work bringing about his plans even though he may seem silent or inactive.

Video Study Note-Taking Pages for Duplication

The process of taking notes is, for many of us, less about having the notes to refer to later than it is about the increased concentration and comprehension that comes to us as we hear something and process it through our pens onto paper. Certainly your members should each have a copy of the companion book, *The Son of David*, and all of the content from the videos is included in the book. Still, it may be helpful for some mem-

bers to take notes with an outline to help them track along with the teaching presentation on the video. Others may choose to take notes on their own blank page, and some may choose not to take notes at all. Following are reproducible note pages for each week, with the major headings as presented on the videos. You are free to make as many copies of these note-taking pages as needed for your group members.

Notes on Week 1: An Introduction to the Prophets

The Word of the Lord

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers *by the prophets* . . . (Hebrews 1:1)

Who were the prophets?

The Problems with the Prophets We Must Overcome

We're unfamiliar with the history and geography.

We're easily bored or confused by their repetitive oracles.

We have a misunderstanding about what prophecy is.

The Message of the Prophets We Must Hear

We struggle with the same sins they struggled with.

We are subject to the same judgment they were subject to.

We also share the same hope that the people of the prophets' day had.

We await the same Savior.

We enjoy a superior revelation than they had.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. (1 Pet. 1:10–11)

The Person in the Prophets We Must See

We'll see the predictions that Jesus fulfilled.

We'll see problems that Jesus solves.

We'll see people in whom Jesus is prefigured.

We'll see a pattern that Jesus superseded.

Notes on Week 2: Jonah

Questions God Asks

Jonah's Rebellion

Jonah's Resurrection

Nineveh's Repentance

Jonah's Resentment

Someone Greater than Jonah

Notes on Week 3: Hosea

Our Holy Husband

He Chooses Us

He Woos Us

He Loves Us

For you were bought with a price. (1 Cor. 6:20)

You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:18–19)

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word*, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25–27)

Notes on Week 4: Micah
Law and Order

The Defendants

The Charges

The Coconspirators

The Evidence

The Witnesses

The Defense

The Verdict

The Sentence

The Shepherd King

Notes on Week 5: Isaiah
There Are Some Things You Can't Unsee

Isaiah Saw a Divine King

An Accepted Sacrifice

A Shoot from a Stump

Isaiah Saw a Suffering Servant

A Hymn about the Servant

Isaiah 53:2–3 and 7–9: The Servant as the World Sees Him

Isaiah 52:13–53:2 and 53:10–12: The Servant as God Sees Him

Isaiah 53:4–6: The Servant as Those Saved by the Servant See Him

Isaiah Saw a Coming Conqueror

Notes on Week 6: Habakkuk

Feeling Pretty Good about Myself

Bad People and Their Need for God

Really Bad People and the Holiness of God

The Only Good Person and the Requirement of God

The righteous “will live by his faith.” What does that mean?

Living by faith means not perishing in your sin.

Living by faith means believing that justice will be done.

Living by faith means expecting that mercy will be shown.

Living by faith means enduring whatever may come.

Living by faith means trusting that God will get you safely home.

Notes on Week 7: Jeremiah

I Pledge My Allegiance

God's Law Written on Stone

Sin Engraved on the Heart

God's Law Written on the Heart

Sin would be dealt with in a different way in the new covenant.

People would relate to God in a different way.

There would also be a new ability to obey God's law provided for in the new covenant.

Notes on Week 8: Daniel

What You Need to Know

You've Got to Know Who You Really Are

You've Got to Know What Will Last

You've Got to Know Whom to Depend On

You've Got to Know Who Lived This Way

You've Got to Know How the Story Will End

Notes on Week 9: Ezekiel

The House That Built Me

The Glory Descends

The Glory Departs

The Glory Returns

The Glory Again Descended (John 1:14)

The Glory Again Departed (Heb. 13:12)

The Glory Will Again Return (Acts 1:9-11)

Notes on Week 10: Malachi

The Problem and the Promise

Malachi Demonstrates the Problem

There's a problem with their receptivity to God's love.

There's a problem with the lack of respect shown in offering sacrifices.

There's a problem with the instruction given by the priests.

There's a problem with their rejection of their wives.

There's a problem with their responsibilities as God's stewards.

There's a problem with their rhetoric regarding God's justice.

Malachi Declares the Promise

The Promise of a Refiner

The Promise of a Book of Remembrance

The Promise of the Sun of Righteousness

Jesus Deals with the Problem

Jesus Delivers on the Promise