

Headlines and Heartaches

Current Events in Light of the Gospel

STUDY 1: THE WORLD

Keep the main thing, the main thing: The world changes constantly, dramatically even. God doesn't change. He is who He always is. God does what He always does. God loves how He always loves. His commandments, promises, and blessings remain even though this world changes and will eventually pass away.

Introduction

THE WORLD IS ALWAYS CHANGIN'...

- **Take out your phone, open your laptop, or unlock your tablet and take a look at the recent news headlines. Identify four to five different news items or headlines. What's going on in the world? Who is in the news? Where is it happening?**
- **Take some time to reflect on the news headlines. How do they make you feel? What do they tell us about the world? Does the news fill you with hope or fear? Why? Anger or joy? Hate or compassion? Why?**

Our Look in the Book

Take a look at the headlines in Habakkuk (the various section titles) and take some time to discuss the historical background and general outline of this Hebrew book.

WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE TIME OF HABAKKUK?

What are some of the parallels between Habakkuk's time and our own? Some of the differences?

How does Habakkuk react to the headlines of his own day? In fear or hope? Anger or joy? Hate or compassion?

Now, READ Habakkuk 2:4 and 3:17-19. How does Habakkuk respond to the events of his time now? What changed? What remained the same?

HABAKKUK IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in several different places in the New Testament: Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38 (and loosely in 2 Corinthians 5:7). Studying the New Testament quotation of this Old Testament truth helps us bridge some of the historical gap between our day and Habakkuk's time.

In Romans 1:16-17, Paul says:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

In Galatians 3: 10-14 Paul reiterates this same point saying,

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.' But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

Finally, Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in the book of Hebrews. The unknown author of this book writes:

"For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, 'yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 10: 36-11:1)



DIAGRAM AND DISCUSS:

Use this chart below and in a small group or with your leader to discuss each of the points in each section:

The world...	God...

Our Feet in the Streets

How might our life change in light of what we learned from our reading and discussion?

How might we respond to the headlines knowing that God doesn't change, brings healing to the world, and is with us at all times, bringing His all-consuming love and compassion to bear on His creation?

The Psalms are a prayerbook/hymn book that give voice to the truth of God as it takes shape in the lives of His people, and it captures their response to His work in the world. With that in mind, READ Psalm 102 and turn it into a prayer. Work on your own, in small groups, or with your leader to paraphrase (put into your own words) the Psalm (you can also use Habakkuk 3:17-19 if you'd prefer).

When you are done, use this prayer to intercede on behalf of the world and devote the fears, anger, and hate in the headlines to God. Using your interpretation of Psalm 103 entrust the headlines—in the newspaper and your own life—to our real, present, God.

As a result of what you have heard from God's Word today, what is He giving you to believe or do this coming week?

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STUDY 2: GOD IN THE WORLD

Keep the main thing, the main thing: God is a Real. Present. God. He doesn't just create the world, set it spinning on in its axis and then recede into the cosmos only to come again some unknown day in the future and destroy the world when He sees fit. By no means! He is active *in* the world, sustaining it, keeping it from devolving into ultimate chaos, re-creating it, and redeeming it.

Introduction

WHERE WAS GOD WHEN _____?

- *Can you name a time in your life when you wondered where God was? Maybe it was personal. Maybe a family tragedy. A death at school. Maybe it was in the news. A natural disaster. A mass shooting.*
- *What are some of the questions that raged in your mind at the time? Why did you wonder if God was present in that situation? Why didn't what was happening seem to match up with the God you know or what others say about God?*

Our Look in the Book

Read the first few verses of Genesis 1 and scan the remainder of the chapter.

- *What is God doing in Genesis 1?*
- *How does God feel about what He has done? Is it good, bad, or in between?*
- *Look at the headlines in chapters 2 and 3 in Genesis. What happens in these chapters?*

- *What have the consequences of those events been? What has God been doing about it?*
- *Why do we sometimes think God doesn't care, or isn't involved, in His created order anymore?*

The main point for this section is to grasp three key things about God and two key things about the world. First, about God:

- 1 - God creates, sustains, and rules over the world.
- 2 - God brings order out of the chaos.
- 3 - God fills the world with goodness.

Now, about the world:

- 1 — The world was, as we just discussed, originally good.
- 2 — The world is full of chaos, death, and evil.

Read John 1:1-14.

- *What are the parallels between John 1 and Genesis 1?*
- *How does John seem to connect the coming of Jesus to the creation of the world in Genesis 1?*
- *How does John describe Jesus' presence? What is significant about these words and promises?*
- *What are the effects of Jesus' real presence in the world? (See also Revelation 21:1-8)*



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- **What does Jesus' presence seem to say to us about those "where was God when _____?" scenarios we discussed earlier?**

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

- **What does the author of Hebrews have to say about Jesus, "our great high priest?"**
- **Is Jesus removed from the world or present with it?**
- **What does that mean for our reactions to what the world has to throw at us? How are we to respond when we face times of need, times of sadness, times of want, and times of doubt?**

Our Feet in the Streets

- The Psalms are a prayerbook/hymn book that give voice to the truth of God as it takes shape in the lives of His people, and it captures their response to His work in the world. With that in mind, READ Psalm 139 and turn it into a prayer. Work on your own, in small groups, or with your leader to paraphrase (put into your own words) the Psalm (you can also use words, phrases and promises from Genesis 1, John 1:1-14, or Hebrews 4:14-16 as well).
- **When you are done, use this prayer to "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace and receive mercy and grace to help in time of need." In particular, as you pray your paraphrase of Psalm 139, keep those "where was God when _____?" scenarios in mind. Meditate on them as you pray and reflect on how God is at work in those kinds of situations.**
- **As a result of what you have heard from God's word today, what is He giving you to believe or do this coming week?**

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STUDY 3: ME IN THE WORLD

Keep the main thing, the main thing: As a follower of Jesus, your identity is founded in Christ. You are a citizen of the “Kingdom of God” in this world. Similar to how Jesus came into the world, so, too, you are sent into the world to make disciples as you are going about the callings of your daily life.

Introduction

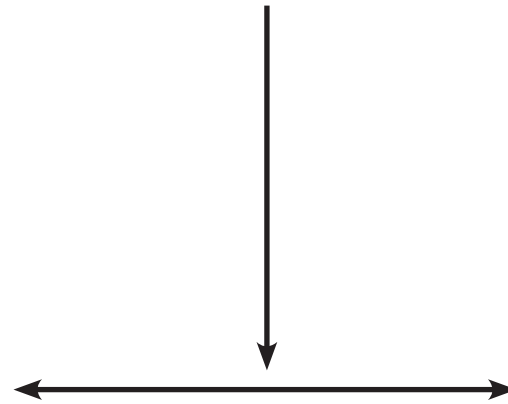
DIVINE DISCONTENT

- *Thinking back on the last two studies, what in the headlines gets you mad? What about the world breaks your heart? What issue keeps grabbing your attention?*
- *If you could solve one critical issue that the world is facing right now, what would it be? Why?*
- *What would your life look like if you started to pursue education or a career along the lines of your “divine discontent?”*

Our Look in the Book

Split up into small groups and read Matthew 28: 16-20; John 17:6-19; 20:19-23.

- *For each reading write down what Jesus seems to be saying about His followers, His disciples. What is He calling them to do?*
- *From what you know about the Bible, the way of Jesus, and these passages, what do you think it means to be a “Christian?”*
- *Are Christians meant to be rulers or stewards? Royals and kings or servants and slaves?*



- *With all of this in mind, what do you believe God is calling you to?*

Our Feet in the Streets

- The Psalms are a prayerbook/hymn book that give voice to the truth of God as it takes shape in the lives of His people, and it captures their response to His work in the world. With that in mind, READ Psalm 145 and turn it into a prayer. Work on your own, in small groups, or with your leader to paraphrase (put into your own words) the Psalm (you can also use words, phrases and promises from Matthew 28:16-20 and John 17:6-19; 19:20-23 as well).
- Consider this prayer as well: O God, who always renews our spirits by the world’s joy and challenges us with the world’s pain; we are glad that we have inherited the mystery and artistry of existence in this world, that we are called by You to the humble service of our neighbor in the midst of it, that we have been given some small part in making rough places plain, transfiguring ugliness into beauty, and bringing good out of evil. Strengthen us in our callings and teach us always to pray: Our Father, who art in heaven...
- *As a result of what you have heard from God’s Word today, what is He giving you to believe or do this coming week? In particular, consider how you (or your group) can bless others in your context and in light of your calling(s)...*



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STUDY 4: US AND “THEM” IN THE WORLD

Keep the main thing, the main thing: Knowing that your identity is founded in Jesus, you are not bound by “identity politics” anymore. You are set free to see others as Jesus sees them—as beloved creations of God in need of re-creation and transformation just like you. Your call is to expand the community of “us,” not close it off.

Introduction

“US” AND “THEM”

- *Who is “we”? Who is “them”?*
- *As a group (or in small groups) fill out this chart. What characteristics, identities, ideas, places, issues, concerns, or actions define “us?” What characteristics, identities, ideas, places, issues, concerns, or actions define “them?”*

“Us”	“Them”

- *Now, consider what “we” share with “them.” Make a separate list of characteristics, identities, places, issues, concerns or actions we share in common.*
- *Looking at your chart, consider why you put the various identifiers where they are. What made you start with differences? What did you realize as you considered the similarities between “us” and “them”?*



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Our Look in the Book

Split up into small groups and read Ephesians 2.

- ***How can Ephesians 2 speak to the conversation you just had? What does Ephesians 2 have to say about God, “us,” and “them?”***
- ***Read also Galatians 3:23-29. How can this passage speak to the conversation you just had? What does Ephesians 2 have to say about God, “us,” and “them?”***
- ***Are Christians meant to play the “us” versus “them” game? If so, how should we view it? If not, how does that change our view of the world and the people we share it with?***
- ***How might an “us” versus “them” outlook shape our thoughts, words, and deeds about and in the world?***
- ***How might taking a Christ-centered view of the world and the various “thems” we are taught to distrust, fear, and hate change the way we think, speak, and act toward so-called “others?”***
- ***What group or community do you distrust, fear, or hate the most? How might your thoughts, words, and deeds toward them be transformed in light of this conversation?***

Our Feet in the Streets

- The Psalms are a prayerbook/hymn book that give voice to the truth of God as it takes shape in the lives of His people, and it captures their response to His work in the world. With that in mind, READ Psalm 146 and turn it into a prayer. Work on your own, in small groups, or with your leader to paraphrase (put into your own words) the Psalm (you can also use words, phrases and promises from Ephesians 2 and Galatians 3 as well).
- ***As a result of what you have heard from God’s word today, what is He giving you to believe or do this coming week?***
- ***You might consider (as a group, at your church, or with your family) inviting “them” over — for dinner, a conversation, or a shared work project (like “Habitat for Humanity” projects or other service opportunities in your shared community). What do you think? What could you do together with a group of supposed “others” to help break down walls and bust through barriers the world has taught us to put in place?***