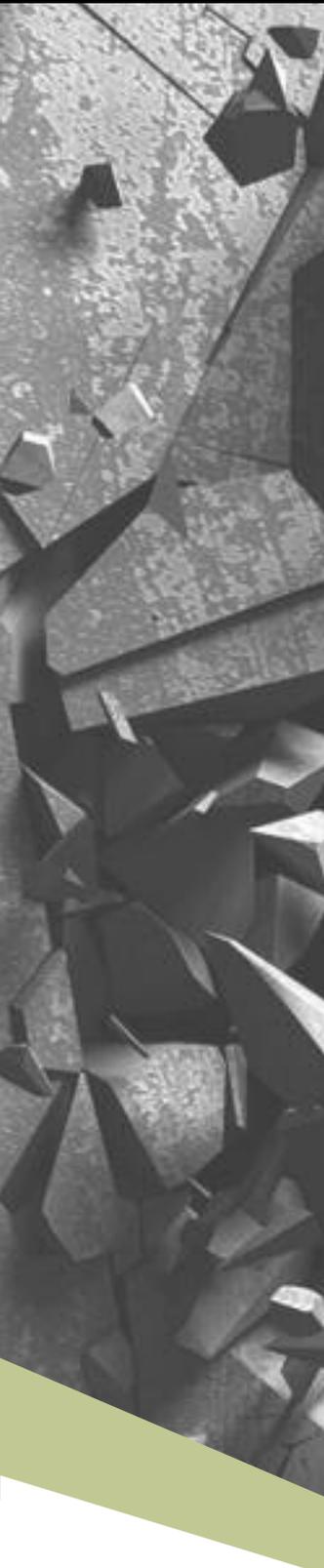


Impactus

STUDY GUIDE



SINCE ITS CREATION, the earth has radically changed physically over time – massive movements beneath the earth’s surface formed mountains, glaciers scraped the earth’s surface creating lakes, volcanoes created islands. History also records events that radically affected humans over time – wars, famine, disease.

Currently, the world is being significantly disrupted – this time by a microscopic virus able to reproduce itself quickly and be easily transmitted globally. History shows that it is not the first pandemic to affect the world, but certainly this latest one is the first in our lifetime! It has changed how we move about, how we connect with others, how we lived our lives in the past year and even how we think about everything. It has led to people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression and financial problems, stores, offices and international borders closed. Amazing how such a small creature can have such a big impact!

In times like we are undergoing now, impacted by the circumstances surrounding us, many people search for answers and one question is “where is God right now?” And the answer is the same as it was on day one, when God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1), “right here”. All the physical changes to the earth since day one, during every disruptive event experienced by humans since day one, throughout the existence of the world, God has always been right here, and will be now and in the future, for you and me. The Lord reigns, in good times and bad.

I was in Edmonton on March 12, 2020 when everything started to dramatically change. We had just arrived to start setting up for the weekend PKC conference. Local health authorities had just recommended no large gatherings, the event was cancelled, and after working through details to deal with the sudden cancellation, I flew back to Ontario Friday evening. As I was driving home from the airport, I reflected on the whirlwind past two days and asked God “what are you teaching me today?”. The answer was quick and very clear, “I am in charge and many do not want to believe in me.” That was it, I heard nothing more, but it was more than enough. I experienced an immediate calmness. “Yes Lord, you are definitely in charge and I’m so grateful for that!” was my immediate reply.

Before you proceed through these sessions, whether alone or part of a group, it may be the question you want to ask in prayer before and after each session, “Lord, what are you teaching me today?”

Blessings

Rick Verkerk, Promise Keepers Canada | Impactus Director, Conferences

I am, the Lord

Scripture references:

Exodus 3:12-15, Psalm 95:1-7, Matthew 20:20-23, Matthew 26:29, 2 Peter 1:3-4

Key thought:

Our God still holds the world. The Lord reigns. – based on Psalm 95:4,5

IN THE BEGINNING God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1a) and on the sixth day, He created man in his own image, male and female he created them, (Gen 1:27) his crowning work for that week.

God placed the man in the Garden of Eden and gave him responsibility to oversee the earth under His sovereignty. (Gen 2:15) Soon things changed as man separated himself from God by sin. But God never changed. He was, is, and will be Lord, forever.

Throughout Scripture, the title of Lord is consistently used in references to God. Even Jesus referred to God in the third party, as his Father, not 'we', always stating the kingdom is his Father's Kingdom. (Mt 26:29) In a world with so many other gods – religious, materialistic, celebrities, none come close to the majesty of the Lord, his sovereignty, his authority. He is Lord.

QUESTIONS:

1. When asked by Moses how to identify himself to the Israelites, what was God's reply? What does his answer in verse 14 mean? What is the importance of starting with the words "The Lord" in verse 15 as the second part of God's answer?
2. Who grants eternal life if it's not Jesus and why? What is Jesus' role in the granting of eternal life and why is it important too?
3. What does God give us through his power? What does 'everything' mean to you? What does it mean that we can 'participate' and how do we do this?
4. When you read this statement "The Lord reigns, in good times and bad", do you feel a personal connection to it? If yes, how? If not, why not?
5. What does 'the great King above all gods' mean? What are we called to do in Psalm 95:6 and why? What are your favourite songs that praise the Lord? Maybe sing a few.

A Life of Purpose

Scripture references:

Exodus 13:21-22, 14:10-14, 19-31, James 1:5, 22-25, 2 Peter 1:5-7

Key thought:

We are called to live a life of purpose under the sovereignty of the Lord.

THROUGHOUT OUR LIFETIME, whether individually or collectively, we will experience unplanned demands that will disrupt our lives without permission. How do we prepare ourselves for these uncertainties? The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt provides two valuable lessons on how to develop the skills to respond to these uncertainties.

Lesson #1 – Do what is obvious. Instructed to follow the cloud, the Israelites did, (Ex 13:21,22) even when they were terrified, trapped by the Red Sea. (Ex 14:10-14) Again, instructed to “go through the sea on dry ground” to the other side, the other option was stay and surrender to the Egyptians. They chose the obvious and crossed. Upon emerging from the Red Sea, they witnessed the power of the Lord. (Ex 14:31) But in order to experience his power, they had to do what is obvious first.

Lesson #2 – Build wisdom to take your best guess. During any period of uncertainty, we have questions, and the answers are not always clear. We are only able to make a “best guess”. The Israelites left behind 400 years of routine for a nomadic existence in the desert. They had to adapt and make decisions based on no clear answers. Living a life of purpose can be challenging when we can only “best guess” but developing disciplines to build our godly wisdom and understanding will refine our skills to make our “guess” better. Scripture provides plenty of guidance on what these disciplines are to help you navigate this (2 Pe 1:5-7) and provides a call to action on how to do this. (Ja 1:5,22)

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think it means to be “called”? Who is doing the calling? What is involved for a person when ‘called’? Do you have to accept the “call”? What happens when the “call” is ignored?
2. What do you think a life of purpose is? What is a life of purpose according to Scripture?
3. What are some of the things in your life that you did over the past year that looking back were obvious? What things did you miss? Going forward, what are the “obvious” I need to look for and do?
4. When presented with a problem that has no clear answer, do you move forward based on what you know or wait until you have a clearer answer? Why? Think about a “best guess” that worked out well for you and one that did not. What did you learn from both?
5. Living a life of purpose for the Lord requires action steps. What steps are these? How do you take these steps? If you are already taking steps, share how these have helped you navigate life and its daily demands.

Abide in Jesus

Scripture references:

Matthew 6:25-33, John 15:1-8

Key thought:

Tomorrow is another day, abide in me today.

IN THE WIDE-RANGING Sermon on the Mount, as it is known, Jesus addresses the various emotions that can affect our life and instructs us not to succumb to these emotions. Rather, we are to "seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness." Essentially, Jesus is saying 'do not worry'. (Mt 6:25-33) These words are very re-assuring coming from Jesus but in uncertain times, worry, anxiety, fear and anger can all cloud our minds and we focus on ourselves, rather than seeking God's Kingdom. To help us focus, Jesus teaches that he is the path to the Lord's Kingdom through his connection to us. (Jn 15:1-3) But it is conditional. We must be connected like a branch is to a vine. (Jn 15:4-5)

Doing what is obvious and building wisdom are great skills and important components to living a life of purpose for both believers and unbelievers. But a life of purpose is incomplete without being connected to Jesus, a living union that is absolutely necessary, as without it there is nothing. Jesus is very clear that since he is the vine and we are the branches, not being connected to him is like a branch disconnected from a vine. It can bear no fruit; eventually its leaves wither and fall off. Connected, a branch can "bear much fruit". By "remaining" or "abiding" in Jesus, i.e. connected, disciples of Jesus will bear much fruit and our fruit-bearing will accomplish a life of purpose, glorifying the Lord. (Jn 15:8)

QUESTIONS:

1. What is Jesus calling us to do? How do your emotions affect this calling for you? Think of past emotional or disruptive times. What were your thoughts and actions during these? In hindsight, what would you have possibly done different?
2. What does it mean to seek first his kingdom? How can we do this? What are some specific examples of how to seek first his kingdom?
3. What does it look like to abide or remain in Jesus? How can we ensure that we are remaining or abiding in him? What does Jesus say about those who choose to not abide in him?
4. When Jesus talks about bearing much fruit, is he talking only about evangelism? What other fruit could he be talking about that is important to see in the life of a Christian? How can we ensure that God gets the glory for any of "our" fruit?
5. Have you ever undergone the pruning process so that you can produce more fruit? Was it painful? Was the result worth it? Do you have one or more areas of your life that need pruning?

Making a Godly Impact

Scripture references: Judges 6, 7:1-15

Key thought: “Maybe it’s about time to stop talking about what you can’t do and focus on what you can do.” – Craig Groeschel

ALL OF US play a part in contributing to the Kingdom of God. Whether large or small, each part is seen as valuable by the Lord. But many of us fail to see the potential in ourselves that God sees in us. God called Gideon to serve with “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” Gideon had his doubts, felt unworthy, and did not see himself as a hero. Like Gideon, we too often think we could never make a godly impact. However, just as God showed Gideon, when He is with you, you have supernatural power to complete what God is calling you to do. What can we learn from Gideon? Here are three principles to consider:

Make a difference. God created us to make a difference. Each of us have a desire to be difference-makers so who are the people around us that we are to impact for the Lord? God knows and will lead us to seek them out. But when we hide like Gideon did, then we can not find them.

Stop the excuses. It’s time to get rid of the excuses, fears and doubts. They make us believe God will only use us when we are ready. Gideon was never going to be ready, but the Lord still called him. God doesn’t wait for us to be capable, rather just willing. He takes care of the rest. Stop talking about what you can’t do, focus on being willing.

Be prepared to pay. Making an impact for the Lord comes with a price. Gideon demolished an altar and the men of the town wanted to kill him. Gideon was still afraid and had to deal with his emotions, but the Lord delivered on his promises to Gideon. (Ju 6:36-40, 7:10) What he wants from us is our willingness to go all in and not be afraid, whatever the cost is, because he promises to be with us.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Gideon identify about himself to justify his unworthiness? How did God enable Gideon to deal with his thoughts about himself? What traits do you identify in yourself like Gideon did in his life?
2. What is the biggest doubt or question about God and faith that you are wrestling with right now? What excuses are you using that are preventing you from being used willingly by the Lord?
3. What would be some of the “prices you are willing to pay” to make a godly impact for the Lord? Are these prices holding you back, and if yes, then why or how?
4. What does the statement “The Lord is with you” mean? What is your definition of a mighty warrior?
5. Using 2 Peter 1:1-11 for encouragement and guidance, create an action plan to develop your skills, identify your weaknesses and prepare for when the Lord places people before you to impact for him. If in a group, meet again and share your plans, discuss next steps and spend time in prayer for each other.



The Lord is With You

OVER THE PAST four study sessions, we examined who God is – Lord over all, his power and reign forever. Then we looked at how to live a life of purpose and how important it is to be connected to Jesus. Finally, we examined what it looks like to apply these skills and the challenges that will arise when we are willing to impact others for the Lord.

The Lord is with you, mighty warrior! How would you react if an angel appeared and addressed you with this line? Would you be encouraged, frightened, doubtful, exhilarated? Would you ignore the angel? Hopefully not! Because what is necessary in today's world, in a period of what seems like indefinite uncertainty, is your willingness to act. You are called to make a difference and it is time for action.

Don't let the emotions of the moment – worry, fear, anxiety, anger, etc. – block you from being a difference-maker. Make every effort to secure your calling by cultivating your qualities, stay connected to Jesus, make godly impacts for him, and someday “you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. (2 Peter 1:10-11) That is what a life of purpose accomplishes!

Are you making an impact for the Lord in your spheres of influence – your spouse, children, church, workplace, friends, neighbourhood, community? What people do you know need to experience the love of Jesus? Are you willing and when will you get started?

READY TO GO?

Remember as you get ready, you have these assurances from the Lord.

- **You are blessed (Numbers 6:24-26)**
- **I am with you (Judges 6:12)**
- **Remain in me, I will remain in you (John 15:4)**

Go. Make a godly impact for Jesus.