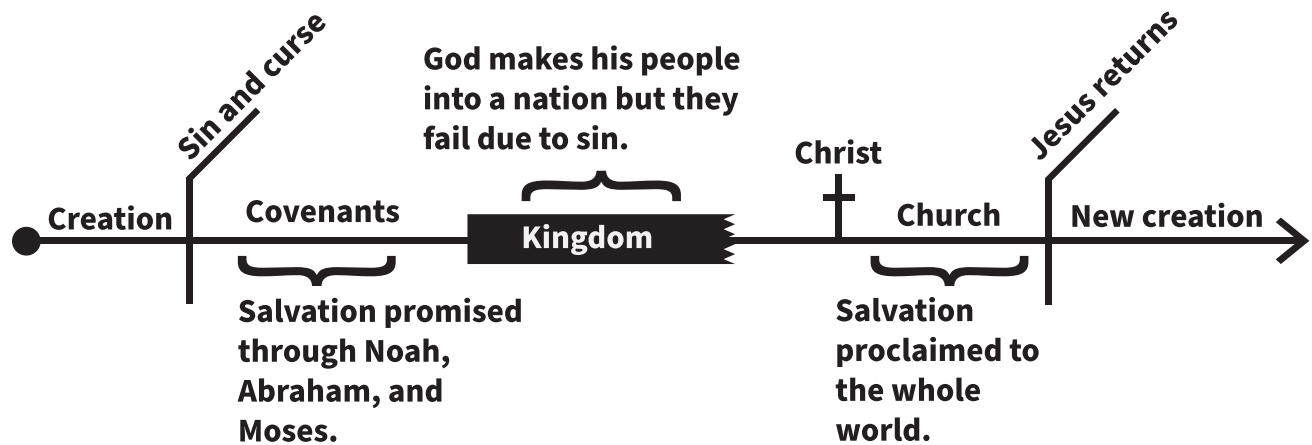


Session 2

Know the Gospel

Session 2: Know the Gospel

Recap Session 1: Big Story



Big Story plot points:

- Creation: Genesis 1-2
 - God creates human beings to enjoy relationship with him, rule his creation, and fill the earth with God worshippers.
- Sin and curse: Genesis 3
 - Humans rebel and are exiled from God's presence.
- Covenants: Genesis 6, Genesis 12, Exodus 19
 - God makes promises to take a people for himself out of sinful humanity.
- Kingdom: Joshua – 2 Chronicles
 - God sets up his people in a physical kingdom to be his special people, and from this kingdom God's light will shine to the ends of the earth. Yet God's people rebel again and are exiled from the kingdom.
- Christ: Matthew – John
 - God sends his Son to be the New Adam, to live obediently yet die like a rebel so that sinful humanity could be reconciled to God. This breaks the power of sin and begins undoing the curse.
- Church: Acts – Revelation
 - Through Christ, God saves a people for himself out of sinful humanity, sending them out to fill the earth with God worshippers.
- Jesus returns: Revelation 19-20
 - Jesus returns to usher in the new age and end the curse of sin for good.
- New creation: Revelation 21-22
 - God makes a New Heavens and a New Earth, to be inhabited by God's people for eternity. God will dwell with them in their midst, like he had always intended.

Church as organism vs. church as organization: the tomato and the tomato cage

Sometimes you'll come across this distinction between the church as organism—emphasizing the organic, people-to-people dimension of church life—and church as organization—emphasizing the corporate structures that organize and systematize church life. To be sure, all churches include both aspects (in fact, all social groups include both), though every church has its leaning or bias. For example, small churches are more organic, such that you might start service five minutes late or you might not need an official greeting team, while large churches are more organized, requiring more robust systems and structures to care for everyone.

However, there is an important priority, captured by Louis Berkhof: “The Church as an institution or organization...is a means to an end, and this is found in the Church as an organism, the community of believers.”⁸ Think of this like growing tomatoes; you certain *can* grow a tomato plant without any support, but the plant is a vine so it'll flop over on the ground and the slugs will enjoy your tomatoes for you. Tomatoes are often grown in tomato cages, and yet the structure and support provided by the cage are a means to an end, that end being the growth of the plant. Similarly, all that we do to organize a church, from service times to websites to community group structures, all are a means to an end: the organic life of God's people.

Also, it's worth pointing out, you can grow tomatoes a lot of different ways. Some people wind them up a string, other hang them upside down from special pots. So too, there are many ways to structure and organize the life of God's people.



⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 567.

Before starting Session 2...

>> CG Leader Role Description: Any questions?

The role description isn't exhaustive (hopefully the training comes close to that); instead, the role description should be a solid overview of what is expected out of community group leaders.

Session 2: Know the Gospel

>> Discussion:

- Why do you personally read the Bible?
- Why do you think we read the Bible together?

Making sense of the Bible

>> Discussion:

- From Prework Exercise 1, what are some general methods you use to understand any passage in the Bible?

- The Prework described the Bible study method we use in Vintage community groups. What was new and/or helpful for you as you read about that?

Bible Study Discussion

See the Session 2 Prework for background on our philosophy for Bible Study Discussion. Here we'll make just a couple points about how we use this philosophy in Vintage community groups.

Vintage Community Group Discussions

- Sermon-based Bible study: our default for community groups is to discuss the same passage that the Sunday sermon was preached on, which allows for more time to chew on that passage and apply it to our lives (note: this is different than merely discussing the sermon together).
- Doubter/Seeker/Follower friendly: We intentionally word questions and structure discussion flow to accommodate folks who have little to no Bible background. This helps us avoid ostracizing doubters and seekers and avoid assuming followers know more than they do.
- Focus less on information and more on transformation: Thinking back to the Prework, we don't spend as much time on Observation as we do on Interpretation or Application.
- Use succinct, open-ended questions: We're not asking specific questions with specific answers (as much as our grade-school instincts might think we are); we're using questions to evoke meaningful thought and dialogue.

Expectations for discussion prep

1. Each week you would spend time preparing for discussion, both in study and in prayer. The goal isn't that you would know everything about the passage but that you feel confident facilitating discussion about it.
2. You would work from the weekly discussion guides as your starting point, both for study and for discussion questions. This means you are **not** expected to write a discussion each week.
3. As needed, you would edit, reword, and/or add to the questions in order to help the discussion fit your people best.

Discussion objectives

You're not going to hit each of these equally every week, but these four objectives should inform the way we do discussion every week. Ultimately, this is what all your prep, prayer, and discussion planning are targeted at:

1. Real, authentic encounters with God in his word.
2. The gospel would be revisited/reiterated
3. Everyone would feel included, supported, and cared for.
4. Real, tangible application for our lives.

CG Leader Website: cg.vintagenc.com

Our CG Leader website has all of our discussion guides plus helpful resources for counseling, sermon series, common questions, etc. Poke through the site to see what all is there. Each week on the homepage you'll find this week's guide, which includes:

- Main focus: the primary direction we're heading with that week's discussion.
- Passage intro: Roughly 3-5 minutes' worth of reading on the text and what we're doing in the discussion. This isn't a regurgitation of the sermon so much as a bridge between the text and the discussion questions. Also, the intro will often touch on any tricky parts in the text, especially ones that might distract your group from the real meat of the passage.
- Discussion questions: 5-7 discussion questions that follow our Observation, Interpretation, Application paradigm, sometimes by jumping to other passages for supporting or clarifying material.

Practical skills for Bible study discussion

>> Discussion:

- Think back to the Pework reading on skills for running a Bible study discussion; what was new and/or helpful to you in that section?
- What questions do you have about facilitating discussion? Any certain scenarios you're wondering about?
- Is there anything you're worried about when it comes to Bible study discussion? Any problems you expect to encounter?

Post-session reflection

At your CG gathering this week, pay careful attention to the discussion, the ebb and flow, how the questions work (or don't work), when people get deep and personal and when people stay at surface level. Perhaps it'll be a prime example of discussion; more likely it'll be an imperfect test-case, and yet it'll give you a moment to see some of these dynamics in action.