

Gaining Ground with Good Soil Leader's Guide

Resources

This Leader's Guide Resource material is to be used in conjunction with the Gaining Ground with Good Soil Leader's Guide and Powerpoint.

If you are leading a group study, go to www.goodsoil.com/gainingground to download materials.

A Table of Contents is included to help you have the materials printed for each of your sessions.



<i>Resource</i>	<i>Print Before Session</i>	<i>Page(s)</i>
Breaking the News Reader's Theatre.	1	2-3
"Preparing the Soil" Narrative	3	4
8 Basic Gospel Concept Cards.	3	5
A Chance to Die	5	6
<i>Gaining Ground with Good Soil</i>		
Chapter 8 Excerpt.	7	7-8
Good Soil Evangelism & Discipleship ...	7	9
Good Soil E&D Verses	7	10
World View Stories	7	11-14
World View Persona Cards	8	15-20
Isaiah 28:23-29 Exercise	9	21
Evangelism Verses Exercise	9	22
Emmaus Skit	9	23
The Story of Hope Worksheet	10	24
The Way to Joy – Helping Believers to Retain the Gospel.	12	25
The Way to Joy – Pursuing Basic Steps to Discipleship	12	26-27

Breaking the News Readers' Theatre

Greg: *(Anxious, blurting out)* We will be leaving Germany in June, and we'd like to use the next six months as a transition for you two to take over the ministry here.
(Greg's German colleagues stare back at him and his wife, Diana, in disbelief.)

Narrator: This is the right thing to do, isn't it? For nine and a half years now—after two years of language study—he and Diana had been trying to start a church in Frankfurt, Germany, a city of 1.8 million people, with only a handful of believers to show for their efforts. Now he and Diana believed they must have been mistaken about God's leading them there in the first place. That's why they planned this four-day retreat with Bernard and Miriam Sämänn to inform them of their decision, to see if they could get them to continue the tiny work they had started, and to plan some kind of transition. At least then, they wouldn't feel as if they were total failures!

Miriam: *(Visibly upset)* No, you can't go! *(Bursting into tears and covering her face in her hands. Diana slides across the couch, puts her arm around Miriam, and sobs quietly with her.)*

Narrator: This was not easy. Bern and Miri were the last people they wanted to leave or to hurt. Ever since they graduated from seminary and joined Greg and Di three years ago, their hearts had been knit together like neither couple had experienced before. Bernard took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He stood, walked to the window, and looked out at the huge white dome covering the maze of blue and green water slides. The two families had come to Monte Mare in Kaiserslautern for a get-away and were staying in an aparthotel (a hotel made up of apartments instead of rooms). The kids were having fun swimming and sliding inside the warm dome as snow fell on this dreary January morning. Bernard was thinking it had just gotten drearier. Had the clouds thickened? Or was it just this news falling down on the room like a heavy blanket, darkening their future? As he prayed a quick "Why, God?" and "Help us figure this out," the blanket seemed to lift a little.

Bernard: Wait! Just---hold on. *(Pauses)* I'm sure you have been thinking and praying about this for some time, and I respect that. But will you wait until the retreat is over before you decide?"

Greg: I know it's difficult. We love you guys, and hate to think about being so far apart; and our kids and your kids...(heart in his throat, has difficulty speaking) But, like we said, we're not seeing fruit. I'm just not sure we were cut out for this kind of thing. God doesn't seem to be using us.

Bernard: But you know that Germany—all of Western Europe—is unresponsive.

Greg: Yes, but...

Bernard: Listen for just a second. *(Takes slow, deliberate breath)* If you can just wait four more days to decide, we'll stand behind your decision and pray seriously about caring for the work by ourselves.

You see, I've been noticing something recently in my study of one of Jesus' parables, and I think it relates to what we are talking about. I wonder if we are even going about evangelism as we should. I think if we all study what Jesus said and work together on this...

Miriam: *(interrupting)* And pray.

Bernard: *(smiling)* ...and pray, we may come up with a better model. Could we spend the next few days in Bible study and prayer and then make a decision? We've already set aside the time."

Diana: And we're already here!

Miriam: *(encouraged)* And you always say, Greg, that 'you can't get enough of the Word...'

Bernard & Diana joining: '...as long as you're applying it!'

Greg: Well, we certainly have nothing to lose by spending some time in the Word, seeking God's face together. What do you say we pray now, then join the kids on the slides, and come back together after lunch?

Narrator: With that, the four friends prayed as earnestly as they ever had that God would teach them during these next few days, that they would gain an understanding of evangelism as Jesus taught, and even that God would work in a special way to keep Greg and Diana in Germany.

Refreshed and encouraged, the two couples hugged one another, then left to find their swimsuits and their kids.

“Preparing the Soil” Narrative

Little Joanna was tugging on her sleeve, but Susanna was lost in thought. Her eyes followed the Master as he got out of the boat and huddled with the twelve, but her mind was still on the story he had just told the crowd.

The tugging continued.

“Mamá, Mamá!” Joanna got her mother’s attention.

“Yes, Joanna, what is it, dear one?”

“Why did he throw seed in the bad places? Didn’t he know it wouldn’t grow there?” Joanna asked her mother innocently.

“What, Honey?” her mother replied.

“Why did the Farmer throw seed on the pathway, and in the rocks, and in the thorns? Seeds don’t grow there. Didn’t the farmer know that?”

“Well yes, I suppose he did. But I’m not sure that the farmer meant to throw seed in the pathway, or the rocks, or even in the thorns. You see, the farmer had come out some time before and tilled his farmland,” Susanna explained to her daughter.

“Tilled?” Joanna asked with a puzzled look on her face.

“Yes, Sweetie, “tilled” means the farmer prepared the soil. He went out to his farmland—probably something like this rectangle of land right there— and he dug it up, turned it over, picked up the stones that were in the field and threw them off to the side. He got his land all ready to receive the seed.”

As Susanna spoke, it hit her. Could this be the lesson—at least part of it—that the Master was trying to teach with this story of the Sower? She glanced back to the shore, pensively. The Master and the Twelve were finishing their conversation.

“Mamá!”

Startled, Susanna turned back to her daughter. “I’m sorry, dear. The farmer prepared his field at least the day before. Then, he came out to his prepared field there (gesturing to the rectangle) and started to sow the seed. He threw it onto the field and as he went along—wanting to be sure to get seed in every corner of his field—he overthrew some of the seed. It landed in the rocks he piled up at the edge of his field. Some of it landed in the thorns just outside his beautifully prepared field. And some landed in the pathway, just like this one that people use to walk around farmland on their way from one town to another.

Joanna tugged again on her mother’s sleeve. She turned to her smiling. She saw her daughter wide-eyed looking just above her mother. Joanna pointed.

Susanna turned to see the Master right behind her, listening. She stood quickly, blushing. “I’m sorry, Master.”

He simply gave her an affirming nod, smiled warmly, and led his disciples to their next appointment.

The mother and daughter watched Him walk down the road, talking with His followers. When they were out of sight around the bend in the road, Susanna commented, half to her daughter, half to herself, “The Master’s stories are always so fascinating, but I don’t always understand. Your question helped me understand what I think is the point to this one: Just as the soil needs to be prepared for seed to grow, so our hearts need to be prepared to receive the word of God so it will produce fruit in our lives. Come on, I’ll race you home!”

God

Man

Sin

Death

Christ

Cross

Faith

Life

A Chance to Die



Amy Carmichael was, perhaps, the most unlikely candidate for missionary work. Born in 1867 to devout Christian parents in Northern Ireland, she suffered from neuralgia — sharp nerve pain that often debilitated and caused her to be bedridden for weeks at a time. After the death of her father, she was adopted and mentored by Robert Wilson, cofounder of the Keswick Convention (an annual gathering of evangelical Christians in Keswick, England). At the Keswick Convention of 1887, Amy heard Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission, speak about missionary life. She was profoundly touched by Taylor's message. Amy later felt God's call to serve Him as a missionary. She applied to China Inland Mission to serve in Asia but was not allowed to go because of concerns about her health.

In spite of her frail health, Amy was still convinced of God's call to serve Him in foreign fields. She later joined the Church Missionary Society and served in Japan for fifteen months. However, after a brief visit to Sri Lanka, Amy felt God calling her to serve in India. She therefore moved to Tamil Nadu, the state located in the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula. Amy spent the remaining fifty-six years of her life there and only returned to Ireland once for a furlough.

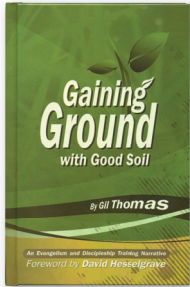
The story as I remember it – and I can only find pieces of the story on line... it may be best not to include this until the exact quote can be found.

“When Amy Carmichael was so very discouraged by the apparent lack of conversions from her labors for Christ, her pastor and adoptive father, Pastor Robert Wilson and Amy were on a buggy ride during her one and only furlough trip home to Ireland, after 17 years in India, when he stopped to watch a group of prisoners breaking boulders on a road bed. He began to count the hammer blows as two men stuck the boulder from opposite sides time after time.... 5,6... 12,13...35,36..52,53... 71,72... and finally at blow 78 the rock broke open. As he pulled the buggy away to continue their journey he asked Amy how many blows it took to break the rock. She replied “78”. To which Pastor Wilson queried... “And which was the most important one?” She replied the first, the last and everyone in between. They were all necessary. Exactly, replied her pastor. And you've been hammering on a field of virgin boulders, untouched by the hammer. You strike one twice, another, five times, another twenty, another 50, and you feel it is all a failure. It is not a failure, it is a process. And the only remedy is to press on, be faithful, and in time, the hammer of God's word will break the stony hearts of India and heal them.”

How Can We Know What They Believe?

Peeling the Worldview Onion

Page 101



Where does the time go? thought Greg. He had just finished his quiet time with God and was sitting at his computer reviewing his calendar. After their retreat in Kaiserslautern, they had been busy with the catch-up that is the result of being away. Also, ministry had kept them busy. Now he realized twelve weeks had flown by. It wasn't as if they hadn't talked. The couples had planning meetings and ministered together all throughout the three months. But with the day-to-day business, they had not talked more about the concepts they learned together on the retreat. Today he and Diana were going to meet Bern and Miri for most of the day for more "Good Soil Strategizing" as they had come to call it.

It wasn't that they weren't applying their findings either. Each of the four believed they were improving their evangelism efforts by "slowing down" the process. "Slowing down" evangelism sounded strange, but it was what they were doing, and even if it was not speeding up church planting, it definitely was making it better. They were seeking to help their hearers truly understand the gospel and move up the Scale by tilling the soil. They

Page 102

also saw many of their contacts moving across the scale as a result of deepening relationships that were opening hearts to hear the gospel. An email Greg sent to Joe, his administrator, yesterday summed up well how he was feeling.

Joe,

Greetings from "spring-is-finally-on-its-way" Germany. Today we saw buds on the trees in the park. I'm excited about Easter ministry possibilities as we see warmer temperatures.

These weeks since the retreat have been great. Not only have we continued to learn so much from Bern and Miri, but we are seeing a difference in people's responses in evangelism and in the discipling of our little band. In our Sunday Bible study I had people look up verses with *suniami*, *paradechomai*, and *katecho* in them to help solidify their concept of understand, embrace, and retain as it relates to the gospel in the parable of the soils. What fun it was! The interaction of the activity was fun, sure, but even more fun was seeing lights come on above their heads as they understood. I'm attaching a copy (in English, of course) of the study we did if you're interested.

Thanks for your prayers. We thank God for His Word, for great colleagues, and for your encouragement along the way.

Yours and His for a harvest,
Greg

As Greg was about to shut down his computer and get ready to go to the meeting, it chimed and a little box popped up indicating he had a new message. It was Joe. Normally he wouldn't be receiving a message from Joe at this hour of the day since Germany is five hours ahead of North American (Eastern Standard) time. But Joe was on a trip visiting missionaries under his care in Western Europe. He was in Italy and would arrive in Germany later this week. Greg looked at his watch and decided he had time to open the email and read it quickly if it was not too long.

Page 103

Greg,

We are having a good time with the missionaries here in Italy. They are a great group. I have shared a bit about the "good soil" discoveries your team has been making. They are very interested in hearing more—not only here in Italy, but in Spain, Portugal, and England where I have already visited. I'd like to talk with you and Bern about making it our emphasis at our All-Western Europe Conference in November. It might be good for you and him to run your colleagues through the learning processes you have experienced.

Eager to see you on Thursday,

Joe

With a couple of clicks Greg was out of his server, the computer was shutting down, and he was on his way out the office door. "Honey," he shouted down the stairs as he took them two at a time, "You'll never guess what Joe wants us to do at the All-Europe this year."

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Good Soil

Evangelism & Discipleship

03-15-11

What is Good Soil Evangelism & Discipleship (E&D)?

Let's let Jesus define it:

Matthew 13:23	Mark 4:20	Luke 8:15
<p>But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and <u>understands it</u>*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.</p> <p>*Greek <i>sunimi</i> = συνίμι (soon-ee'-ay-mee)</p> <p><small>The word literally means to send or bring together, thus in this case to mentally put things together so as to comprehend or make sense of it.</small></p>	<p>But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, <u>accept it</u>*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.</p> <p>*Greek <i>paradechomai</i> = παράδεχομαι (par-ad-ekh'-o-mi)</p> <p><small>The word <i>dechomai</i> (receive) is intensified by the prefix <i>para</i> (near or by one's side), thus it conveys the idea of embracing.</small></p>	<p>But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, <u>keep it</u>* and bear fruit with patience.</p> <p>*Greek <i>katecho</i> = κατέχω (kat-ekh'-o)</p> <p><small>The word literally means to hold something down; in a positive sense it means to hold it tightly so as to protect it from being taken away.</small></p>
<p>Match Passages to Statements</p> <p>___ Matthew 13:19 ___ Luke 24:44-45 ___ Acts 28:26 ___ Acts 28:27</p> <p>1a. Sometimes people hear and see but do not understand.</p> <p>1b. Sometimes people with a lot of Bible knowledge do not understand it ("put it all together" so as to make clear sense).</p> <p>1c. Sometimes lack of understanding is a "calloused or dull or hard heart" problem.</p> <p>1d. People who hear but don't understand are spiritually vulnerable.</p>	<p>Match Passages to Statements</p> <p>___ Acts 15:4 ___ 1 Timothy 5:19 ___ Hebrews 12:6</p> <p>2a. This word carries the idea of welcoming something or someone into one's presence—a warm and friendly reception.</p> <p>2b. This word is also used to describe the act of adoption, when a father lovingly acknowledges a child as his own.</p> <p>2c. This word is also used to describe the action of accepting something as being true and valid.</p>	<p>Match Passages to Statements</p> <p>___ 1 Corinth. 11:2 ___ 1 Corinth. 15:2 ___ Hebrews 10:23</p> <p>3a. Our human role is to "hold fast" but the encouraging thing to know is that God's role is to remain faithful to the promises He has given us.</p> <p>3b. Those who are truly saved will hold firmly to God's Word.</p> <p>3c. It's a praiseworthy thing for believers to hold on to the teachings that have been passed on to them by the person who disciplined them.</p>

Regeneration (new birth) occurs instantaneously at a single point in time, but *there is a sense* in which **conversion** is a gradual process that leads up to regeneration.

Discuss: In what sense is conversion a gradual process leading to regeneration?

Matthew 13:19

¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

1 Timothy 5:19

¹⁹Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Luke 24:44-45

⁴⁴Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Hebrews 12:6

⁶For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Acts 28:26

²⁶saying, 'Go to this people and say:"Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive;.

1 Corinthians 11:2

²Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Acts 28:27

²⁷For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.""

1 Corinthians 15:2

²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

Acts 15:4

⁴And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

Hebrews 10:23

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

World View Stories

At the end of session 7, the leader asks some of the participants to do some research on worldviews. The following paragraphs are short narratives that will give one an idea of what the worldview of different individuals could be like. You can distribute these to help with the research. Also, the “Religious Worldview Analyses” give excellent insight into several worldviews. The research in those documents is taken directly from source material. This 96-page document developed by missionaries serving where the worldviews are predominant can also be downloaded from www.goodsoil.com/gainingground.

A Secular / Scientific Humanist’s Story

Life only comes around once – I only get this one chance at it – and I want to do it right! I really can’t waste my time on anything that won’t help me or humanity to be better off. As a result, I think that religion, ethics, morals, and other human philosophies and mental constructs should all be examined to see if they can stand the test of reason. Nothing should just be taken on faith. I can readily imagine humanity’s ultimate victory over such problems as over-population, sickness, aging, and even death! I get excited in realizing that if we apply insights from the great minds of the past, reason, scientific methods, and hard work, the so-called ‘mysteries’ of life, death, this little globe, and the universe will all be solved.

A Buddhist’s Story

In India, where the Blessed One was born, many people lived painful years in the lowest castes of life with no one to help them. Without right teaching, they continually cycled through lives of desire, death, and rebirth appropriate to their fate. The Blessed One, though he was born into a life of wealth and was destined for royalty, left his castle walls and saw suffering and death all around. Renouncing his life, and leaving his wife and child, he took on the clothing of a mendicant and began his search for the meaning of life. Denying himself, he learned that asceticism was not the right path. Finally, like others before him, he gained enlightenment under the bodhi tree. Through deep meditation, he realized the supreme truth, and he began to teach about the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths. Like the lotus, he overcame the world, and prolonged his life before entering nirvana in order to help others to obtain salvation. Like Sakyamuni, the Blessed One, knowing that there is no self for me to consider, in this life I would become as one who has ceased to crave and to fear. I would help and show compassion on others, not concerning myself with my own destiny as much as helping others to find the Middle Path that leads to nirvana.

A Post-modernist's Story

All people are finite and therefore all knowledge is finite. Knowledge derives from and has application to a specific limited cultural framework and a specific community which interprets this knowledge. Absolute certainty is neither possible nor desirable. One interpretive community cannot claim that their knowledge is applicable to another. The foundations by which knowledge is discovered and the methods by which they are applied only serve the preference and convenience of a particular group. Therefore, no truth can claim a universal, an historical application. What is true for one culture and language may not be true for another. Absolute claims are therefore arrogant and intolerant of the diverse ways in which knowledge and truth are discovered. God may exist for some but does not of necessity exist for all. Both astrological and religious claims share an equal claim to truth by those who embrace these truths.

An Animist's Story

There is one God who created the world, but he lives far away from us, and he cannot hear our voice. So, if we want to pray to him, we must find someone who will take our requests to him. Our ancestors, who once lived with us have gone away, and they now live much closer to God, so they can take our prayers to him. We must continue to honor our ancestors through acts of worship, such as sacrificing chickens or other animals, or they will not help us. If we fail to honor them or fail to keep the traditions they established, they will become angry with us and can do us harm. There are also many spirits who live in the rivers, the mountains, and the forests who can help us reach God. People have seen these spirits, who sometimes appear as a light in the night, or can take the form of a bird, a woman or a mermaid. If we fail to honor them, or in some way displease them, they have the power to cause us great harm. This is why sickness sometimes breaks out in villages, or why the rain does not fall. These spirits can cause accidents, madness, and even death. The only death that is natural is from old age. So when a child or a young adult dies, we need to seek a fetish priest who has the power to discover who caused his death. Death from a falling tree or from lightning is considered judgment from God, and will require special ceremonies to purify the village of the person's sin. A person who dies in this way cannot be buried in the village, but must be taken out into the bush for burial. Such a person cannot go to the place of his ancestors, and his spirit becomes an evil spirit, wandering in the wilderness, and able to cause us harm. We can use a spirit's power if we know special words or ceremonies. This power can be used for success in business, for protection from enemies, and for healing when one is sick. It can also be used against our enemies if we seek revenge. The fetish priests can help us know how to gain control of this power, so they are our saviors. Every person has two spirits. One spirit is his life force, and he gains additional life force from the animals (or in the case of cannibals, from the people) he eats. That is why young men facing combat eat dogs, for the dog is a fierce fighter, and his spirit power will help the young men to become skilled and fierce in combat. This is why we hide our cut hair and fingernails. These grow quickly, showing they possess much of the spirit power in our body. If an enemy were to find these things, he would gain power over us with our spirit life force. The second spirit is the part of us that thinks and knows. When we dream at night, it is this spirit that leaves our body and is actually experiencing the dream. We must be careful to not abruptly wake a person, because the spirit might return and be unable to find his body. Then, if it cannot find the body, the person will fall sick and eventually die. Or if he has had an accident and he is in a coma, it is important to bring the person back to the place where he had the accident, or his spirit will be unable to find him and he will die. If a person has lived a good life, he or she will be welcomed into the home of the ancestors. If he has been an evil person, like a murderer, he will be condemned to roam in the wilderness as an evil spirit forever.

A Hindu's Story

"So stale this room is. You like to live like a filthy pig? Where you saw girls carrying on like this? In my day, we were up at four o'clock in the morning. Four o'clock! By six o'clock, we finish light the lamp, clean the fowl run, sweep the front yard and make breakfast for the men of the house. My mother, your great-granny, always used to say that girls are the Lutchmi¹ of the house, and because of that, we must show respect for God and welcome luck into the house by getting up before God. Getting up late is like telling God you don't want good luck."²

Granny scurried around the room faffing as she went. The phone rang and she bolted downstairs. Sheree pulled the covers over her head hoping the call was from one of the aunties. Gran could spend hours gossiping with them. That would give her some peace. Sheree knew she was no Lutchmi, and as a twenty year old modern Indian girl she took all her gran's religious nagging as superstitious ranting and raving.

Devi was on the phone. She grew up on the farm with gran. Devi's mother's brother's daughter's son was drinking and drugging again. Devi wanted granny to come with her to the priest to say a prayer and to find out what they must do to stop this boy and make him love his mother like a good Hindu. The boy had already been arrested twice and his wife went home to her mother. The wife wanted no part of priests, so Devi must help the boy.

Granny and Devi took the taxi to the priest. He listened to them then looked some things up in his book, asked the boy's name and birthday. Finally he told Devi she must make an offering of coconuts, milk and money every day for two weeks at the temple. She must also carry kavadi at the procession in two months (kavadi involves walking in a procession behind the god chariot carrying a burden on her back). After she had done these things she must have a prayer and thanksgiving at her house. All the neighbors were to be invited, and she must hold it on an auspicious date, which the priest will assign. After all this the boy should be free from the evil spirit and the family purged of their bad luck. Devi paid the priest and went on her way, happy to know she will be able to help her mother's brother's daughter's son.

On the way home gran tells Devi she is too old to carry Kavadi and that she must have one of her grandsons do it. Devi says she must do it. It will be more pleasing to Shiva, if she an old woman, suffers under the Kavadi. Whatever it takes she must help her uncle's family.

¹ A reference to lighting the god lamp – traditionally the responsibility of the women of the house.

² The first paragraph is taken from *Devi on Sunday* a delightful commentary written by a South African Indian. *Devi* chronicles the normal life and worldview of South African Indians through fictional stories.

<http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/article.aspx?ID=408087>

The Story of a Jewish Believer

God is one, the creator of all things and he shares his glory with no other. Man is made in the image of God, but this image was marred by the trespass of Adam. Repentance is defined as returning to God (lachazor le'tshuvah), which is achieved by strict observance of the 613 Mosaic laws of the Torah, or Halachah. If enough Jews do these good works, then they will repair the world (Tikun Ha Olam) helping to bring Messiah to redeem mankind. The Jewish people have the responsibility to bring redemption to the world. Nowadays, the Jewish People are divided into Cohen, Levi and Israel. Those who are not Jews do not keep the Mosaic commands and need only follow the Noahite covenant. Trepasses against "HaShem" (God's name is too holy to pronounce), can be covered during the 10 Days of Awe, between Rosh Ha Shanah and Yom Kippur. By Yom Kippur, all unconfessed sin will be sealed against you. Death is one component in the cycle of life and a person's soul might roll into another cycle of life to repair the world. Some people may have lived more than once. At the time of resurrection, all Jewish souls will "roll" to the Mount of Olives (gilgul ha neshamot) and be resurrected there at Messiah's coming. Messiah is not God, but will come as a supernaturally empowered king to redeem all of mankind and rule a new kingdom on earth.

A Story from the World of the Orthodox

Long ago, when paganism ruled medieval darkness in Rus, the spiritual light of Orthodoxy pierced the blackness, raising civilization out of its spiritual lethargy and into robust orthodoxy. People began to reach out to God in worship focused on Him alone, and his utter otherness. Orthodoxy has time after time exhibited its culture-transforming power, ruling empires like Byzantium and Russia. It has formed the core of societies from the Middle East (Syria and Ethiopia) to Alaska.

Orthodoxy was for a time sidetracked in the 20th century. But today Orthodoxy is assuming its rightful place after communism, secularism, and modernism all ran their course, and were shown to be wanting. Protestantism, with its fixation on modern methods and pragmatic approaches, is unable to plum the depths of spiritual insight sought by people today. As a result the mysteries and liturgy of Orthodoxy are rising to new heights. The ancient faith is the true historical witness to God on earth, something both schismatic Catholics and Protestants can never understand nor claim for themselves.

The Muslim Metanarrative¹

By His command, Allah (God) created everything in six days, and then established Himself on the throne of the universe. Among Allah's creations are the angels, the jinn, and mankind. One of the chief angels, Jibreel (Gabriel) conveys Allah's messages to humanity through His prophets. One of the jinn, Iblis (Satan), deceived Adam and his wife to eat the forbidden fruit so they were expelled from Paradise to live out their days on earth. Adam was the first of the prophets sent to the nations to tell them to embrace Tawhid, the absolute oneness of God. Tawhid means there is no god but one God, and he has no partners. Allah gave Musa (Moses) the Taurat (Torah) containing the same message, but the Jews corrupted it, making it necessary to send other prophets. Allah sent 'Isa (Jesus) with the Injil (Gospel) also proclaiming Tawhid, but the Christians corrupted it and glorified Jesus to the degree that they call him the son of Allah, making him God's partner. Finally, Allah revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad and promised to preserve the Qur'an from all corruption. All people everywhere are called upon to obey Allah and his final prophet, Muhammad. All polytheists will suffer forever in the fire of hell. After death, all people will suffer agonies in the grave for their sins, except for very holy men, prophets and martyrs who will immediately enter Paradise. Those who have embraced Tawhid and do good deeds can hope to eventually obtain salvation. The final decision for all things rests with Allah alone.

¹ *Al-Imam Ibn Kathir, Stories of the Prophets (Mansoura, Egypt: Om-Alkora), viii-xiii.*

Ken

Age 55

(Worldview: Materialist/Naturalist)

- You have a college degree, a wife and two college age kids, a good life. You are satisfied with things as they are, except that you have a desire to better your life for you and your family.
 - You are a nice guy, liberal politically, and think that war is a pointless waste of life. You are a successful engineer, a hard worker, a little league coach, and a good husband and father.
 - You attended church occasionally as a child and now attend only for formal events like weddings for family or friends. God, if he exists, does not play a role in life today.
 - You believe one should be good, but do not believe there is any life after death. Evolution is how we got here and the world will just keep on, unless we destroy ourselves.
-

Marcus

Age 49

(Worldview: Liberal Protestant/Pluralist)

- Your current marriage is the second marriage for both you and your wife. You like running, photography, and canoeing. You are an articulate, intelligent college English professor and a great story teller.
 - You are a member of a liberal protestant church, attend church services every week and are often asked to speak at church events. You pride yourself on being honest, broad-minded, tolerant, and intellectual. God will judge one based on how good or bad he/she is.
 - You believe Christianity is the best religion, but there are many roads that lead to God. You really hate the narrowness of those who say, "Jesus is the only way." You think Jesus was the greatest teacher and example who ever lived, but not the Son of God, unless we are all sons of God. God surely wouldn't send someone to hell.
-

Samuel

Age 40

(Worldview: Muslim)

- You are a well-educated, hard working Muslim. Your whole family works hard in the family-owned hotel business. You are eager to please your customers, extremely agreeable, and always want to compliment and praise others.
- Your business keeps you away from the mosque but you try to keep the other obligations of Islam: reciting the Muslim creed, praying five times daily, giving alms, and fasting during Ramadan.
- As a Muslim you believe in an all-powerful "God" and that man has lost his way, worshipping false gods. But there will be absolute justice at the resurrection.
- However, the politics of today make you reticent to talk about your religion and beliefs because it might be bad for your business.

Curt

Age 31

(Worldview: New Age)

- You are a college graduate and computer systems analyst. You are very athletic and enjoy hiking, kayaking, and running.
 - You were raised without any religious moorings. You lived the fast life, and are not close to your family, who lives far away in another state.
 - You are a vegetarian, live with your girlfriend, and like to talk about spiritual things. You believe in a pervading force (God) and a multitude of spirits. You especially love to travel to Colorado because there you feel much closer to your personal "Avatar" (mediator between you and the God-force). You love the mysticism of your beliefs.
 - Humans are intrinsically good and one must get in touch with his higher-power for full realization in this life.
-

Darren

Age 32

(Worldview: Roman Catholic)

- As a child you attended a Catholic parochial school. You really liked the ceremony and reverence of the church, but that's about all.
 - You feel there's more to life than what you are experiencing so you waver between seeking God and becoming a cynic. You attend Mass at least once a month, but life is a big question!
 - You attended a state university, medical school, and are now a surgeon under a lot of stress. Your outlet is supporting your university's football team.
 - You love your wife and two kids though you can't figure out how to get out of the trap your career has placed you in. Your family has a lot of debt, and though you have a very good income, it is used mostly to pay the bank for the nice things you and your family own.
-

Jerry

Age 38

(Worldview: Biblical/non-believer)

- You hold a job as a supervisor at a local shipping business where the atmosphere is hectic and you must work long hours. You are really stressed and tend to be a loner.
- You have three sons with your first wife and feel guilty about not spending much time with them. Your lack of affection for your second wife was a major factor in a second divorce.
- You attended church often as a kid but not much since college but your three children were baptized, you make some contributions to a Bible teaching church, and you attend occasionally. You believe in God and even agree with the fundamentals of Christian teaching.
- You think more about life and death since your dad died of cancer last year at age sixty-one.

Roger

Age 29

(Worldview: Agnostic)

- You are an intellectual person and an avid reader. You have read extensively about philosophy and religion, and even minored in religion in college.
 - You tried praying before your parents' divorce, but since it didn't work, you began to wonder if there even was a God.
 - While you find religion interesting, you think it is probably a man-made crutch for people who can't face the harsh realities of life. Your reading has led you to believe that one just can't know whether God exists or not, supporting your earlier doubts.
 - Though you are a nice guy generally, you don't like being pushed by those who are vocal and aggressive about their religion, and can react strongly.
-

Thomas

Age 39

(Worldview: Hindu)

- You are married with a large family and good job in an office. You spend a lot of your spare time with family and friends who immigrated together with you.
 - You have begun to make more forays into your new culture but are often absolutely confused by it, even though it intrigues you.
 - You believe in a Universal Soul and your revered scriptures, Vedas, communicate spiritual knowledge. You believe every person possesses an individual soul that is extended from the Universal Soul, Brahman.
 - Sin is simply being ignorant of one's divine nature. But, good karma is built up by good deeds, which help one gain a better status in the next life on earth. The ultimate goal is to escape the cycle of reincarnation and achieve unity with Brahman.
-

Bruce

Age 32

(Worldview: Mormon)

- You are single and have just taken a job at a local factory after returning home from a year at college and two years as a missionary to France. You enjoy the outdoors, including hiking and skiing.
- Your whole family was raised in the LDS church and you believe in the tenants of that religion – the death burial and resurrection of Jesus; that he is Son of God, in the sense that all of us are "Sons of God," and can become a God someday. You believe in the Bible and the book of Mormon.
- Your girlfriend has begun attending an evangelical church and you think it might be something you should check out since she is getting genuinely interested in church and in reading her Bible.

Katie

Age 55

(Worldview: Materialist/Naturalist)

- You have a college degree, a husband and two college-age kids, a good life, and are satisfied with things as they are, except that you have a desire to better your life for you and your family.
 - You are a nice person, liberal politically, and think that war is a pointless waste of life. You are a successful career woman, a hard worker, active in the local garden club and a good wife and mother.
 - You attended church occasionally as a child and now attend only for formal events like weddings for family or friends. God, if he exists, does not play a role in life today.
 - You believe one should be good, but do not believe there is any life after death. Evolution is how we got here and the world will just keep on, unless we destroy ourselves.
-

Marianne

Age 49

(Worldview: Liberal Protestant/Pluralist)

- Your current marriage is the second marriage for both you and your husband. You like running, photography, and canoeing. You are an articulate, intelligent college English professor and a great story teller.
 - You are a member of a liberal protestant church, attend church services every week and are often asked to speak at church events. You pride yourself on being honest, broad-minded, tolerant, and intellectual. God will judge one based on how good or bad he/she is
 - You believe Christianity is the best religion, but there are many roads that lead to God. You really hate the narrowness of those who say, "Jesus is the only way." You think Jesus was the greatest teacher and example who ever lived, but not the Son of God, unless we are all sons of God. God surely wouldn't send someone to hell.
-

Samantha

Age 40

(Worldview: Muslim)

- You are a well-educated, hard-working Muslim. Your whole extended family works hard in the family-owned hotel business.
- You seek to please your husband and family and believe you should do all you can to help your husband keep the obligations of Islam: reciting the Muslim creed, praying five times daily, giving alms, and fasting during Ramadan.
- As a Muslim you believe in an all-powerful "God" and that man has lost his way, worshipping false gods. But there will be absolute justice at the resurrection.
- However, the politics of today make you reticent to talk about your religion and beliefs because it might cause difficulties with your neighbors due to their prejudices.

Cathy

Age 31

(Worldview: New Age)

- You are a college graduate and computer systems analyst. You are very athletic and enjoy hiking, kayaking, and running.
 - You were raised without any religious moorings. You lived the fast life, and are not close to your family, who lives far away in another state.
 - You are a vegetarian, live with your boyfriend, and like to talk about spiritual things. You believe in a pervading force (God) and a multitude of spirits. You especially love to travel to Colorado because there you feel much closer to your personal "Avatar" (mediator between you and the God-force). You love the mysticism of your beliefs.
 - Humans are intrinsically good and one must get in touch with his higher-power for full realization in this life.
-

Darla

Age 32

(Worldview: Roman Catholic)

- As a child you attended the Catholic parochial school. You really liked the ceremony and reverence of the church, but that's about all.
 - You feel there's more to life than what you are experiencing so you waver between seeking God and becoming a cynic. You attend Mass at least once a month, but life is a big question!
 - You attended a state university, medical school, and are now a surgeon under a lot of stress. Your outlet is working out at a local gym.
 - You love your husband and two kids though you can't figure out how to get out of the trap your career has placed you in. Your family has a lot of debt, and though you have a very good income, it is used mostly to pay the bank for the nice things you and your family own.
-

Jamie

Age 37

(Worldview: Biblical/non-believer)

- You hold a job as a supervisor at a local shopping center where the atmosphere is hectic and you must work long hours. You are really stressed and tend to be a loner.
- You have three children with your first husband and feel guilty about not spending much time with them. Your lack of affection for your second husband was a major factor in a second divorce.
- You attended church often as a kid but not much since college but your three children were baptized, you make some contributions to a Bible teaching church, and you attend occasionally. You believe in God and even agree with the fundamentals of Christian teaching.
- You think more about life and death since your mom died of cancer last year at age sixty-one.

Renata

Age 29

(Worldview: Agnostic)

- You are an intellectual person and an avid reader. You have read extensively about philosophy and religion, and even minored in religion in college.
 - You tried praying before your parents' divorce, but since it didn't work, you began to wonder if there even was a God.
 - While you find religion interesting, you think it is probably a man-made crutch for people who can't face the harsh realities of life. Your reading has led you to believe that one just can't know whether God exists or not, supporting your earlier doubts.
 - Though you are a nice person generally, you don't like being pushed by those who are vocal and aggressive about their religion, and can react strongly.
-

Tami

Age 39

(Worldview: Hindu)

- You are married with a large family and work a job like the rest of your family. You spend a lot of your spare time with family and friends who immigrated together with you.
 - You have begun to make more forays into your new culture but are often absolutely confused by it, even though it intrigues you.
 - You believe in a Universal Soul and your revered scriptures, Vedas, communicate spiritual knowledge. You believe every person possesses an individual soul that is extended from the Universal Soul, Brahman.
 - Sin is simply being ignorant of one's divine nature. But, good karma is built up by good deeds, which help one gain a better status in the next life on earth. The ultimate goal is to escape the cycle of reincarnation and achieve unity with Brahman.
-

Briana

Age 32

(Worldview: Mormon)

- You are single and have just taken a job at a local clothing store after high school. You enjoy the outdoors, including hiking and skiing.
- Your whole family was raised in the LDS church and you believe in the tenants of that religion – the death burial and resurrection of Jesus; that he is Son of God, in the sense that all of us are “Sons of God.”
- You believe in the Bible and the book of Mormon. You do have a concern about the polygamy practiced by some break-off groups that give Mormonism a bad name.
- Your new boyfriend has begun attending an evangelical church and you think it might be something you should check out since he is getting genuinely interested in church and in reading his Bible.

Read the passage below. Using three different colored high- lighters, highlight

- a. different actions of the farmer
- b. different places for planting
- c. different kinds of tools/implements

Isaiah 28:23-29

²³ Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say.

²⁴ When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually?

Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil?

²⁵ When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin?

Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field?

²⁶ His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.

²⁷ Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cumin;
caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cumin with a stick.

²⁸ Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever.

Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it.

²⁹ All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.

(The Holy Bible: New International Version, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

Read your verse(s) and determine what lesson you can draw from your passage that will apply to evangelism (keeping in mind the tilling, planting, and reaping principles).

Proverbs 20:4

John 4:35-38

1 Corinthians 3:6

Proverbs 20:4

*A sluggard does not plow in season;
so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.*

John 4:35-38

³⁵ *Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.*

³⁶ *Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.*

³⁷ *Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true.*

³⁸ *I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."*

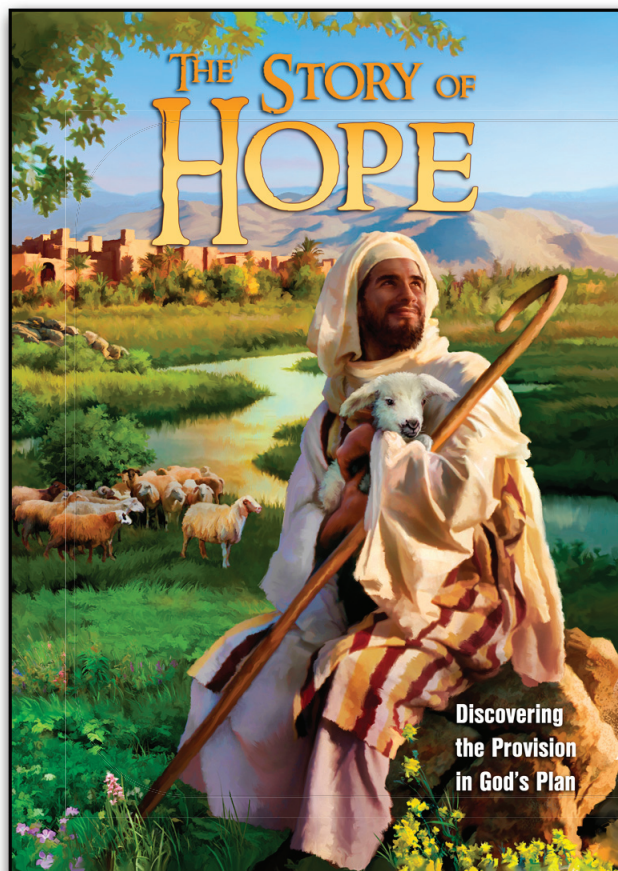
1 Corinthians 3:6

*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it,
but God has been making it grow.*

Emmaus Skit

- Narrator:** After Jesus had died two of his disciples were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all the things that had happened recently. As they talking and trying to make sense of it all, Jesus came up and walked along with them but they were not able to recognize Him.
- Jesus:** What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?
(The two just stand there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then Cleopas answers.)
- Cleopas:** Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days? Are you just visiting?
- Jesus:** What has happened?
- Other:** The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people.
- Cleopas:** Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel.
- Other:** And it is now the third day since it happened. But some of our women have completely confused us.
- Cleopas:** Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus.
- Jesus:** So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?
- Narrator:** Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him. They came to the edge of the village where they were headed.
(The disciples turn to enter the village; Jesus waves and keeps walking.)
- Cleopas:** Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done.
- Narrator:** So he went in with them. *(The others act out as narrator continues.)* And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.
(The disciples recognize Jesus and thrilled, then amazed as he disappears Since this is not a major production, you might simply turn the lights out for Jesus to leave the table and turn them back on.)
- Cleopas:** Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"
- Other:** We can't stay here. Let's go back and tell the others!

The Story of Hope: Discovering the Provision in God's Plan



Browse through *The Story of Hope*.
Make a list of at least five positive distinctives.

①

②

③

④

⑤

Introductory Material – Pages 4-10

The Story of Hope is a Real Time and Place Story.

Introduction to the Bible and its Big Story.....	4
Instructions for Self-Study and Group Study Leaders.....	5
Map of Canaan-Palestine.....	7
Map of the Ancient Near East.....	8
Visual of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.....	10

Triad Activity: Get together with two other people, as a triad. Determine whose birthday comes 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in a calendar year.

•1st birthday person: Read pages 4 through top of 5.

•2nd birthday person: Read bottom of page 5 through page 6.

•3rd birthday person: Read and view pages 7-10.

Then, each person should teach the others in the triad until pages 4-10 have been explained.

Initiate conversations that may become redemptive relationships. Col. 4:2-6



3. Helping Believers to Retain the Gospel

Luke 8:15

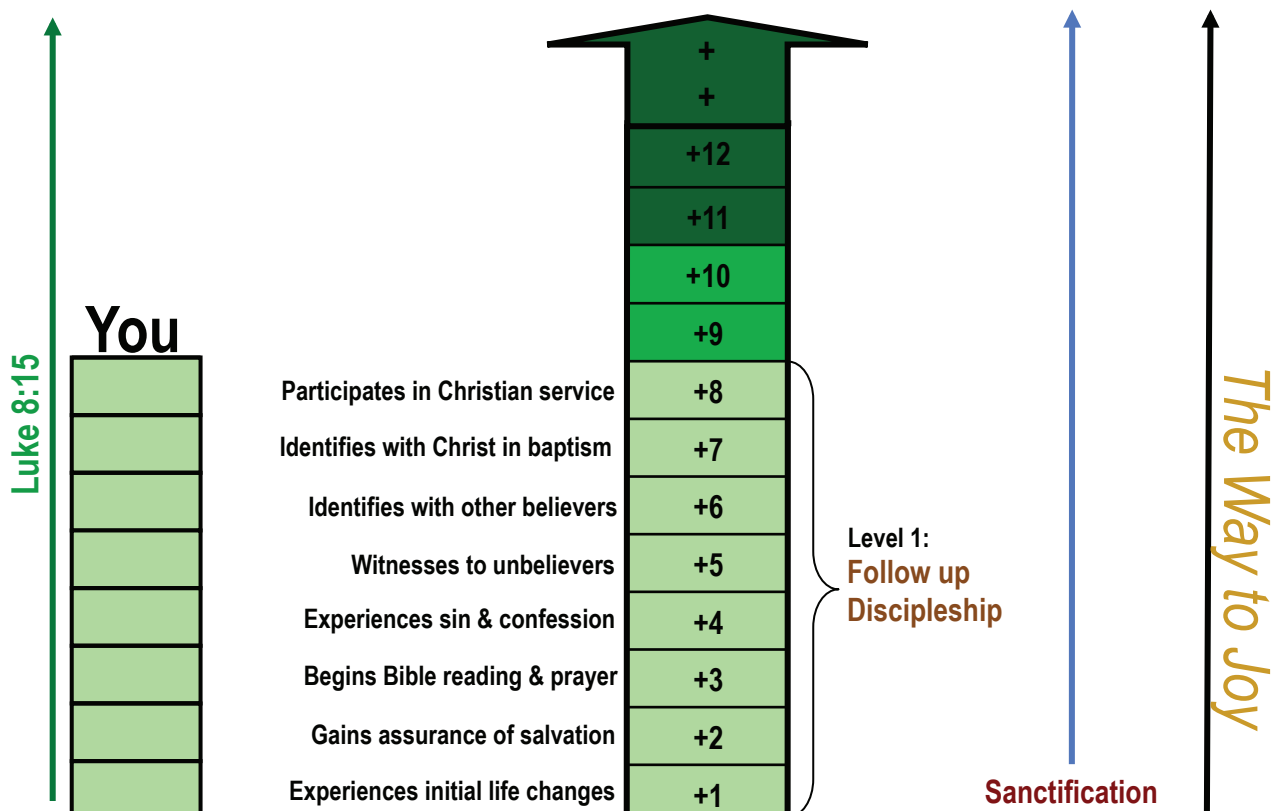
But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, **keep it*** and bear fruit with patience.

*Greek *katecho* = hold firmly to something so that it will not be snatched away, to cling to it tightly, to grip it

Just as evangelism is a combined divine-human process, so it is with discipleship. True believers will persevere in the faith as disciples of Jesus Christ because God secures them. But, it is also true that God has chosen to use us to “make disciples.”

“Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.” –Paul (2 Corinthians 1:24)

Pursuing Basic Steps to Discipleship



The order in which new believers progress through the first eight steps on the discipleship scale varies greatly from one person to another. What about your own experience? In the column on the left, write the numbers that identify the order in which these new believer experiences occurred in your early Christian life.

Initiate conversations that may become redemptive relationships. Col. 4:2-6

The Way to Joy: Pursuing Basic Steps to Discipleship

OUR BIBLE STUDY COVENANT

INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS

Read pages 4 & 5 and respond to the following True-False statements:

1. T or F – The follower should sign the covenant in the leader's book and the leader should sign the covenant in the follower's book.
2. T or F – Memorizing the verses associated with this study is not something that the leader should feel obligated to do.
3. T or F – *The Way to Joy* is designed for follow-up discipleship, not some other deeper, more extensive type of discipleship.
4. T or F – The memory verse assignment for each lesson is given at the beginning of the session.
5. T or F – The website www.GoodSoil.com is a support site for users of *The Way to Joy*.
6. T or F – The *Personal Bible Reading Plan* is on page 32.

1

THE JOY OF HOPE: *God's Eternal Plan*



Narrative Gospel Presentation

But, the Bible focuses on one Big Story interwoven through all the others:
God is working to provide eternal hope for all of the people of the earth!

1. In what ways is this lesson similar to and different from pages 12-31 of *The Story of Hope*?
2. What are some reasons for making this the first lesson in our basic discipleship study?
3. Read the "Options" on the bottom-left of page 6 of *The Way to Joy*, then look at pages 26-29.

Initiate conversations that may become redemptive relationships. Col. 4:2-6

The Way to Joy: Pursuing Basic Steps to Discipleship

2

THE JOY OF ETERNAL LIFE: *Salvation*



Propositional Gospel Presentation

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. **Do you believe this?**"

What are some reasons why this *Chronological Bridge to Life* material from *The Story of Hope* would be repeated here?

Read the "Instruction" on the bottom-left of page 8, then look at pages 30-31.

View the "How to Use the ChronoBridge to Life" DVD.

3-10

Compare TWTJ lessons with the E&D Scale on page 34.

How do the topics in this study align with the general developmental stages that occur in the lives of new believers?

3 THE JOY OF CONFIDENCE: *Assurance and Security*

4 THE JOY OF GUIDANCE: *God's Word*

5 THE JOY OF COMMUNION: *Prayer*

6 THE JOY OF EMPOWERMENT: *The Spirit-Controlled Life*

7 THE JOY OF PURITY: *Personal Holiness*

8 THE JOY OF SHARING: *Witnessing*

9 THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP: *The Local Church*

10 THE JOY OF PURPOSE: *God's Plan for You*

Note: Lessons 3-9 can be taught in any order preferred by the study leader and/or most suited to the follower.

Initiate conversations that may become redemptive relationships. Col. 4:2-6