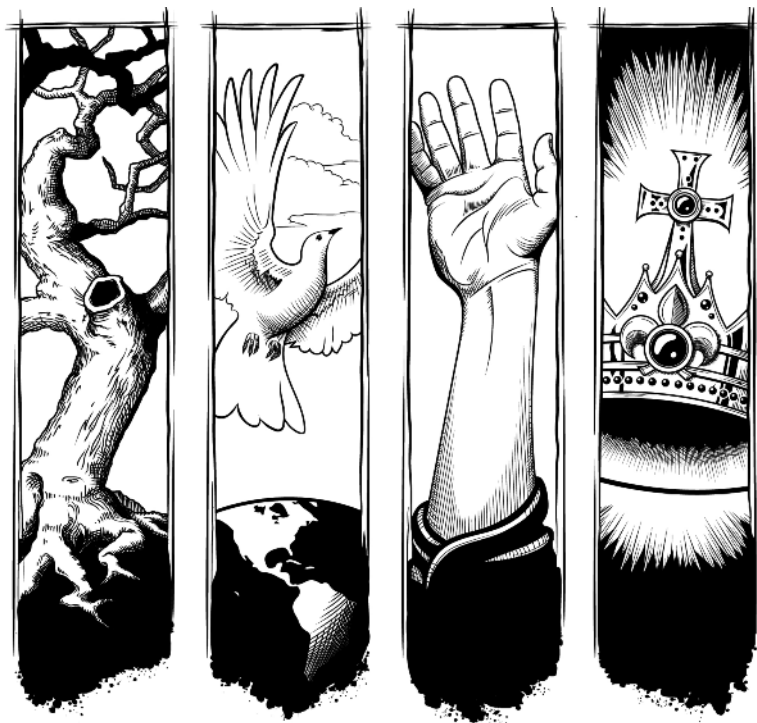


SO CAL SQUAD



**"Jesus Christ is the Savior, Baptizer
with the Holy Spirit, Healer and
Soon and Coming King"**

SO CAL SQUAD



**"Jesus Christ is the Savior, Baptizer
with the Holy Spirit, Healer and
Soon and Coming King"**

**Ashton Fish, Cheyne Jackson,
Fernando Morales & Jennifer Thigpenn**

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SQUAD Book Dedication

This book was written because I saw a need to remind a new generation of who Jesus is and the four foundations that make us The Foursquare Church. In a world that is getting more confusing and complex, these four foundations remind us of the simple yet profound transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The goal of this book is to be a resource and reminder that today Jesus Christ is still saving, baptizing with the Holy Spirit, healing and providing us with the great hope of his return. I want to thank my three wonderful friends, Jennifer Thigpenn, Cheyne Jackson and Fernando Morales, who co-wrote the book with me. I truly have the best and most brilliant friends in the world!

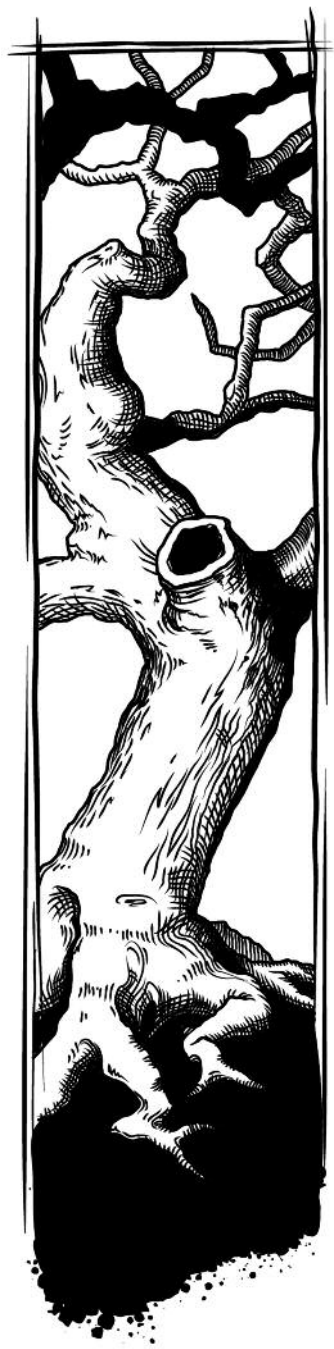
I dedicate this book to my father, Robert Fish. My Dad was my hero, mentor and role model of what a godly man full of love and grace looked like. Through the pain of his death I have come to know more and more of the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Dad, you live on through me and all of the beautiful lives you touched. Like you always told me, “Keep Jesus the big deal of your life and always point people to Jesus.” Thanks for being my dad and for pointing me to Jesus. My desire is that this book would do the same.

— Ashton Fish

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**Part One:
Savior**



Jesus, the Savior

Pastor Fernando Morales

Jesus Christ is the only hope of humanity. Jesus loved us and died to save us from the penalty of our sin and rebellion. The salvation he brings begins with a person's decision to put faith in him. That decision opens a lifetime of being healed, restored, delivered from oppression, and set free to stand in spiritual, emotional, and physical wholeness. (Luke 4:18)

The Foursquare Church. (2011)
Introducing The Foursquare Gospel. Los Angeles, CA

In the Beginning

Since I can remember I've been going to church. My parents literally met as my mom was going to a church event. My mom was sassy and wasn't falling for any of my dad's tricks to ask her out. The only way he could even have a chance in going out with my mom was to go to church with her. I guess he caved in and the rest is history. I like to believe that God set up my dad. Poor guy never saw it coming.

Fast-forwarding a bit: I was born, dedicated in church and on my way to grow up in a Christian home. I grew up attending church camps, conferences, church gatherings, church potlucks, church this, church that. You name it, I went to it. I was your all-around well-behaved (depends who you ask) Christian kid. Sunday School did a great job in teaching me all about the Bible: from creation with Adam and Eve to Old Testament heroes and villains. I learned about Jesus and how he fed thousands, walked on water and hung

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out with 12 disciples. I mean, I think I could have been a Bible teacher by 10.

A lot of things changed for me at 11. Coming home one day after school my mom let me know that my dad had moved out and wouldn't be coming back. I really couldn't understand in totality what was going on at that moment. It was all a blur. My life changed that day. My thoughts about God and church changed. I can't say they changed immediately, but my heart began to grow cold. What understanding I had about God and life had shifted, and no amount of Sunday School classes could have prepared me for this season in my life. A lot of questions ran through my mind. Did I do something wrong? Why would God do this to me? Where did I go wrong?

If God is good, why would this happen?

I believe we all have a common denominator, that is, something we all share. I believe it is pain. We have all experienced pain in one form or another at some point in our lives. On many levels, in many ways, pain has found its way to hit us all. As I look back at my own life and the struggles that I went through as a kid, I have to take a step back and look at the bigger picture to really grasp the small, broken and missing pieces. In my case, I couldn't understand why divorce, lies, pain, and guilt were in my life. The question that naturally came up was, if God is so good why would he bring pain in my life? Why would suffering even exist in the first place? It doesn't make sense.

In order to understand pain and suffering, we need to take a step back and look at the world we live in and through God's word, discover why pain and suffering exist.

Sin Messes Things Up

My least favorite thing in the world is to build puzzles. The ironic thing is that I married someone who loves to build them. Not only does she love to build them, but also her entire family loves to build them. The pain doesn't stop there - oh no - there's more! They love to play board games. My second least favorite thing in the world is to play board games. I'm telling you, God has a sense of humor. My problem with puzzles or board games is simple: I don't have the patience to wait for the end result. For example, if I can't find a puzzle piece's place in the puzzle, I will force it to fit anywhere I choose. You can see how this would make a mess of things. As much as I want it to fit, it just won't. It wasn't created to fit in the place I'm putting it. So what happens if I don't fix it? The puzzle is not displayed correctly.

Sin is that way. Sin distorted God's original plan. The Bible tells us that God created Adam and Eve, the first humans, to live in perfect harmony with him. He even created a perfect setting for them; he called it "Eden" which literally means "delight." It was the perfect plan, in the perfect place, created by a perfect God.

God also gave them free range in the garden; everything was supplied for them and they lacked nothing. It's important to note that from the beginning God created humans with free will. Free will is simply God giving us the ability to make choices that can affect our destiny. If anything, this points to a God that out of love would give us the ability to live with choice. Our ability to choose is directly proportionate to God's love for us. This freedom of choice is his gift to us, even when we don't always make the right choices. This happened in the garden, when God, after showing Adam and Eve all they could eat, warned them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He let them know that the

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result of eating from this tree would be death. Adam and Eve, out of their own will, chose to reject God's warning. The consequence of their decision was devastating. Through Adam, and his rejection of God's instruction, sin entered our world.

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. (Romans 5:12 NLT)

So what is sin? Sin means to miss the mark or, as the apostle Paul puts it, to fall short of God's standard.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. (Romans 3:23 NLT)

Everyone means everyone. All means all. Paul tells us that sin is now the common denominator for all mankind. It's what makes us all equally guilty and equally broken. No one is innocent, not one. So whether you've known God for one day or have known God your whole life, the reality is the original picture God created is no longer on display, and in its place there is this messed up puzzle with pieces in the wrong place. Every single human since has suffered and paid for the consequence of Adam's choice. We all carry sin. We are no longer in right standing with God.

DIY Experts

A while back the sink in our kitchen kept clogging up. To be exact, our garbage disposal gave its last stinky breath. Now, I'm not ashamed to admit that I don't know a lot about plumbing. I did manage to change a showerhead once, but let's not talk about that. I may or may not have made it worse.

Instead of fixing the problem, I did what any normal (maybe not normal) guy would do. I put duct tape over the sink with a “do not use” sign. We kept on using the other side of the sink thinking that would last until the garbage disposal would miraculously come back to life. Unfortunately, that made things worse since water kept leaking underneath the sink. The problem was clear. The garbage disposal was broken and I needed someone who knew how to fix the problem to come fix the problem. My “DIY” method (or lack thereof) didn’t do a thing. In fact, it made it worse.

After the fall of man, God in his mercy gave man a set of rules called the 10 Commandments. This was given to help and to look after the well being of God’s people. The Ten Commandments, or the “Law,” was given to show us our condition and our necessity of God:

*Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.
(Romans 3:19 NLT)*

But even this couldn’t solve the problem. It’s like putting a Band-Aid on a life threatening open wound. That’s what I see people do sometimes: trying to mend every broken piece of their lives by simply replacing it with a temporary fix. It’s the story of a broken girl trying to fill her hurt and void with another broken boy. Broken tools don’t fix broken pieces. It’s the young man who from the outside seems to have it all under control, but underneath he is rotting away from the consequences of his choices, but too prideful to admit it. It’s the busybody trying to “do” and “work” their way into heaven, trying to win God’s attention and approval by the amount of things they do, have or say. But really none of it matters. None of it is sufficient. Even on our best day, our

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attempts are foolish. You can't cover, replace or ignore the void that sin brings.

As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one." (Romans 3:10 NLT)

Welp. That's encouraging. So you're telling me that going to church won't make me righteous? No. Quoting preachers? No. Not cussing? No. Posting selfies with verses on my social media? No. Definitely No. Please No.

So where do we go from here? How do we fix this sin problem? This might not sound revolutionary in thought, but it sure is relevant: we can't fix it ourselves. Not now, not tomorrow, not ever.

If anything, what the Law did accomplish was to prepare us for God's real provision through his Son.

Call the Plumber

I'm reminded through Scripture that I'm not the only one who has struggled with this dilemma. The apostle Paul, one of the most influential writers in the New Testament (He pretty much wrote half of it), struggled with this as well. He writes in Romans about some of his struggles:

I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want

to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. (Romans 7:15-20 NLT)

It's encouraging to me that even one of the toughest, baddest, brightest apostles in the New Testament struggled with sin. Daily he fought sin and daily he went to the Lord. He knew he couldn't do this on his own. He called on God. He went to his Creator. So should we.

Jesus, It's in His Name

Long before I became a pastor, I had always had an interest in media — photography, videography, anything to do with design had my attention. I loved creating things. It was just in me. I could spend hours designing something out of nothing. Even now, whenever I'm in a funk, I'll go out and shoot some photos. It's what I do. When I'm creating, I'm in my zone.

Jesus saves. It's in him. It's what he does. Before Jesus was born, his purpose had already been declared. The name Jesus literally means "The Lord Saves." Matthew tells us,

*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.
(Matthew 1:21 ESV)*

Talk about pressure! But Jesus took it on completely. He was unafraid. He was on a mission and nothing was going to stop him. God, in his love for humanity, provided a way for redemption. You see, in order to understand the gift, we need to understand the cost. Sin had brought death into the world.

Another definition of death is separation. The Bible tells us the devil came to steal, kill and destroy. Satan destroys relationships; in fact, in Scripture, every time Satan spoke it

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was to destroy relationship between God and man. But no matter how hard he tried, no matter how many wrenches he threw into the gears, he could not keep us from the love of God.

When Jesus stepped foot on this earth, the enemy was put on notice. Things were about to change.

Just Trust, He'll Take Care of the Rest

One of my favorite stories of Jesus is out of Matthew 14:23-33 (NLT):

After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone. Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!" But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

"Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

Peter definitely got some man points for stepping out boldly onto the water. What really gets me is his bold request before he walked on water. He asked Jesus:

Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

And Jesus doesn't flinch in responding:

"Yes, come," Jesus said.

And Peter did. Peter's faith in Jesus is impressive. He knew that in his own ability and power he could not make it to where Jesus was, but at the sound of God's voice he drew strength to step forward. He knew that there could be a possibility that he would sink, but nonetheless he stepped out. He moved forward. He trusted in Jesus and Jesus took care of the rest.

But my favorite part of this encounter is what happens next.

But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him.

When Peter sank, Jesus reached out. There was no hesitation on behalf of Christ; there was no penalty for his lack of faith. Jesus' immediate response was to reach out and save Peter. In our faith journey, there will be times where circumstances will overwhelm our faith; in those moments, doubt can engulf us and extinguish our trust in him. But when Peter became overwhelmed, God's presence brought peace to his life.

Hope for Humanity

At the beginning of this chapter I shared my own story of growing up in a church. I knew the Bible, I just didn't know its author. I had heard about sin, but to me the only people that committed sin were "bad" people. I knew about salvation, I just didn't know what it had to do with me. It didn't become real to me until I personally saw the consequence of sin in my life. I looked for affirmation and acceptance in all the wrong places because of it. I blamed God. I was blind and could not see. I ran away from God. I thought I was hopeless. But unbeknownst to me, the whole time God was running straight toward me.

Jesus saves. It's in his name. It's what he does. It's what he offers to all those who ask. Acts tells us that there is no other person, place or thing that can offer that to us:

Salvation comes no other way; no other name has been or will be given to us by which we can be saved, only this one. (Acts 4:12 MSG)

We can think:

"But I'm messed up."

"I'm really not worth it."

"I don't think there's hope for me."

All of those are lies. The book of Romans reminds us of God's great sacrifice for you and me:

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8 NLT)

Why me? Why would he die for me?

Simply put, for Love.

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17 NLT)

So how do I do this? Where do I start?

You start right where you're at, with what you have. We start by acknowledging and confessing our sins. We start by making a choice to turn away from sin and turn toward Christ. This is called repentance. We start by putting our trust in Jesus and believing that he paid the price of sin on the cross on our behalf.

...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10 ESV)

Congratulations! If you've made this decision you are now a part of the family of God. Heaven is rejoicing in the new addition to God's family:

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13 ESV)

Jesus Christ is the only hope of humanity. Jesus loved us and died to save us from the penalty of our sin and rebellion. The salvation he brings begins with a person's decision to put faith in him. That decision opens a lifetime of being healed, restored, delivered from oppression, and set free to stand in spiritual, emotional, and physical wholeness. (Luke 4:18)

GROUP QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION POINTS

1. I'm a pretty good person, is this not enough?
2. Is sin really that big of a deal? Does it really “mess” things up?
3. What can we do to be in “right standing” with God?
4. What is the result of following Jesus?

**Part Two:
Baptizer
With the
Holy Spirit**



Jesus, the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit

Pastor Cheyne Jackson

It Makes a Difference

Jesus Christ, our Baptizer... our baptizer? What in the carnival dunk tank does that even mean?

Savior... Sure!

Healer... Got it!

Soon and coming King... AMEN!

But what does Jesus Christ our baptizer mean? More importantly, or more practically, what does it mean to my life and what kind of difference does it make?

Well everyone, I'm so glad you asked this question:
JESUS CHRIST OUR BAPTIZER MAKES THE MOST
DIFFERENCE IN OUR DAILY LIFE!

Jesus Christ our Savior makes a big difference to our eternal destiny, answering the question of where we go when we die (the whole heaven or hell thing). But how does that affect how I live my life as a young person when eternity seems so far away?

Jesus Christ our Soon and Coming King speaks again to our place with God for all of eternity. Once again, you may ask, how does that change my life today?

Jesus Christ our Healer begins to change the game. In eternity, there will no longer be any need to be healed as all of creation will again be set right, good and truly perfect. But we don't have to wait until we are in heaven to be healed.

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Healing is for now, because now is when its needed! This is why Jesus Christ our Healer and Jesus Christ our Baptizer are so closely linked!

Getting it Right; Getting it Redeemed

I often say as I speak around the world, “There’s only one thing better than getting it right, and that’s getting it redeemed!” What does this mean?

To give you an understanding, I want to put in contrast two specific examples of God’s love.

The first comes to us from Genesis chapter 3. It is the story of the Garden of Eden: the story of how God created everything so perfect and so complete that he put everything in that garden as an expression of his love toward humanity. It even says that God would come and walk with the first man and woman in the cool of the evening.

Everything in this garden was good, for their benefit and protection; the only thing that God said in the beginning was that it was not good for man to be alone. This is a great example of the love of God; the Garden was a place that was totally safe and protected in which they were provided for in love. The fact that the man and woman got to be in relationship with the One who did all of this for them is philosophically the definition of true love. This is “getting it right.”

And then humanity got it all wrong.

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. It’s only the fruit from the

tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.' "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

"Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." (Genesis 3:1-13 NLT)

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So with perfection at the beginning, and then a very big break in relationship with the Creator, how could it get any better? It gets better by “getting it redeemed.” This is the second example of God’s great love.

As you read in *Jesus the Savior*, the cross is extraordinary. You see, there is only one thing more beautiful, more holy and more evident of God as our Creator as us getting it right in the garden: it is what Jesus did on the cross. He got it right as the perfect sacrifice; he was a man who lived blameless among the brokenness of our world. He was bringing a reversal that would set the stage for him as our Baptizer.

Jesus was introducing redemption into all of creation, down to its very bones. As Jesus’ blood flowed freely, he canceled out the separation from God that had been initiated through Adam and Eve’s disobedience in the Garden and ushered in the redemption of all of God’s creation. The nature of redemption has been deposited into the very essence of God’s people.

Empowered Living

We as the people who know God and have accepted him as our Savior are called to live like him — and by *live like him* I don’t just mean act like morality clones and sound super Christianese. We are meant to show and demonstrate in our life all of the same kinds of things that marked Jesus, and made him the standout and extraordinary change maker that he was! Fortunately he promised he would leave us his Spirit - his “Holy Spirit” - the essence if you will, of what made Jesus, Jesus!

In the Scripture, Jesus tells us that he would send his Spirit to us:

For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:5, 8 NKJV)

Okay, there is that word again, “Baptize.” It sounds super churchy, but its simple definition is awesome! Check it out:

baptize

[bap-tahyz, bap-tahyz]

verb (used with object), **baptized, baptizing.**

1. to cleanse spiritually; initiate or dedicate by purifying.

I LOVE THAT DEFINITION! To cleanse spiritually and to initiate, means to begin; to begin something new!

Jesus talked about this in the above scripture when he said, “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.*” (Acts 1:8 NKJV) That “coming upon you” is the same word in the original language that is used for the word Baptize. And that is exactly what happened.

It was an early morning when all Jesus’ closest people were in one place and they were praying. They were all in a place of unity, meaning they were there for the common purpose of seeing what Jesus had asked them to do, accomplished in what is known as the Great Commission. (See Matthew 28:16-20 for more info on that...)

When all of a sudden, a legit miracle happened. A wind from nowhere began to blow in the middle of the room and it was filled with light and pieces of fire came down and rested over the heads of everyone in the room and they were filled,

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or baptized; which, as we remember, is to cleanse spiritually and in state or dedicate something. In this case, it was them! They were being filled with the same power that raised Jesus from the grave; the same power that he used when he healed people; the same power that is his authority when he returns as our Soon and Coming King. He was placing THAT POWER inside each of the men and women who believed in him as their savior!

This moment set in motion a movement of women and men who would change the world. What started with just a few hundred people in a small city in the Middle East has now gone around the world with thousands upon millions of miracles taking place just like what Jesus did when he was here on the earth! He promised us it would be like this because he is unchanging. It says in Hebrews 13:8, “*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.*”

This amazing baptism of God’s Spirit continued all throughout the rest of the New Testament. There is example after example of people being empowered by the Spirit of God to be just like Jesus:

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. (Acts 10:44-46 NKJV)

Again:

And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:6 NKJV)

And again:

*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
(1 Corinthians 3:16 NKJV)*

All of this is available to us today; that is why we believe he is also Jesus Christ our Baptizer!

As we live empowered by his Spirit, we get to walk and live with the same power that conquered death and the grave! That is why Jesus Christ our Baptizer makes such a difference to our every day life!

It is because Jesus sent us this power of his Spirit: when faced with temptation, we can walk away from it; when pushed to make wrong decisions, we can say no; when things are done to us that are wrong, we have the ability to forgive ...without revenge (which is SO hard, and impossible without Jesus and his Holy Spirit alive in us)!

At this point you may be asking, "If I have this power, why don't I experience it and look and live like Jesus did?"

Two simple reasons:

First, you should be able to answer the question: "Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?"

The Bible is clear and we, as a Foursquare movement, believe that it is in fact a separate occurrence and is done by the laying on of hands. This is an old tradition dating all the way back to Abraham. It was how someone was made special for doing God's work! They called it being "set apart" for God's purposes. Throughout the book of Acts, we see multiple encounters of people receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and

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John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17 ESV)

Second, Jesus' incredible power was poured out from the overflow of his relationship to his Father in Heaven (God the Father). He made this super clear in the gospel of John,

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." (John 5:19 NIV)

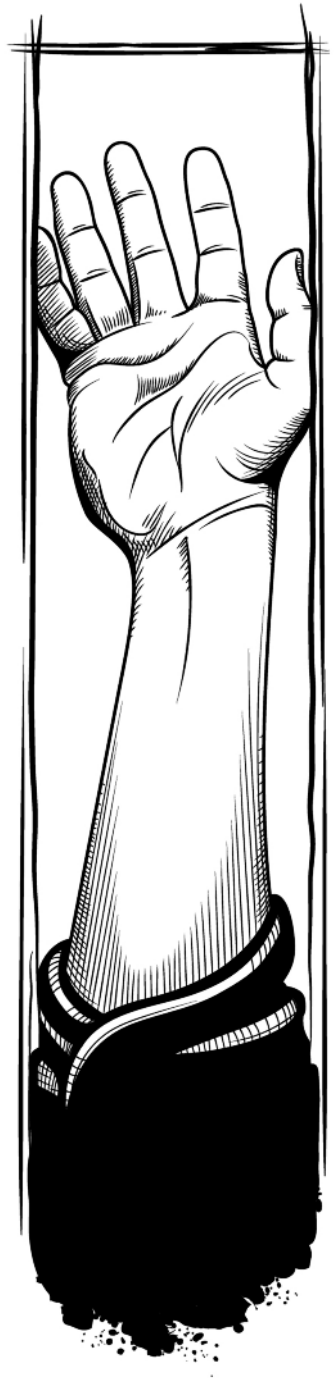
Well, if that is how it worked for Jesus, what makes us think that God's power is going to work any differently for any of us? **Hint hint hint** ... it's not! The power of God flows through our lives as we are connected to the Father in heaven. We connect with the Father by listening to him: 1. In prayer and 2. By reading his Word! People often don't realize that the largest Word from the Lord is in fact his WORD! The Bible speaks to every issue of life and is the only book that can separate the things of this world from that which involves our spiritual growth and development. If we hope to walk in the power that Christ Jesus left us as our Baptizer then a strong connection like Jesus had is essential!

I hope this helps you in your journey and I encourage you to take the time to go back and consider the scriptures listed above this as a short overview of some of the deepest truths there are. You deserve to hear the whole story! So take a look and God Bless!

Group Questions & Discussion Points:

1. To “baptize” means to start something new. What new thing from God do you desire most in your life?
2. What does the Baptism with the Holy Spirit mean to your life and what difference does it make in how you live every day?
3. How is the Holy Spirit uniquely using you to be a witness or a representative of God in your everyday life?
4. What are some ways that you can join with the Holy Spirit’s activity in our world? We know that the Holy Spirit is already making a difference in our world today, so how can you partner with that work to make a difference in your community (family, friends, school, job, etc.)?

**PART THREE:
HEALER**



Jesus, the Healer

Pastor Jennifer Thigpenn

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me... (Isaiah 61:1 ESV)

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish. (John 1:14 MSG)

Jesus, Messiah

In the Gospel of Luke, there is a powerful moment where Jesus begins his ministry on earth. Following his temptation in the desert and his baptism, where the Father validates Jesus' identity as the Son, Jesus finds himself in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, where any good, observant Jew would be. He takes the scroll from the writings of Isaiah and begins to read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

...And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-19, 21 ESV)

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Jesus began his ministry by explaining to people exactly what he had come to do. He was the “anointed one,” which Jewish people in the first century understood to be an allusion to the promised Messiah. This was the Messiah that they had been waiting for since the very beginning, the one who would undo all of the wrongs that had been done to the people of God. In the minds of the Jewish people, the Messiah was going to be a war hero, a ruler, a king. So when Jesus, the son of a carpenter (or so they thought), claimed to be the anointed one, the people listening to him did not know what to do.

So they tried to throw him off of a cliff. (Seriously... keep reading Luke 4!)

But Jesus was just getting started. He was the King that the people needed, though not the one they thought they were going to get. He had been anointed, or commissioned, to bring the Kingdom of God into their time and space, where the things that were wrong would be set right. He was on a healing mission.

The Big Question

“What do you want?”

These might be the four most terrifying words in the English language. For me, they usually come from friends or family members that are trying to speed up the process in deciding what or where we are going to eat. For some reason, I become the most indecisive person when it comes to food choices. I’m not proud of this, but it happens. In my head, I know that I have certain preferences, but when it comes to actually saying what I think, nothing comes out of my mouth. And so, unfortunately for the ones that love me most, we go ‘round and ‘round in circles trying to decide until we

finally land on something that I could have said 20 minutes earlier because it was exactly what I wanted. Lame, I know.

That is a very small example of how we can respond to the BIG question, “What do you want?” Often, rather than giving an answer about what we DO want, we tend to rattle off a list of what we DON’T want or give excuses of why we can’t have what we want. At this point you may be asking, “What does this have to do with Jesus as Healer?” My answer is: a lot. Let me explain.

When Jesus began his ministry, one of the things he did that caused people to take notice was that he healed people. These healings ranged from relief of a fever (Matthew 8:14-15) to curing leprosy (Luke 5:13) to raising the dead (Mark 5:41). Because Jesus was fully human and fully God, he could have healed every single person that he saw who had a problem. However, Jesus was not like Oprah, just tossing out healings as he walked through first century Judea: “You get a healing! You get a healing! Everyone gets a healing!” No, Jesus was far more intentional than that.

In almost every recorded interaction of healing in the gospels, the person desiring healing, whether for themselves or for someone they cared about, had to seek it out. Jesus could have known a person’s need – a blind person would need their sight, a lame person would need to be able to walk, a mute person would need to be able to speak – but rather than assume their desire to be healed, Jesus waited to be invited into their need. “What do you want?” or some other version of that question was constantly being asked or implied by Jesus. If a person sought healing, they had to approach the Healer for it.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus had an encounter with two blind men who understood the importance of inviting this man into their need.

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*And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" And stopping, Jesus called to them and said, "**What do you want me to do for you?**" (Matthew 20:30-32 ESV)*

Before I finish this account, let's remember: these men were blind. Jesus could see that they were blind. But he chose not to assume that he knew what they wanted. They could have been asking for money. They could have been asking for food. So, he asked the question, "What do you want...?"

They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. (Matthew 20:33-34 ESV)

These men knew what they wanted. They did not have the time to go 'round and 'round in circles telling Jesus what they didn't want or why he should keep on moving. They cried out above the noise of a crowd to make sure that Jesus saw them, and when given the opportunity, they invited him into their need. Their lives and their futures depended on this moment. Being moved with compassion, Jesus responded to their request and healed them.

We can all have these moments, where our needs are so real and so painful that we desperately need Jesus to intervene. However, rather than crying out and submitting our request, we assume that because God is all-knowing and all-powerful, he will step in and save the day, with no action required on our part. "God knows my heart," we say to ourselves, "and if it is his will, this thing [fill-in-the-blank of your need] will work itself out." While God certainly has the

power to throw out healing and restoration and freedom like a man with a t-shirt cannon at a concert, he instead continues to ask the question and allows us to invite him into our needs so that he can partner with us in our healing.

So... what do you want?

On Earth as it is in Heaven

Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10 ESV)

How do you even begin to answer the question “What do you want?”

It is a question that is so broad that it could have an infinite number of answers depending on the person and the day and the situation they are facing. Sometimes the answer is simple, like when Jesus was speaking to the blind men: “Lord, we want to see.” Other times, when the pain of life is more messy and complicated than simply asking for the opposite of what you are currently experiencing, finding the words to answer such a simple question may seem impossible.

When Jesus taught his disciples how they should pray, he instructed them to ask for God’s Kingdom to be lived out in such a way that heaven met earth in a real and tangible way. Jesus’ mission as the Messiah was more than just to die on the cross to save people from their sins; his assignment was to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. Jesus came to the earth as God-in-the-flesh and stepped into the brokenness of humanity – broken bodies, broken hearts, broken minds, and broken spirits – with the power to set them all right. To know Jesus as the Healer is to fully embrace heavenly realities lived out in earthly bodies. To answer the question “What do you

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want?” when you need the Lord to intervene in your situation is to ask and believe for heaven to break into your reality and change it.

What does it look like to have heaven lived out on earth? In Revelation 21, the apostle John writes about a new heaven and a new earth. He says,

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”
(Revelation 21:3-4 ESV)*

John describes a world in which there is no more sadness, mourning, pain or death because God has made all things new and dwells among his people once again, as he had done in the very beginning. All of the brokenness of our current reality does not exist in the presence of God. When heaven meets earth there will be no more:

- Depression
- Suicide
- Cancer
- Self-harm
- Heart attacks
- War
- Division
- Racism
- Sexism
- Homelessness
- Bullying

- Self-esteem issues
- Jealousy
- Abuse of any kind
- Persecution
- Hunger
- Mental illness
- Abandonment
- Orphans
- Drug abuse
- Loneliness
- Greed
- Isolation

The list could go on and on and on. The point is, however, that none of these things exist when God sets all of the wrongs of humanity right. But the even greater hope is that we don't have to wait until the end of time until these things are no more. Jesus, our Healer, reminds us that when we pray, we get to ask for - and then live out - the Kingdom of God right here and right now. From the very beginning of his ministry Jesus' message was the same: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*" (Matthew 3:2 NIV)

The Power of Touch

The nearness of the Kingdom came in the form of a Jewish man who walked and talked and ate among people. He was not afraid to get close enough to reach out and touch the lost and the lonely, the ignored and the infirm. Jesus, as God-in-the-flesh, brought the Kingdom of Heaven so near that we could touch it; or rather, it could touch us.

Throughout Israel's history, observant Jews did their very best to keep themselves "clean" in the eyes of the Law. Sin, illness, and food choice are all examples of things that would

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cause someone in the Jewish community to be declared “unclean” and would force them out of relationship with their family, their friends and with God (unclean people could not worship in the tabernacle, synagogue, or Temple). If a “clean” person were to touch an “unclean” person or thing, they would become “unclean” for a time. Being considered unclean often led people into a place where they were isolated: no friends, no family, no place to worship. They lived on the outside of society because the Law would not allow them to be close enough to be touched by anyone, so they could not make anyone else unclean.

Touch is one of the first senses that is developed in a human being. For the first months of a child’s life, touch is one of the primary forms of communication between a parent/guardian and a child, allowing the child to grasp the level at which they are being cared for while developing an understanding of language and the ability to communicate using words. There have been many studies that have been done over the last several decades on the impact of neglect and lack of physical touch on children that have been raised in orphanages in countries like Romania and Cambodia. The data has been devastating. Healthy touch is important to our development as people and when it is taken away, for whatever reason, or abused, the lack of connection can have damaging effects.

Many of the people that Jesus encountered throughout his ministry – the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34), various lepers (Luke 5:12-14, Luke 17:12-19), or Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:35-41) – all risked making this respected teacher “unclean.” But Jesus recognized that the Kingdom of Heaven was not just for the “clean” but for everyone, and so he risked religious and social exile to bring the outsiders into the Kingdom of God. He chose to use his physical touch to bring healing to those that were considered untouchable and,

in the process, restored them and welcomed them back into the society that had pushed them out.

When the Miracle Doesn't Come

The Bible gives us story after story about people who had an encounter with Jesus and walked away with a miracle healing. Those moments with Jesus, the Healer, changed their lives, their stories and their futures. They got a second chance; they were able to once again live among their family and friends, to worship with their community and to live “normally” in society.

But what about those moments when the miracle doesn't come? Is Jesus still the Healer?

What about the children whose father walked out and never returned? Or the mother who died from cancer? Or the friends of a person killed in a car accident? Or the family that lost everything in a fire or earthquake?

You see, it is really easy to doubt God's ability to heal when you see people that are suffering. It is really easy to doubt God's goodness when the prayer that you have faithfully prayed goes unanswered. It is really easy to doubt God's love when you feel alone and isolated.

I work in a classroom with kids who have moderate to severe learning and physical disabilities. Most of them cannot speak, a few of them have the inability to communicate in any way, and many of them have physical limitations that keep them from doing things that many able-bodied people take for granted. Though they may never see physical healing on this side of heaven, these kids have taught me more about Jesus as Healer in ways I could have never imagined. They have taught me that healing is more than just the blind eyes made to see, or the lame legs made to walk, or the mute tongue made to speak. They have taught me that I have a role

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in their earthly healing. Every time I sit with them to teach them something, or help them eat their lunch, or grab their hand to walk them to the playground they are being so completely loved with the same power, spirit and anointing that Jesus walked in. This is the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven: everyone has a place.

When the BIG miracle doesn't come on this side of heaven, we can rest in the Good News: we have the community of the people of God that are going to walk with us through the pain of life. Jesus, our Healer, opens up the door so that everyone has a place in the Kingdom. The Kingdom is not just for those that have it all together; no, the Kingdom of God invites in the sick, the poor, the outcast, the lonely, the forgotten, the disabled, and the rejected. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus bridged the gap so that EVERYONE has access to the Father and can be in community with one another. Jesus brought the Kingdom to us, for us and for others.

Sometimes we don't get the immediate miracle: people still die, disasters still happen, pain is still so very real. When we don't get the miracle that we ask God for, we can doubt that he is listening or, perhaps, come to the conclusion that he doesn't exist. However, let me offer another option: in the moments we don't get our miracle, it may be because God is redirecting our focus so that we connect to his people so that they can be the agents of his healing. Those people can come in the form of doctors, therapists, counselors, pastors, youth leaders, teachers, friends and family members. One final story:

When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he

was preaching God's word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven." (Mark 2:1-5 NLT)

He has a bit of a moment with the religious leaders who were thinking he was blaspheming God, but then the encounter ends like this:

... Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!" And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!" (Mark 2:10b-12 NLT)

I tell you this story as a conclusion to remind you that sometimes you need your friends to get you to your healing. We don't know if that paralyzed man would have ever crossed paths with Jesus; but he did because of four men that picked him up and made sure that he had an encounter with the Healer.

Jesus did not bring the Kingdom of God to earth as something that would happen to us. Rather, Jesus brought the Kingdom so that we can participate in it. We can live in the same power and the same anointing that Jesus did. As our Healer, Jesus invites us to be healed so that we can be people who bring healing to others. For some, you may bring healing through your career choices as doctors, nurses, therapists or other caring professionals. For others, it will be as people who serve in ministry. For others, it may be those who are a good

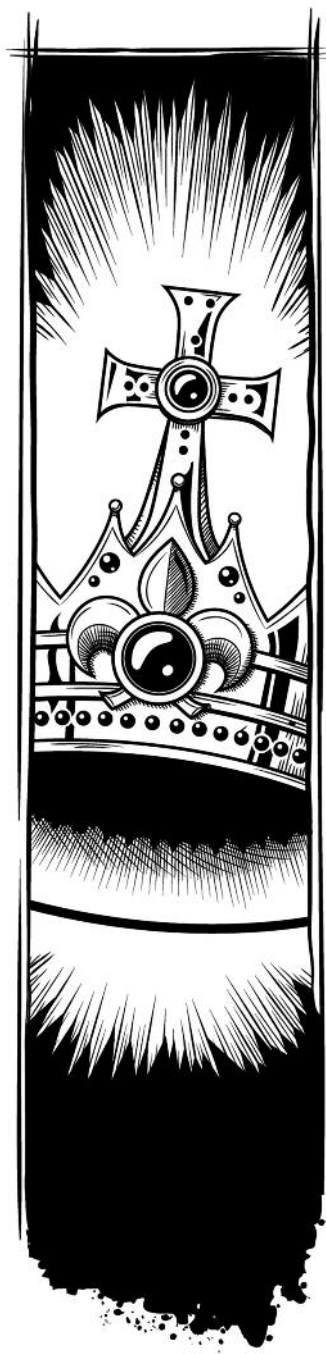
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friend or loving family member. But for all of us, as people empowered by the Spirit of God, we get to show the world what it looks like for the Kingdom to be as present on earth as it is in heaven.

Group Questions & Discussion Points:

1. What do you want? Where are the places in your life that you need to invite the healing power of Jesus into (ex: your health, your parents' marriage, your friend group, your school, etc.)?
2. Are there any places in your life that you have just assumed that Jesus would heal, but are afraid to ask him to come into? Write those things down and commit to inviting Jesus into them every day for a week, and see if you begin to see a change in those areas of your life.
3. If you start living each day as though heaven had come to earth, what are things that you would like to see removed from your life and your community? Reference the list under the *On Earth as it is in Heaven* section for ideas and feel free to add your own!
4. Where are the places and who are the people in your life that you can connect to when you don't get your miracle? Are you a person who can carry your friends to Jesus when they can't get to him themselves? What are some ways that you can bring people to Jesus when they need your help?

**PART FOUR:
SOON AND
COMING
KING**



Jesus, the Soon and Coming King

Pastor Ashton Fish

At some point in all of our lives we long for something better and for someone to take us there. Jesus Christ, the Soon and Coming King, is this hope for the world. He will fully establish the Kingdom of God and make all wrongs right. Peace will prevail instead of sin and evil. Heaven will come down to earth and there will be no more tears, suffering, evil or death. We will forever be united in person with Jesus and will rule and reign with him on the new earth and in the new heaven.

FOMO

The fear of Jesus coming back before I graduated from school, got married, had sex and accomplished a lot of my life goals was real for me growing up. I was simply afraid of missing out on all the good things of life. In today's world, we are more connected than ever before. Your smart phone can be a portal to any place in the world at any time. It is interesting that we are so connected, so social, and so informed, but there is a deep sense in us that we are missing out. Many people compare themselves to others and feel like their life just can't measure up. Missing out, not being a part of something meaningful, is probably one of the most practical fears.

We live in a world of fear; that is why alarm companies and life insurance companies are steadily growing and aren't going away anytime soon. The most common fears are: the

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fear of death, the fear of the unknown or future, the fear of failure and the fear of missing out (FOMO). When it comes to the topic of the end of the world, fear can be the biggest obstacle we face. Sadly, we see so many people live in fear and anxiety. In fact, anxiety is the number one obstacle young people are facing today. But there is hope! Jesus wants to turn your fear into a deep-rooted faith in him.

What if I told you that understanding Jesus Christ as Soon and Coming King can help take away or relieve your fear and anxiety? The central message of the Bible is, “Do not fear.” God says that to us so much because he created us and knows that we can be crippled by fear. The phrase “do not be afraid” or one like it is mentioned in the Bible over 365 times. That is a reminder for us each day we are alive to not live in fear. Jesus is really clear that in this world we will have trouble, but he says, “...*take heart; I have overcome the world.*” (*John 16:33 ESV*)

When Jesus is your King, you have a secure future. When Jesus is your King, you know that death is just the beginning of eternal life. When Jesus is your King, you won't miss out on the important things of life. In fact, the fullness of life will be complete when Jesus returns and everything you were worried about missing out on will seem petty compared to the glorious future we have in Jesus. So if you experience fear when thinking about the end of the world, use that as an opportunity to be reminded of the eternal hope we have in the return of Christ. At the end of the world Jesus will make all wrongs right and he will give us life, and life to the full. You can't miss out when you are in perfect union with the Creator of the universe!

A Baby and a Warrior

The first coming of Jesus was very unique and unlikely. He was born of a virgin in a dirty manger in a non-significant town named Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1). I have often thought, “Why did God send his only son to be a completely dependent, weak and fragile baby?” I believe the reason why Jesus came as a weak baby was to be with us and every human who has ever felt helpless and in need. Jesus was just like us, facing life’s stresses, temptation, pain, and suffering; but also he experienced laughter, work and rest. Jesus became human to be with us so he could save us in our humanness. He had a human mind, will, body and spirit so he could save our human mind, will, body and spirit.

One of the names that the Bible described Jesus as is Immanuel, which means, “God with us.” Jesus was with us in every way; rather than being a God who is distant, he is the God who understands and is personal. Jesus showed his love for us when he died on the cross to forgive our sin and rose from the grave so we will one day rise with him in complete victory over sin, evil and death. The question many people have had is, “Why would Jesus need to come a second time?” I mean, why didn’t he just do it all the first time? That is a very great question, but you have to understand the manner in which he came the first time — he came in human weakness so he could save us from all things we face today.

Jesus is coming the second time as the resurrected warrior King in strength with heaven’s armies behind him. This is a whole different portrait of Jesus than the first coming of Jesus as a baby. In Revelation 19, we begin to see this futuristic picture of Jesus. The Bible describes Jesus riding a white horse (yes, there will be horses in heaven) judging the world and waging war with heaven’s angels against the devil and evil. His eyes are blazing like fire, out of his mouth comes a sword, on

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his head is many crowns, and he is dressed in a white robe dipped in blood. The Bible says,

*On his robe and on his thigh he has the name written,
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.
(Revelation 19:16 NIV)*

This is the picture of Jesus we have of his second coming. Warrior Jesus will bring the full Kingdom of God through his judgment and wrath upon all the evil on the earth and in the heavens.

Judgment and Reward

Jesus is coming to make all wrongs right, in which he will finally put an end to death, sin, suffering and evil. When we think about the word *judgment* we often have a negative association. The judgment of Jesus is actually a very good thing. Only through judgment will come the full justice of God on earth and in the heavens. God has appointed his son Jesus to judge the world. Why? Because Jesus walked the world and knows the hearts of women and men. When you think about Jesus judging the world, you have to first understand that his arms are wide open. After all, what other judge died for a guilty party? He is a judge of grace and love, but also truth and justice. Jesus will make everything right when he judges the world and will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Every evil deed that has been done will be accounted for and each person will either receive the grace and forgiveness of Jesus through the cross or they will face judgment for what they have done. For all the people who have been oppressed and persecuted they will finally have justice from our righteous judge Jesus. When Jesus judges every human being he will not be sitting at the pearly gates of

heaven saying, “You were good so you are in and you were bad so you are out.” Not one single human being is good enough for heaven. Only when our identity is in Christ will we be good enough and enter into an eternal relationship with God.

Jesus said,

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.” (Revelation 22:12 NIV)

Everything we have done in faith for God in our lifetime will be rewarded. Our reward will be to rule and reign with him as a son and daughter of the King. That means we have full access to all the riches and goodness of God. We will not be sitting on clouds all day and playing harps. We will be endlessly thriving with God forever and our imaginations can't even think of this amazing reality filled with exciting possibilities. In this new reality of eternal life there will be no more lying, abuse, distractions, stresses, anxieties or fears (the list goes on and on). Imagine what life would be like without these things now. This is the hope we have in the second coming of Christ. All 66 books of the Bible lead to the person and work of Jesus redeeming all of mankind, the earth and the heavens and making all things new.

There are two things I can confidently say we know in Christianity about the second coming of Christ. First, Jesus is coming back to fully establish his kingdom and to make all wrongs right, so therefore we have an amazing hope in Jesus. Second, the dead and the living believers will rise at the second coming of Christ and will receive new glorified bodies. There is a wide variety of beliefs about all the details of the second coming of Jesus, especially concerning the rapture of

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believers, and the timing of the end time events. These are great studies that I would encourage you to personally dive into and study with a community of faith.

However, the rest of this chapter will focus on how the second coming of Jesus informs our lives today. My goal is to start a conversation and inspire you personally to answer this question: Jesus is coming again, so now what?

KOG - Extreme Makeover

Where there is a King there is a Kingdom. Jesus has given believers the job of bringing the KOG (Kingdom of God) to earth. Jesus taught us The Lord's Prayer and part of it goes like this, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." What does it look like to bring heaven down to earth? Heaven on earth looks like taking care of our planet, glorifying God with our words and deeds and even giving extreme makeovers. On earth as it is in heaven is simply revealing and expressing God's truth and beauty in the world today.

I grew up in a mobile home in the Mojave Desert in a very poor town. When we first moved into our mobile home there were mouse droppings everywhere inside the house and all of the plants and trees were dead. So we decided to do a whole home makeover; we planted gardens and watered the dead trees. In about a year, our little mobile home looked like a green thriving desert oasis. Bringing the Kingdom of God down to earth is hard work, but it is the best work you can partner with God in. Growing up, my family didn't have a lot of money, but we had a lot of life and love. These were the best eight years of my childhood. Heaven was truly on earth!

During this time in Mojave, a girl in the community named Teri (this isn't her real name) started coming to our church. Teri was just 15 years old, but she had already been

abused, sex-trafficked and on drugs. After about a year of getting to know her, my family took her in and she became part of our family. One of the cool things my parents did for Teri was pay for her to have a complete makeover. They got her a whole new wardrobe, make up and took her to a salon to get a fresh haircut. I will never forget Teri feeling like she was beautiful and loved for the first time. This was bringing heaven down to earth.

Today we have the task of giving the world a makeover. As believers in the Soon and Coming King we have the amazing job of bringing heaven down in nature, our communities and in the whole world. One of the most famous verses in the Bible is John 3:16 and it says:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)

We forget that the verse says, “God so loved the world...,” not just certain people or America. That means that God’s plan is to re-make all nature, all nations and all people groups.

Get ready for his return

The number one thing we need to do before Jesus returns is to become like him. This is a process that we will be involved in for the rest of our lives here on earth. The Apostle John, the same one who wrote Revelation, said,

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3 NIV)

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It's important for us to know that our identity is first and foremost found in being a child of God. Because we are the sons and daughters of God, we have an inheritance full of God's goodness and eternal life.

Second, we see that when we are resurrected upon Christ's return we will have a glorified body like Jesus has. The Apostle Paul teaches on the resurrection of believers when he says,

...it will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.
(1 Corinthians 15:52 NLT)

Upon the resurrection of the dead, Jesus will give us our new glorified bodies. Our new bodies will be whole, eternal and free from pain, sickness or disease. We will be like Jesus in body and in virtue, which means we will be without sin and will be holy as he is holy.

Third, we see that if you have the hope of the second coming of Jesus in your life you will purify yourself. What does it look like to purify yourself? We know that the Apostle John isn't talking about taking a shower if you smell bad. Purity is more than just not being dirty. Purity has to do with proximity. What I mean is that when you are close to Jesus, you are made pure. One of the root meanings of the word purify is to be completely vulnerable. To purify yourself is to be vulnerable with God in every area of your life (body, spirit, mind, and will). Consider this: the people you are the closest to are the people you tend to be the most honest and vulnerable with. Jesus wants to be close to you. And what's more, the closer you are to Jesus, the more pure in heart you will become.

Watch for the second coming of Christ

You watch for the people you care most about.

I remember on my wedding day, my bride was over 30 minutes late. I never thought that she would not come, but I was very eager for her to arrive. When she walked down the aisle, I could not take my eyes off of her. She was so beautiful and, in that moment, she was the only one I saw even though there were dozens of people around us. In the same way, and to a much higher degree, when Jesus comes back, nothing else will matter more than being with him.

I believe that this is how we are to long for the second coming of Jesus. We are to eagerly long for Jesus and watch for his return. In Matthew 24:42 we are told:

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (NIV)

Whenever you see the word *therefore* in the Bible you must ask the question “What is it there for?” This means you must read the verses prior to this verse to fully understand what the speaker (Jesus) is saying. In quick summary of Matthew 24 Jesus gives us a two-part prophecy. First, he tells his disciples that the Jewish temple was going to be destroyed which happened around 40 years later, in 70AD. The second prophecy is about his second coming, which has not happened yet, and he tells us three basic things: 1) Watch for the signs of the end times, 2) No one knows the day or the hour of Christ’s return and 3) Don’t be deceived by false prophets and their teaching that leads you away from the gospel (the Good News of Jesus Christ).

We are to be a watchful people longing for the second return of Jesus. This point became more real for me when I

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lost my father to cancer a few years ago. There is nothing more painful in this life than the loss of a loved one. The grief, heartache and pain of losing my father has been the hardest thing I have ever had to go through and I don't wish it upon anyone. As I have reflected on my father's death I have come to this truth: I have an overwhelming hope in the second coming of Jesus because he will make all the wrongs right and that means I will see my father again. Jesus reminds us that though death is painful, it is not final. All who are in Christ will be raised up and my dad will be given a new body that is not devastated with cancer, but healthy and made new. This overwhelming hope brings tears to my eyes and motivates me to keep watch for the return of Christ. Do you have this overwhelming hope and longing for his return?

Nugget Night

Why is it taking so long for Jesus to return?

The answer is simple: Jesus is waiting for every tribe and nation to hear the gospel (Good News) of his salvation and hope. Jesus said,

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14 NIV)

According to the joshuaproject.com, about 3 billion people are unreached and have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is more than the whole population of China, India and the United States put together! Most of these unreached people groups live in the Middle East and Asia. We have a great need and task at hand. Surprisingly, 17.2% of the U.S. population hasn't heard the gospel of Jesus and over half of the population is not Christian. That means that all around

you there are people that are just waiting for you to share God's love and hope with them.

When I was 14 years old I started a Bible study at McDonald's that I called "Nugget Night." I bought everyone who came free Chicken Nuggets. I mean, who wouldn't want to come just for free nuggets? My first night I only had one person show up and I was scared out of my mind to share my faith. For the next few months only one or two people showed up. After about a year, I had 30 people showing up at my Nugget Night and my sister had started Taco Tuesday. Our youth group tripled in size that year. Who knew that God could use a terrified, but willing teenager?

The most memorable person that came to Nugget Night was a kid named Joe. Joe would ride over on his skateboard and he loved to eat and cuss. When I first met Joe, I didn't like him at all because he would distract the group talking about bad stuff like drugs and him trying to get with every girl in town. I remember praying that Joe wouldn't come back because he gave me such a hard time. Thank God that he doesn't answer all of our prayers.

Joe ended up surrendering his life to Jesus and began to turn his life around. Joe became a very close friend and I have very fond memories of him. In July 2012, Joe was killed in a car accident. I was asked to lead Joe's memorial service at Mojave High School. I often think about how close I was to never starting Nugget Night, because I was afraid to share my faith and I didn't feel prepared or ready to lead a Bible Study. But I am thankful that I didn't let fear stop me. One day I look forward to seeing Joe again at the resurrection of all believers at the second coming of Jesus.

There are too many people that are dying to hear about Jesus and are desperate to be in relationship with him and experience his love. Every single believer has a mission to reach his or her world. What is stopping you from sharing

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your faith? There are plenty of people like Joe out there that are waiting for you to share with them the greatest truth and hope of your life, and that is Jesus.

I believe God is placing before you an open door into someone's life at school or in your community. Everything we say and do reflects the Kingdom of God. There will be times that you need to repent (change your mind) and turn back to God. You will face trouble and persecution, but remember Jesus is with you and is working in your life despite the circumstances. The time is now to wake up to God's calling and mission on your life to become like Christ, study God's Word and live a vulnerable life with the people around you so that they would see Jesus. Jesus is coming soon, so be ready for his arrival. The Bible ends with these two verses and I felt this was the best way to end this chapter,

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. (Revelation 22:20-21 NIV)

Group Questions & Discussion Points:

1. What fears about the future and return of Jesus do you need to surrender to God?
2. What are you most hopeful about? In what areas of your life do you need God's hope?
3. Are you ready for the return of Jesus? What are you doing to get ready for his return? How are you daily growing closer to Jesus?
4. How are you being active in telling others about Jesus?
5. What are some unique ways (like Nugget Night) that you can invite your friends and neighbors to hear about the love of Jesus?



ONE YOUTH,
MANY NATIONS,
ALL ARE WITNESSES



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