

**AUTUMN
RIDGE
CHURCH**

He Gets Us.®

A printer-friendly
STUDY GUIDE

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Welcome to our small group study of the Spring 2023 Autumn Ridge message series!

To ensure each of us feels the safety to be vulnerable, together we invite you to commit to these Group Agreements:

1. **Confidentiality.** What's said here stays here. What's learned here leaves here.
2. **Let God do the fixing.** We are not here to fix each other – that's God's work to do.
3. **Invest and receive.** We are better together - arrive prepared to invest in others and receive from others.
4. **Make space. Take space.** Make space for others to contribute. Take space to make your contribution.
5. **Keep the main thing the main thing.** We are here to talk about how Jesus gets us. We are not here to talk about politics or divisive issues.
6. **Transformation above information.** We emphasize friendship over facts and sincere exploration as a means to bring about personal growth.

Are there any additional agreements we should add and abide by?

Message Schedule for the Series:

- April 15/16 – Anxiety
- April 22/23 – Compassion (Heartbreak)
- April 29/30 – Outrage
- May 6/7 – Struggle
- May 13/14 – Mother's Day – *no small group materials this week*
- May 21/22 – Rebellion

APRIL 15/16

Discussion Guide For A Refreshing Response to Anxiety

Jesus was no stranger to stress and overwhelm. The social pressure was immense. He was constantly bombarded with questions. He had to be intentional about his words. Jesus lived in times of civil unrest. He carried a lot of weight on his shoulders.

Amidst anxious times, he sought help and sometimes solitude during his most stressful moments.

Opening Prayer

Begin with one minute of silence to allow the group to center on the presence of God, then briefly pray for receptive hearts to what God will do as we practice the spiritual discipline of community.

Opening Questions

In this session, we'll be discussing things that make us anxious and how we might respond. For openers, what are some things that make us anxious? As a group, brainstorm a list of 20 possibilities. What are the side effects of that in our lives?

Discussion

Invite a different person to look up each of the following verses and read the verse aloud to the group.

- Matthew 26:36-38
- Matthew 14:10-13
- Luke 22:44-46

In what ways did Jesus respond when he was in these anxious experiences?
How about you? What are some specific things that have caused you to be anxious in the past?

How do you respond when you feel anxious?

Invite someone from the group to read Matthew 6:25-34. Then discuss:

- How does this apply in your life today?
- Is there anything challenging or difficult about living it?
- What comfort can we take from these verses?
- What principle can we learn from verse 34?
- Does that mean we should not plan for tomorrow?
- What is the difference between planning and worrying?

Scripture Reflection

Individually, read Matthew 6:33 five times.

Consider each word in the verse and write down your thoughts, even if it's just a word or two. Allow God to speak to you through the words of the verse.

When the group has concluded writing, invite anyone who is willing to share what insights emerge from the passage through this reflection.

Praying Together

Although it is a lifelong endeavor, what is one thing you can do in the coming week to "seek first the kingdom of God"?

Invite everyone to share their one area of intent.

Pray together for the intentions that were shared.

Sharing He Gets Us

Think of others in your life who may experience anxiousness and worry. What's one simple way you can offer compassion, support, and prayers to each person this week?

APRIL 22/23

Discussion Guide For

The Remarkable Compassion of Jesus – Heartbreak

Jesus had great compassion. Everywhere he went, he sought to alleviate suffering. He ministered to the sick, injured, and outcasts. In those days, people who were afflicted with leprosy were isolated in leper colonies. While others shunned them, Jesus treated and assisted them. He was a healer, both of body and spirit. Jesus didn't hold back his feelings. He cared. He mourned. He wept. Through his example, we can learn how to be more caring and compassionate to everyone around us.

Like Jesus, we can seek ways to ease others' burdens and lift them up physically and emotionally. Small acts of kindness and sincere words of sympathy can make a huge difference to someone that is in need of compassion.

Opening Prayer

Begin with one minute of silence to allow the group to center on the presence of God, then briefly pray for receptive hearts to what God will do as we practice the spiritual discipline of community.

Opening Questions

In this session, we'll be discussing suffering, and how we might respond to it. Can anyone share a time they were suffering and received a significant act of compassion in response?

Scripture Reflection

Invite each person to individually read and reflect on Mark 1:40-45 by answering these four questions. Allow enough time for the group to write down their insights.

1. What might God want me to understand/think?
2. What might God want me to believe?
3. What might God want me to desire?
4. What might God want me to do in response to my understanding?

When the group has concluded writing their insights, invite anyone who is willing to select one of the four questions and share their response. (If there is momentum, you might opt to repeat, inviting the group to select a different question.)

Discussion

- Why do you think the man with leprosy approached Jesus asking, “If you are willing”?
- In what ways can you relate to the man’s approach to Jesus?
- What is significant about Jesus’ response to the man?
- When have you seen Jesus’ presence or compassionate response to suffering in your life?
- What did you take away from those experiences?

Praying Together

Who do you know that may be wondering if Jesus is willing to meet their needs?

What specific needs do they have?

Pray together for the needs you just listed.

Sharing He Gets Us

Think of the person/people you just prayed for. How can you offer compassion to that person/people? What’s one thing you can do to offer that compassion this week?

APRIL 29/30

Discussion Guide For Feeling Angry? Jesus Did too. Outrage

If anyone knew the temptation to retaliate, it was Jesus. He was spit upon. He was falsely accused. He was challenged by powerful men and even mocked publicly. But how did Jesus respond? Sometimes he said nothing. Other times, he softly acknowledged what he knew to be true. But he didn't escalate the situation. He didn't humiliate his accusers. He exercised a level of self-control that few have. In doing so, he set an example of peace for us in our daily conflicts. We, too, can turn down the volume whenever our blood boils, even when we feel justified. As Jesus showed, contention is not the answer.

Opening Prayer

Begin with one minute of silence to allow the group to center on the presence of God, then briefly pray for receptive hearts to what God will do as we practice the spiritual discipline of community.

Opening Questions

In this session, we will be discussing conflict and how to respond to it. For openers, what's a current circumstance in your life that causes you to respond in anger?

Scripture Reflection

Read through Luke 22:47-53

Choose a specific character in the passage. Read Luke 22:47-53 again. This time see, hear, feel, and experience what is happening in the passage from the perspective of the character you selected.

Next, take time to write your own journal entry based on what you (the character in the passage) just experienced. How did you feel? What are you seeing? What is your response? What is going through your mind as the events unfold? How is your life impacted?

When the group has concluded their journal entry, invite anyone who is willing to share what they have written and any insights they had.

Discussion

- What motivated Jesus' followers to retaliate with swords?
- Describe Jesus' response to the people who came to arrest him.
- Think for a moment about how Jesus' response would have impacted those who came to arrest him. Use one word to describe the impact.
- Envision a different ending. Realizing it is out of the character of Christ, what may have happened if Jesus affirmed striking with swords?
- How would the situation have progressed?
- How is the topic of outrage relevant in today's society?
- How do you see people in culture responding to things that upset them?

Invite a group member to read aloud Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus's response when we feel outrage. What might this kind of response accomplish within us when we are in disagreement with others?

Praying together

Think of someone who makes your blood boil or a relationship that is in tension. Take a moment to consider life from their perspective. Write down concerns, anxieties, needs, or hurts they may have.

Pray together for the needs you just listed.

Next Step Challenge: Pray for those needs each day this week.

Sharing He Gets Us

Whom do you know that may be feeling outraged? What do they need from you? What can you do to meet that need?

MAY 6/7

**Discussion Guide For
Jesus Brings Real World Change: Struggle**

There were multiple ways Jesus could have made himself wealthy. He was a teacher with lots of supporters. And he was a carpenter's son, which means he likely grew up learning a lucrative skillset. But Jesus wasn't building a personal estate, or an army, or a nation, or an empire. He followed what he believed was his true calling and identity – to demonstrate how the tenets of his ancient faith were actually designed to translate into a movement of radical love and inclusivity. He related with and loved all people, but his message resonated most with those who were considered the least lovable – the poor, the sick, people with disabilities, and other outcasts. To love people like that he needed to relate with them. And so, like most of his poor and oppressed followers, he relied on other people for the money he needed to survive. He traveled often, staying with friends, without a home of his own during his public ministry. He even instructed other members of his team to travel without any extra money and to rely only on the generosity of those who were inspired by their mission of radically inclusive love. He promised them that if they just represented his message to others, their basic needs would be met, and their experience would be so fulfilling that nothing else would matter. He was right.

Opening Prayer

Begin with one minute of silence to allow the group to center on the presence of God, then briefly pray for receptive hearts to what God will do as we practice the spiritual discipline of community.

Opening Questions

At what point in your life was (or is) it especially challenging to make ends meet financially?

Scripture Reflection

Invite each person to individually read and reflect on Matthew 19:16-22 by answering these four questions. Allow enough time for the group to write down their insights.

1. What might God want me to understand/think?
2. What might God want me to believe?
3. What might God want me to desire?
4. What might God want me to do in response to my understanding?

When the group has concluded writing their insights, invite anyone who is willing to select one of the four questions and share their response. (If there is momentum, you might opt to repeat, inviting the group to select a different question.)

Discussion

What can we learn about Jesus' views on and relationship with money from the following passages? Work as a group to make an exhaustive list.

- Luke 8:1-3
 - Luke 9:57-58
 - Mark 6:7-9
 - Matthew 17:24-27
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- Based on these insights, what understanding does Jesus have of those who are struggling financially?
 - How does this perspective on money align with our society's view on money?
 - How does Jesus' lifestyle and relationship with money inform your perspective on those who are struggling to make ends meet?

Individual Reflection

What might Jesus say to you regarding your own relationship with money? Take a few minutes in silent reflection to write a letter from Jesus to you about your relationship with money.

The one word Jesus would use to describe my relationship with money is...
If you feel comfortable sharing, what general insights surfaced in your letter?

Praying Together

Regardless of our level of financial struggle, cultivating a grateful heart makes a positive impact on our relationship with money.

Pray together, inviting the group to complete the following sentence in as many ways as they can think of, concluding as you sense the time is complete. "God, thank you for..."

Sharing He Gets Us

There are people around you struggling to make ends meet, maybe even people around you. How can our group come together to express a tangible act of love by meeting a need of a struggling person/family?

Make specific plans and take action within the next two weeks.

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MAY 20/21

Discussion Guide For The Radical Acceptance of Jesus – Rebel

Jesus knew how it felt like to be falsely judged. The government and religious authorities of Jesus' day saw Jesus and his disciples as troublemakers, lawbreakers, and rebels. Jesus and his crew were eyed with suspicion whenever they entered a new city or walked down the street. Rumors and false accusations swirled. Everything they did was questioned or challenged. The truth is, they were rebels. They were challenging the status quo, but they were not criminals. They were rebels for peace. They challenged others to love everyone. This was a radical idea that the leaders of that time couldn't see or wouldn't embrace. But that didn't stop Jesus or his followers.

They did the right thing despite the misunderstanding and biases within their society.

Opening Prayer

Begin with one minute of silence to allow the group to center on the presence of God, then briefly pray for receptive hearts to what God will do as we practice the spiritual discipline of community.

Opening Question

What comes to mind when you think of a rebel?

Scripture Reflection

Read through John 18:28-40.

Invite each person to individually reflect on the passage, by placing themselves at the scene. Invite the group to individually write down reflections based on what they just experienced. Ask:

How did you feel? What is going through your mind as the events unfold? What would your response have been?

When the group has concluded writing their reflections, invite anyone who is willing to share their reflections or insights that surfaced.

Discussion

Invite a different person to look up each of the following verses and read the verse aloud to the group.

- Luke 5:29-32
- Luke 6:6-11
- John 1:45-46
- Matthew 11:19
- Matthew 12:22-32

Invite the group to discuss:

- In what ways do you think Jesus rebelled against the norms of society?
- In what ways was Jesus wrongly judged?
- Since Jesus was teaching people to love one another, why was he such a threat?
- Who in today's society might experience the misperception of being wrongly judged?
- What characteristics, traits, and skills would they need to build to get by each day?
- In what ways might Jesus understand and relate to them?

Praying Together

Consider those who are wrongly judged in our society. Individually, write down words that describe their challenges when navigating society.

With that experience in mind, pray together for these individuals in our society and the needs that arise from their experiences.

Sharing He Gets Us

This week, consider someone who may be wrongly judged in your own social spheres. What's one thing you can do to perceive and interact with them differently?

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