

BiG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

2.7/2.8.09 // THE STORY OF EVERYTHING – CHAPTER III: JESUS

BiG IDEA: In Jesus, God is bringing everything back together.

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: Who is your favorite fictional hero?

Option 2: What is it about him/her that makes him/her so special?

// Questions for Discussion _____

Misconceptions about the story of Jesus can lead to major problems for some people. We need to understand the whole truth to fully appreciate who Jesus really is and His role in the STORY OF EVERYTHING.

Before this study, what are the first words/thoughts that came to mind when you heard the name "Jesus"?

Read John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Read Revelation 22:13

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

When we miss the first part of the story, we may believe that Jesus just showed up on the scene as a fortunate solution to the problem of sin. We need to remember that Jesus has always been a part of the perfect community that is God. As part of that community, He has loved us from all eternity. When He came to earth it was an act of selfless love. God Himself pursued us in Jesus. God wrote Himself into the story so we can truly know Him. He stepped into our shoes and became fully human.

In the STORY OF EVERYTHING, where we are all characters in the plot, how do you feel about the idea of "God writing Himself into the story"?

We are apt to concentrate on the part of Jesus' story where He died on the cross for our sins. This is the part called "the atonement". Atonement literally means "to make right again" or "to make up for". When Jesus died He made up for, or took care of, the rift between God and us that exists because of sin.

However, if we think that Jesus' only role in the story is to fix the problem that exists because we are such bad people who make God angry, then we make God out to be schizophrenic... the Father hates us, Jesus loves us. We can start to think that we are lucky that Jesus is such a nice guy. This is not what we know about God. Paul wrote,

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

18 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

We believe that Jesus is God Himself, taking our sins on Himself. God does not simply dispense justice for sin but He does it on Himself. He hates sin but He loves His creation. God is not two-faced. He has one face. It is a face of compassion and mercy.

Pastor/author Dan Kimball wrote the aptly-titled book *They Like Jesus But Not the Church* about how non-believers actually have a very high and respectful view of Jesus, but a very low view of His followers (the church). Why do you think such a huge gap exists between who Jesus really is and who His followers reflect Him to be?

It's one thing to say you respect/admire someone, but it can mean something much different to say that you *follow* them. What is the difference between simply respecting, admiring, believing in Jesus, and actually following Him?

There are three important aspects to understanding the full story of Jesus.

The first is known as the *Incarnation*. This is when God became one of us, coming to earth in human form as Jesus. He hurt with us and for us and lived the life we were all meant to live.

Jesus "invaded" this earth, but in a far different way than the soldiers hitting the beaches of Normandy shown in "The Longest Day". That World War II battle was decisive—it meant that from then on, there was no doubt who would win the war. In the cosmic battle of good and evil, how does the invasion of Jesus become the turning point?

As fully human, Jesus also remained fully deity. In what ways did he not "grasp" onto, or cling to his equality with God? What did he give up to become human? Read **Philippians 2:5-8**

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

The second is the *Atonement*, which we have already discussed. Jesus secures our forgiveness by grace, not by works, so that our relationship with God could be made whole again like it was in the beginning.

Thirdly we consider the *Restoration*. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. We believe He will return, completing the renewal of the entire creation including the resurrection of our bodies. At this time all things will be made new and set to rights. Heaven will come down to earth. The story that started with a perfect creation will end with heaven and earth becoming one again.

What are some differences in the way Jesus invaded the earth the first time, and the way he will invade the second time? How will His mission be different? How will His Kingdom be different? Read **Philippians 2:9-11**

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In what ways can we partner with God right now in the restoration of all things? How can we advance His Kingdom now?

When we really get the whole story of Jesus, we can stop doubting that God truly loves us. We can know that He will never give up on us or forsake us. Jesus did it all for the love of you and me.

Jesus is the One we place all our trust in for the story to be what it was meant to be and have the end that God intended for us in the beginning. This is not just so that we can have our sins forgiven or so we can find our moral compass or so that we can have power to successfully live life. It's all of these and more; Jesus is the One who brings about the STORY OF EVERYTHING ending in concert with the way it began, both in our lives and in the whole of creation.

If you are trusting Jesus for your eternal destiny, how are you doing with trusting Him for your life on this earth? What difference would truly trusting Him make?

// Application_____

Read and commit to memory John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is more than the answer to my sin problem. The true story is that God really wants to have a relationship with me and Jesus came to make that possible. As a Church community we are about making fully-fledged disciples who are in a committed relationship with God.

Would you describe your life in that way? Have you made a commitment to trusting Jesus not only to “save you”, but to live your life with Him each day? As you think more about Jesus and your role in the STORY OF EVERYTHING, commit to finding out more about the truth of who Jesus is. Start reading the Gospel of John and ask God to show you something new about His Son. Be ready to share your insights with your group next time you meet.

// Prayer_____

Pray that you live your life with Jesus every day.

Pray that God show you something new about His Son.