

**“Power Up”: VBS Sunday (“Gather”)**  
**7.21.19**  
**Selected Texts**



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**Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context...** (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

Here are the (4) “big-theme” questions that formed this year’s VBS. If you are using these notes with your community group, why don’t you take the opportunity to form your own responses to the following questions:

**“How do we get to know God?”**

**“Why is it important to discover what God says?”**

**“Why do we need to be rescued?”**

**“How can God’s Spirit help me?”**

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**Teaching Notes...**

On behalf of all the staff, I want to say, *“Thanks”*, for entrusting your children with us and allowing us to serve them this week. Our desire was to create a loving and safe environment in which your kids could interact around a Story which we believe helps us understand both **“who we are”** and **“why we are”**. It’s a story which helps us to get our bearings in the world.

Each day was formed around big themes with a key question and a summative response. The big themes were [themes we will spend the next few weeks pursuing in greater depth]:

**“How do we get to know God?”**

**“Why is it important to discover what God says?”**

**“Why do we need to be rescued?”**

**“How can God’s Spirit help me?”**

So, in the interest of time (and a “go at the mechanical bull”), let me re-state each big theme and offer a few thoughts which I hope will either stimulate your search (if you are new to the Story) or help encourage your faith.

Perhaps we could address the first (2), in tandem:

**“How do we get to know God?”** God wants to you to know him.

**“Why is it important to discover what God says?”** You can know God through his word.

*“In the beginning, God...”* Genesis 1

That is not only a propositional statement, but a definitive starting point in an unfolding narrative.

*“I am God, and there is none like me.”* Isaiah 46

Immediately, we are confronted with a dilemma: if left to our own assumptions, we will never arrive at a god who is “glorious”; who is to be “worshipped”.

**“Revelation” offers us the paradigm for life.**

God’s first priority is to establish, for us, ‘reality’. This is what’s true. This is what’s reliable. It says that we are not self-determined. Left to ourselves, we will reach all the wrong conclusions (about ourselves, about God, about place) and be sent off in all the wrong directions---- disoriented and discontented--- the way(s) we’re supposed to feel when we’re disconnected from God... disconnected from life.

**God desires to be known. He can only be known as he desires to reveal himself.**

**His desire is linked to his intimate knowledge of you, therefore, you can only know yourself by discovering what God knows about you!**

**Jesus is the Story that God was telling.**

He is God in **3D**; God speaking in the first person; putting a name and a face to God. He is God extending mercy to a woman with a string of failed marriages, but still trying to find love on “Match.com”. He is God having covert meetings with religious leaders whose religion has left them pious, but empty. **Jesus is the way that God comes to us.**

**“Why do we need to be rescued?”** God sent Jesus to save us.

If Jesus is the way that God comes to us, **Jesus is the way that we come to God.**

If we go back to the “beginning”, we are able to trace our “genesis” and discover this process of human disintegration and disillusionment has been going on for some time.

The creation project is going along well. There are more “yeses” than “nos”. *“Be fruitful. Flourish. Multiply. Expand. Take full advantage of the raw materials of life”* (Genesis 1:28).

*“Eat this. Don’t eat that. It’s a matter of life or death!”* (Genesis 2:17) It’s not a threat. It’s establishing loving boundaries.

### **Sin is who we are in light of who we were meant to be.**

We all know that something’s not right (abuse, misappropriation of good, disorder, injustice, etc.), although we would have differing opinions about both the dilemma and the solution (educational reform, legislation, social justice programs, etc.)

Few of us would dare call it “evil”, but evil, in its most fundamental definition means, “disorderly; not as it ought to be”. Fewer of us would be willing to use the “s-word”: sin. At its core is the idea that we have “missed the mark; we have fallen short; we are not as glorious as we were meant to be” (Romans 3:23).

### **Sin was not just “one really bad choice”, but an absence of trust.**

In the garden, Adam and Eve could no longer find it within themselves to trust God and his good intentions toward them. *“I don’t trust you”*, cripples the relationship and causes us to attach our desires to things which can never fully satisfy us.

### **God’s desire is to re-story us! Restoration.**

Rescue means that you’re worth it. To substitute your own self-conceived strategy of controlling life (‘progress’) for grace (the unprovoked, self-initiated movement of God toward and in us) is to undermine love.

Soren Kierkegaard called Jesus the *“prototypical human”*. As fully God, Jesus shows us what God is like. As fully human, Jesus demonstrates for us who we were meant to be.

The historic creeds of the Christian faith have always insisted that Jesus was both “fully God, and fully human”.

*“For God, in all his fullness, was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself.”* Colossians 1

Only as a human could he rightly represent us, addressing all that had gone wrong, taking the consequences upon himself “for” and “with” and “instead of” us.

*“... he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and his people... for Christ died to set them free from the penalty of sin...”* Hebrews 9

Only as a resurrected human could he ensure that death was not the end and that the promise of life would be secured in our identification with his own life, death and resurrection.

*“And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.”* Romans 6:4

*“My old self has been crucified with Christ... I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20*

**“How can God’s Spirit help me?”** God sent his Spirit to help you.

**God sends his Spirit so that Jesus can continue to be with us.**

*“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world... isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.” John 14*

The call to live like Jesus in the world cannot be heard merely as a ‘moral mandate’. In fact, such an approach can never accommodate the *“full life”* (John 10:10) that God makes available to us.

It is a call to live with a daily encounter of God which empowers and compels us to “incarnate” the story in every nook and cranny of our eating, sleeping, working, recreating lives.

*“Friend of sinners”* (Luke 7). Unfortunately, that was an accusation (from the religious community), not simply an observation. People liked Jesus. He *“reeked of grace”*, which seemed to create some safe space for people to honestly assess their situation and give them the opportunity to choose a healthier alternative.

Repentance was never a pre-requisite for *“hangin’ out with Jesus”*, but it was often a result of having spent time with him.

**“Follow me.”**

Jesus was confident enough in his lovingly-restorative approach that he could extend the invitation but allow you to choose, even if that choice wasn’t for him--- but he would insist that our choices are consequential.

*“How would you define the good life? From whom are you learning it? What kind of life is your present understanding of reality (way) producing?”*

**Think:** consider the conclusions that you have reached about life and God and the life it has produced.

**Think again:** “repentance”. Sincere willingness to re-align yourself around another’s version of truth.

**Trust:** the result of a developing understanding of God’s goodness and his good intentions for you.

**Accept:** *“Everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds.”* Matthew 7

**Follow:** it means that we have determined that the life Jesus offers so resonates with the desires within us, that we would willingly renounce our confidence in our own strategies for making life work and adopt his.