

A close-up photograph of several long, green, blade-like leaves of a plant, possibly an iris, with a soft, out-of-focus background. The leaves are arranged vertically, creating a sense of height and depth. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture and color of the foliage.

PARALLELS

discussion guide

Parallels

How to use this guide

This study guide is designed to engage your group in deep and meaningful conversation.

Conversation Starter is designed to break the ice and allow for group members to engage in opening conversation. The questions are usually fairly simple so anyone can participate. Feel free to come up with your own questions to break the ice too.

Digging Deeper is designed to take the group through the text and engage the group in a more robust conversation. The questions in this section will hopefully engage group members from all walks of life. You don't have to work through all the questions. As a leader, pick the ones that you think would best suit your group needs.

At the end of each section, we have provided you with room in the **Praise & Prayer Points** to take notes and write down the prayer requests of your group. We hope that through this study you will understand more of what it means to live as Jesus lived.

CONTENTS

Session 1 – **“Baptism”** (*Matthew 3:1-17*)

Session 2 – **“Temptation”** (*Matthew 4:1-11*)

Session 3 – **“Encounter”** (*Matthew 17:1-20*)

Session 4 – **“Surrender”** (*Matthew 26:36-45*)

Session 5 – **“Life”** (*Matthew 28:1-10*)

****Please note all materials including video teachings and discussion guides are now available through our FAC Experience App under the ‘Resources’ tab.***



CONVERSATION STARTER

To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:

- What's your favourite water sport?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from Matthew 3:1-17 then watch Session 1.

- In the video, we stated that baptism is an outward demonstration of an inner reality. Explain what this means in your own words. (See 1 Peter 3:21, Romans 6:1-10)
- Baptism represents an inward transformation. **Read Matthew 3:6, Acts 2:38, and Acts 16:29-34** and discuss what transformation must occur as a qualification for baptism.
- What reasons do Christians often have for delaying in being baptized? What truth does the Bible offer to us regarding this?
- If you have been baptized, what have you learned about baptism since then that has given your baptism even more significance?

It brings God so much joy to be in relationship with His children. He is a perfect father. He affirms us and calls us deeper into abundant life.

- What has God spoken to you about your life? You may be able to recall an identity statement, a repeated lesson in life, or a favourite verse or word that is very meaningful to you. Share this with the group and how it deepens your relationship with God.
- Do you find it easy or difficult to accept the unconditional love of God?
- How are you regularly reminded of God’s unconditional love?
- Sometimes our family or friends are not able to love us in the ways we need. Have you allowed forgiveness to heal these wounds?

It’s not about how we start our life story, but how we re-write the ending with God. These are the stories we need to share because they are evidence of God’s grace to love us and power to transform us despite our pain and brokenness. This is the amazing God we want others to know too!

- What is a testimony and what is the purpose of it?
- What should the focus of our testimony be and why?
- If you were to tell your testimony, summarize what your main points would be. You can use the points below as an outline:
 - * Briefly describe your experience before Jesus.
 - * How did you come to believe in Jesus and be baptized?
 - * What has Jesus done in you that changed your personal life?
 - * How has Jesus changed your life’s purpose and how is He working through you?

Take-away: What parallels can you see between your life and this moment in Jesus’ life?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other’s prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life.



CONVERSATION STARTER

To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:

- When did you leave home to be on your own for the first time? What was that experience like for you?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Matthew 4:1-11 then watch
Session 2.***

In Matthew 4:1-11, we read about Jesus' temptation. That's right, even Jesus was tempted. As followers of Jesus, we look to Jesus to learn how to deal with and process going through temptations and trials.

- When you hear the word "temptation," how does that make you feel?
- How have you learned to deal with temptations when they come your way?
- What can we learn about temptation and how to resist it through Jesus' example?
- How would you answer the following question: "If Jesus was fully God, then how can His victory over temptation help a weak and sinful person like me?" (See Hebrews 2:14-18)
- What human need is at the heart of each temptation? How are these needs evident in your life? How does Satan use these needs to tempt us?
- If you are willing, share a temptation that you often deal with. How can others help?

Jesus used the spiritual resources that are available to us even today, the power of the Word of God. Jesus knew the Word and it was through the power and authority of the Word of God that put Satan in his place.

Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and answer the following questions:

- Discuss this phrase, “Scripture is a powerful weapon in moments of temptation.”
- How did Jesus utilize the armor of God during this temptation and in His life?
- How can you intentionally utilize the armor of God in your life?
- What are some passages of Scripture to speak/pray during specific temptations?
- How can we use the Word of God for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that we are prepared before temptation arises?

Jesus, being our example of how to fight temptation, remained in the Father.

- What does it mean for you to “remain” in the Father? Why do we struggle to “remain” in Him?
- What are some practical ways that you can stay “attached to the vine”?

Take-away: What parallels can you see between your life and this moment in Jesus’ life?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other’s prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life.



CONVERSATION STARTER

To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:

- Where's one of your favourite places to go for a hike/walk in and around Calgary? Around Alberta?

DIGGING DEEPER

What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from Matthew 17:1-20 then watch Session 3.

The mountaintop is a metaphor for those divine moments where we feel very close to God. These moments reaffirm who God is, who we are, and what our purpose is. Retelling stories of divine encounters is encouraging to us and to others because it strengthens our faith and gives us hope in difficult times.

- Can you think of a 'mountaintop moment' you have experienced where you felt very close to God? What was so special about that moment to you?
- Do these moments always happen on the 'mountaintops' or do they also happen in the 'valleys' or 'deserts' of our lives?

Desiring divine encounters with God is a good desire birthed out of our love for God. It is our desire to see Him and know Him face-to-face as we will in heaven.

- What expectation do you think Christians have to experience these moments and how often?
- Do you crave special divine encounters and ask God for them? Why?
- How often did Jesus experience unique moments like these?

It can be tempting to conclude that when God presents Himself to us in a specific way He is closer to us than at other times. As a result, we may find ourselves doubting God's presence in the normalcy of our daily life.

- What did Jesus promise to his followers in Matthew 28:20?
- Do you find it easy or difficult to trust that God's presence is *always* with you?
- Does the limited number or time between divine encounters lead you to doubt God's presence in your life?
- Why might we tend to associate God's presence with these unique encounters and miss Him in the simple moments of life?
- How might we begin to sense God's presence in daily life and realize that, although daily moments differ in presentation, they are still equally significant divine encounters?

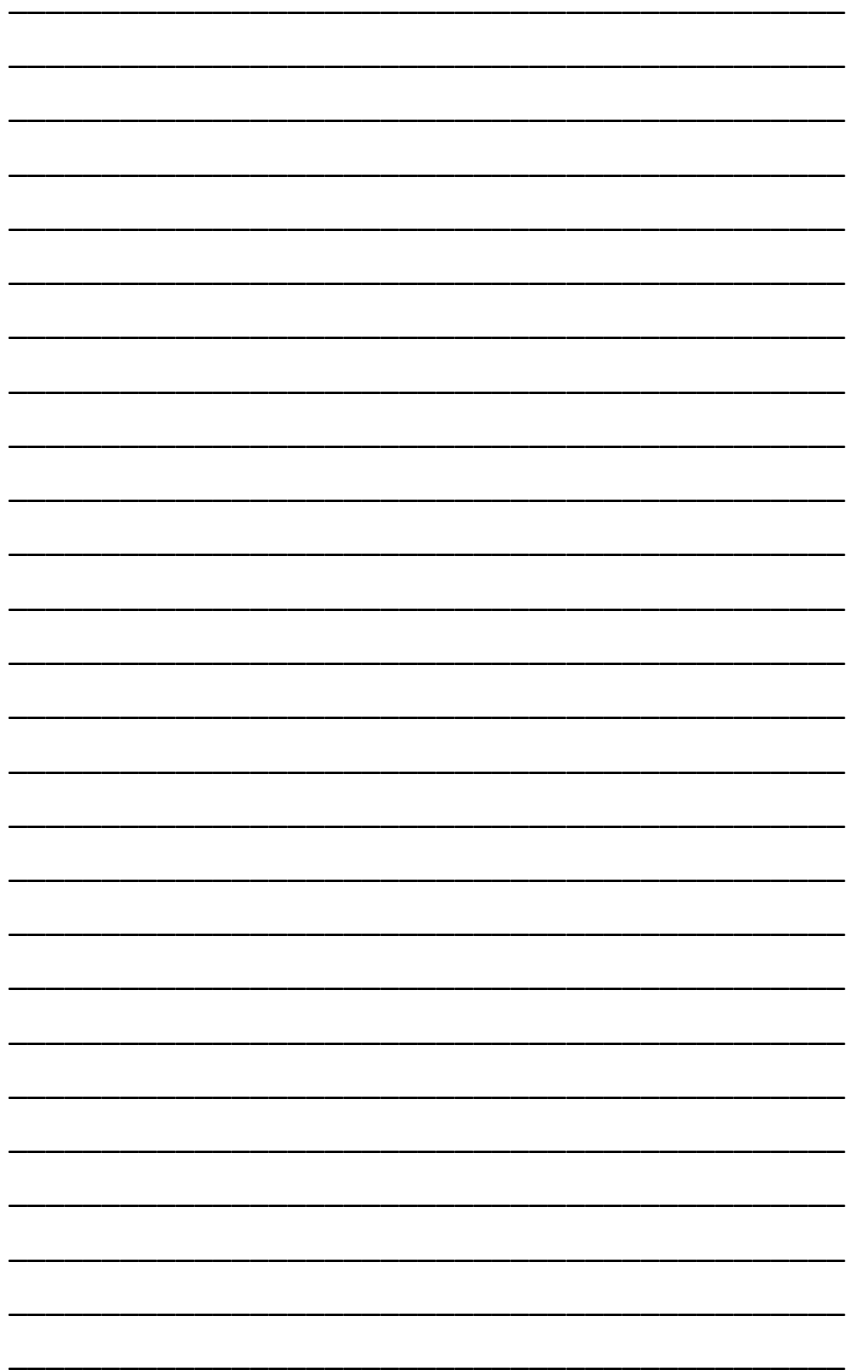
It is evident in the Bible that Jesus was confident of the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit in all moments of His life – not just on the mountaintop.

- How did Jesus demonstrate an ongoing sense of God's presence with Him? (Read Matthew 4:1, 11:27, 14:23, and 26:39; John 3:10-11, and 5:19-20)
- How do you sense God's presence or notice Him on a daily basis?
- How can we remain faithful to God and not fall into doubt and discouragement when we go through a season where we do not sense God in the ways we are used to?
- How might the body of Christ be encouraging to those who feel distant from God? (See 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 27)

Take-away: What parallels can you see between your life and this moment in Jesus' life?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life.





CONVERSATION STARTER

To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:

- What seemed like one of the longest nights of your life?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from Matthew 26:36-45 then watch Session 4.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus came face to face with the reality of his future, his betrayal, his death. Jesus asked His Father to remove the cup of wrath He was about to drink, but each time He submitted to the Father's will. Jesus was wholly and completely surrendered to the will of his father.

- When in your life have you had to surrender? Was it easy or difficult? Why?
- What emotions do you think Jesus must have felt in Gethsemane?
- What do you appreciate most about Jesus' emotions in the garden?
- What has been your "Gethsemane," a place where you wrestled with God? What can we learn from Jesus when we go through those times?
- What does Jesus ask of his disciples? What does he ask of God?

- Who could “watch and pray” with you the next time you face a “Gethsemane” experience?
- What can we learn about how we can approach God from Jesus’ experience in the garden?

Surrender involves trusting God even when there is no immediate relief in sight. There will be times in life when we face immense grief, immense pain, troubling sorrow, and those moments where we ask God is there any other way. In these moments of pain, do we move forward “Your will be done” or do we back down “sorry God, I’m out.”

- Discuss this phrase, “Jesus trusted God, even when there was no immediate comfort.”
- When have you had to surrender (your dream, health, hopes, fears) to God and didn’t hear a response or heard a ‘no’?
- What if you knew the ending? Would you still trust Him to lead you through? Why?
- Does fear of the unknown outweigh our knowledge of who God is when we evaluate our situations? How can we learn to trust God and His character even when the future is unknown?
- When faced with these phrases, “Your will be done” or “sorry God, I’m out,” what would be your first inclination? How can we learn to say and truly believe, “Your will be done”?

The Psalms offer us a practical way of dealing with these moments of grief or sorrow. These particular Psalms are known as Psalms of Lament. The pattern and use of lament Psalms in these moments can help us process these moments of pain. Here’s a simple approach to guide your prayer life:

1. Address/Introductory cry to God
2. The Lament (the problem, the complaint)
3. Confession of trust
4. Plea for God’s intervention
5. Shout of praise

Realistically, life is not as structured and poetic as the Psalms. However, this is a great tool for prayer and an awareness piece when we are going through difficult times. It’s okay to cry out to God, to express your problems to Him, to confess your trust, to plea for God to act, and to worship Him.

- If you have some time as a group or on your own, read through Psalm 142 and work through the structure of the Psalm of Lament.

Take-away: What parallels can you see between your life and this moment in Jesus' life?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life.

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CONVERSATION STARTER

To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:

- How did you celebrate Easter when you were a kid?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Matthew 28:1-10 then watch
Session 5.***

When we become believers, we begin a journey in which God teaches and refines us, affirms us and tests us. All of this is in preparation for the incredible Kingdom work He has in mind.

- Looking back over your life with Jesus, can you see the journey He has taken you on? What have been 2-3 milestones for you?
- Looking ahead, do you have any sense of what to anticipate in the coming seasons of your life and faith? Are you willing to follow Jesus into what is ahead?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and answer the following questions:

- What might people see in the grave from which you were raised? What have you left behind that was a part of your old life and no longer has a

place in your new life with Christ?

- There is often something new and different our friends notice about us when we receive new life through Jesus. What were some of the first changes that happened in you?
- In what areas of life can you sense God transforming you in new ways?
- Have you ever experienced joy in suffering, peace in chaos or hope in troubled times? How was it different going through that experience with God rather than without Him?

The spiritual life is progressive in its depth and in its call to sacrifice. As these progress together, the depth of our relationship with God sustains us through sacrifice. **Read Philippians 2:5-13 and John 10:10.**

- What does Jesus' example teach us about our calling to sacrifice as Christians?
- What was the reward of Jesus' sacrifice?
- Jesus says He brings us abundant life and simultaneously calls us to sacrifice. How does this make sense to you?
- Sometimes we want to avoid making sacrifices in our life. What kinds of rewards do we achieve by avoiding sacrifice and how do they compare to the rewards God offers us?
- How should we anticipate earthly or heavenly rewards in light of Jesus' example?
- Reflect on this: Now that you have life, what is it really for? Are you willing to say, "Not my will, but yours be done?" Are you all in?

Take-away: What parallels can you see between your life and this moment in Jesus' life?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life.

A close-up photograph of several long, green iris leaves, some showing yellowish-green variegation. The leaves are arranged diagonally across the frame, creating a sense of depth and texture. The background is softly blurred, showing more greenery.

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