



# **CHERISHING GOD**

What  
We Love

Most  
About God

**Ron Pickell**

*Cherishing God – Participant’s Guide*

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# Greater Things...

is about learning God—not *about* God or how to follow God, but to learn God—to truly love and cherish Him simply for who He is!

God expects his people to cherish him and He sums this up in the Hebrew Shema, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 4:4, 5). Why does God expect and command us to love Him? Can anyone be commanded to love another? God can command our love simply because He is God. Love is what God wants and expects from us first because God is love, but more importantly because love is what we have received from Him. God requests us to cherish Him because He cherishes us: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” | John 3:16.

What or who do you love most? Whoever captures our heart comes down to the things we appreciate most about them – their habits, personality, character traits. By definition, God should be our greatest love and if He does not hold the highest most cherished place in our life, He is not God to us. He is eclipsed by whatever we place before Him. What we love most often translates into worship. In this sense, “to cherish” is a helpful way to describe how we ought to feel about God.

Cherishing someone comes with time and from learning more about them – what makes them who they are and what is so special about them. Cherishing is a heart thing. If we’re going to cherish God, it will only come with time spent learning all we can about Him. This is what *Cherishing God* is all about.

What do the high points in scripture teach us about God? What do biblical doctrines and the great themes of the Bible teach us about Him? Each great truth—Creation, the fall, the cosmic struggle, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, high priest ministry, final judgment, second coming, and Sabbath rest—all have the potential to tell us more and more, leading us to a deeper understanding and a greater love for the one who deserves and commands our greatest affections.

The Westminster (shorter) Confession reminds us that “man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Knowing about God is one thing. Being grateful for our salvation is another, but to cherish God and love Him forever because of who He is and the express beauty of His character—even if it is a command will only come from intentional study, meditation on His very being and His magnificent acts. In *Cherishing God*, we are encouraged to learn more about God through the great truths of the Bible, to cherish and to love Him forever!

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Breaking Down *Journey*

*Journey* was created for larger weekly on or off campus meetings in a teaching format and small group discussion. The beginning story or illustration introduces the topic of study.



- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.



- **Road Map** is the main passage for discussion followed by questions that help draw out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own questions, while staying on track with the main direction of the study laid out in the leader's guide.



- **My Story** has been prepared as a continuation of the larger group meetings for smaller groups that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. We recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Also, the amount of questions are limited in the My Story section, allowing for more personal interactions and life application.

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Getting  
the  
most  
out of  
*Journey*

## What You're Going to Need for *Cherishing God*:

- Good soil—an open and receptive heart
- Willingness to work the soil—determination and diligence
- Hunger and thirst—a desire for God

## The Five S's of Hearing and Discerning God's Voice

- **Seek:** Pray for God to open up each week's Bible passage for you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, words for you to follow, or an insight to share?
- **Soak:** Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections, or anything God speaks to you about what you have read.
- **Seal:** Seal God's word to you deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on whatever the most important truth to you was this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most in your life this week.
- **Script:** Journal or write (even if only a few lines) noting the ways that God spoke to you during your reading, your meditation, or the group's time together. This will help you keep better track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through scripture.
- **Share:** Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God during Journey. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God's word home to you even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

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*Journey*  
Covenant

I want to grow in my understanding of Jesus and the life he has for me. I want to participate in Journey to enhance my own relationship with God this year. I will commit to doing the weekly assignments and life group meetings.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My best times of availability are

Morning: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_



# Loving God

## The Perfect Example

In the early years of our romance, I would tell Carolyn, my wife, how much I loved her. I know she appreciated hearing it. But one day she came back with, "But do you cherish me?" Cherish. What a rich and compelling word! Did I cherish her? I had to think about that. To cherish someone or something is to have them in your thoughts, to keep them close to your heart, to desire to be with them when you are away. God asked Israel the same question when He requested them to keep Him first in their life. He challenged them to cherish Him by loving and keeping His commands. He told them to talk about them, tie them as symbols on their hands and foreheads, and to write them on the doorframes of their homes. In today's passage, we see what it really means to cherish God by putting Him above everything else in our life.



1. What was your favorite childhood toy and why?

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2. Besides God, what do you cherish most in life?

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### Genesis 22:1-19

1. This story often evokes a conflicting response especially when reading it for the first time. What is your first impression or thoughts about this story? What do you appreciate about it? What makes you uncomfortable?

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2. What spiritual lessons can we draw from this story? Some refer to this as Abraham's great test. What was God testing here and why was Abraham being tested?

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3. Have you ever felt like God was testing you? What are some tests that God is taking you through right now?

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4. What does this story teach us about cherishing God and putting him before everything else in our life?

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5. In the grand scheme of God's overall purpose, what role does this story play in helping us understand who God is and what he requires of us? Why was this experience and test so important for Abraham as the father of the people of God?

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6. What role did Isaac play in this story? How was this a test of his own faith in his father and especially in God?

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7. What is the ultimate test here for all of us? What can we learn from this story about the sacrifice of Christ and the meaning of the gospel?

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“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Deuteronomy 6:5-9



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to cherish Him?

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2. In what areas of your life is God taking second place?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# War of the Worlds

When I was about 5 or 6 years old a famous sci-fi movie called *War of The Worlds* was released for TV and my family couldn't wait to watch it. I was too young to view such a scary movie due to the nightmares it would bring so I was sent off to bed early. I was the only one in the back bedroom of our house, a room that was somewhat unfinished with bare walls that echoed noise from the living room. I could almost hear every word and being alone only made me more frightened than actually watching the movie with my family.

The passage we are studying today is about the real war of the worlds and would be much scarier than the Hollywood version if it were not for God stepping in. This is the core story of what Seventh-day Adventists refer to as the "Great Controversy" between good and evil. Our challenge is to pay close attention to learn what the grand narrative, the great controversy, teaches us about God leading us to cherish him even more.



1. What was one of your greatest childhood fears?

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2. What frightens you most about the Devil?

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## Revelation 12

1. What are your first impressions of this passage? List the characters here. Who might they represent?

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2. Verse 7 says there was war in heaven. What do you think this war looked like? According to these verses, the battle rages on earth with the dragon pursuing the rest of the woman's offspring. What are the implications for us on planet earth?

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3. Take a moment to reflect on the two images presented here of the woman and the dragon. What comes to mind when you think of a woman and a great dragon chasing her and her children? Who are these characters and what do they represent?

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4. Do you ever feel like you're in the middle of a great spiritual conflict—a great controversy? What does that feel like?

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5. Where is the good news here? What verses give you hope?

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6. In the grand scheme of God’s overall purpose, what role does this story play in helping us understand God and what is required of us? What is important about this great cosmic struggle?

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7. Romans 8 reminds us that, “God is for us, not against us.” How do you see God being for us in Revelation 12? What important lessons do we learn about God in the great controversy?

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8. How can this group pray for you today?

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“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

Daniel 12: 1-3



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to cherish Him?

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# The One Who Made Us

In my last year of undergrad, my wife Carolyn and I began to think about finishing school and setting up a real home. We had been married almost a year and were excited about living in something more than an apartment. However, the more we looked at furniture, we could not imagine ever being able to afford new store prices. I had some elective credits to fill so I decided to take a woodworking class and make our own dining room table. We wanted something big enough to entertain plenty of friends and that we could be proud of. We settled on an oak trestle table modeled after an Ethan Allen original. It took all semester to cut, glue, plane, and fit the pieces together, but when it was finished I could not have been prouder of what I had made with my own two hands. I even made a couple of benches since we had no chairs. When friends would visit, they would often comment on our beautiful table.

God made a universe and filled it with stars and planets. Then he formed the earth, complete with beautiful living things. This week we want to stop and consider what we can learn about God as our creator and our connection to him as *the One who made us*.



1. Do you like to make things from scratch? Why?

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2. What are some things you like to make?

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## Revelation 4

1. What are your first impressions of this passage? What is the central focus of this scene in heaven? What surprises you most about it?

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2. What is the relationship between this chapter and chapters 1-3? What is the context and why is it so important to keep in mind?

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3. Who and what are the characters in this scene?

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4. What is happening here? Why is everyone gathered around the throne? Who is on the throne? Describe this being.

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5. What do these gemstones of brilliant color represent? What do these images tell us about the One Who Sits on the Throne?

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6. What can we learn about worship from those gathered around the throne? Why are they worshipping this being of brilliant colors? What surprises you most about their worship?

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7. All things were created by God. Why is this truth about God the center of heaven's worship? What is so fundamental about worshipping God as our creator? How does this help you cherish God more?

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"Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

Psalm 8:1, 3, 4, 9



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. What do you cherish most about God's creative power?

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# Greater in My Life

I remember the first time we visited Yosemite National Park. It's about two and a half hours from Berkeley and we seemed to wind our way up and up the mountain with nothing all that spectacular in sight. When we finally reached the summit drive into the park, I was not all that impressed. I kept waiting for the spectacular views I had been told about and seen from a PBS special on our National Parks, but it wasn't how I had imagined it. We kept driving and driving on a narrow park road and the scenery was beautiful... but nothing all that spectacular.

Finally, we rounded this corner and I got my first view of El Capitan and the Yosemite floor. I had to pull over; it was massive and breathtaking. It was like driving into a lost and magical world that must have captivated explorer John Muir when he first laid eyes on this scene. I found myself stumbling into an ancient world of grandeur and indescribable beauty. Magnificent!

I wonder if this might describe John the Baptist and his testimony about Jesus. John saw something in Jesus that was unnoticeable to most people and he realized that his own world was about to become much larger as he focused on Him. John exclaimed, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). Today we learn how our world becomes larger when we make room for God.



1. What food do you like that you never thought you would?

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2. What is your greatest concern in life right now?

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## John 3:22–36

1. What impresses you most about this passage? What do we know about John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus? Why is John's testimony about Jesus so important?

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2. What do you think the controversy was between John's disciples and Jesus? What do you imagine the 'certain Jew' had said in verse 25? How would you have felt if you were one of John's disciples?

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3. How does John respond in verses 27–30? What is John's point in the allegory of the bride and the bridegroom? What does John's response tell you about him?

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4. What facts about Jesus does John bring out in verses 31–36? What are the implications of 'rejecting the Son'?

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5. When you consider verse 27, what have you received from heaven? How are you making use of God's gift?

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6. How can we apply John's statement, 'He must become greater. I must become less' especially as we think of our witness?

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"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?' For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

Romans 11:33-36



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. How is God becoming greater in your life?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# Blessings from the Fall

I have a good friend who lost his eyesight when he was just 18. He woke up from surgery and had suffered a subarachnoid hemorrhage—a broken blood vessel under the covering of the brain. He had lost his sight and all feeling on the left side of his body. Fortunately, his feeling came back, but his eyesight was gone forever.

Amazingly, he credits this terrible loss at such a young age with opening his spiritual eyes, so he could see the movement of God in his life. Before the accident, he believed in God but was not following or serving him. He was preoccupied with his own life and interests. Now everything had slowed down and he thought much more deeply about his purpose and the meaning of life. He had experienced a huge loss, but in the end, he considers it the turning point of his life and he actually says he wouldn't change it back if it meant the loss of his spiritual vision. These are some of the life lessons we can learn from great loss. They are what I refer to as blessings from the fall as we attempt to learn and grow from separation from God. How important is the fall of sin in the garden? How can we learn and benefit from this horrible tragedy?



1. What was one of your early childhood acts of disobedience?

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2. What did you learn from that experience?

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## Matthew 5:1-12

1. Jesus calls us blessed when we are poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry, and thirsting for righteousness, full of mercy, pure in heart, making peace, and being persecuted on his behalf. Share a time when you felt blessed though experiencing hardship?

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2. What is the blessing here? Why does Jesus consider these the marks of the blessed person?

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3. Which of these beatitudes can you relate with most right now? How are they a blessing in your life?

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4. The beatitudes can all be traced back to the Garden of Eden when sin first entered the world. If Jesus can find a blessing in these conditions, where is the blessing in the original fall of our first parents? What promise in Genesis 3 is connected to these blessings?

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5. What is so important about understanding and acknowledging our separation from God in the very beginning of our existence? How does this help us appreciate the gospel?

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# A God Like Us!

Sometimes I look at our dog, Wally, and I think how smart he looks. He is this very furry, wirehaired creature with the most piercing eyes. When he wants something he cocks his head, looks intently, and then barks at me like I should understand him. Of course, he also does some very stupid things like chase after skunks and run right out into the road with no sense of oncoming traffic. He did that when he was just a pup and it nearly cost him his left leg at the hip.

I do love our dog and we go for walks most mornings. I might even be willing to make some sacrifices for him. In fact, I have made sacrifices for him, but I would never want to be him. What I mean is that even though I have made some personal sacrifices for our dog and might even put my own life at risk to save his, I would never choose to become a dog in order to help him. That is completely out of the question. However, in this week's lesson we are going to discuss the most profound mystery of the Christian message: the incarnation of Jesus, God becoming human!



1. Have you ever wanted to be someone else? Who have you wanted to be and why?

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2. What is one of the greatest sacrifices anyone has ever made for you?

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## John 1:1–5, 14

1. What thoughts do you have about Jesus as the WORD and the WORD becoming human? What mysteries come to mind when you stop to consider what John is trying to tell us here?

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2. Why is WORD or Logos a fitting expression for the second person of the Godhead? What do you think John might have had in mind by referring to Jesus as the WORD?

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3. What questions come to mind as you think about God becoming human? How was this possible for God?

**Note:** Philippians 2:5–11 is one of the first Christian hymns or creedal statements about God emptying and humbling Himself by becoming human and surrendering Himself to the humiliating death of Roman crucifixion.

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4. The beatitudes can all be traced back to the Garden of Eden when sin first entered the world. If Jesus can find a blessing in these conditions, where is the blessing in the original fall of our first parents? What promise in Genesis 3 is connected to these blessings?

**Note:** The doctrine of the Fall teaches that man rejected being like God, while the doctrine of the Incarnation teaches that God embraced becoming like us.

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5. What is the ah ha moment for you in this week's lesson? What difference has God becoming human made in your life?

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6. How can you imitate the humility of Christ this week?

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"For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Hebrews 2:17, 18



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. How do you feel about God knowing and understanding what it's like to be human?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# Dying to Live!

A story is told of a little girl who was critically ill and needed a blood transfusion to save her life. Her older brother's blood type happened to be a perfect match. When asked if he would be willing to give his blood in order to save his sister, he said he would have to think about it. In the morning, he agreed.

After the transfusion was completed, the boy turned to the doctor and asked, "When am I going to die?" That's when the doctor realized that the boy had misunderstood and thought that sharing his blood with his sister literally meant giving his life.

As the Apostle Paul points out in the book of Romans, "rarely will someone die for a righteous person, though for a good person one might possibly be willing to die. But God demonstrated his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:7, 8

Today we are reflecting on God's amazing gift of life—a gift that cost his own life in our place. What could lead us to cherish God more than such a great sacrifice?



1. What are some sacrifices you have made for others?

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2. Who would you give your life for and why?

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## Revelation 5

1. What jumps out at you as you imagine this scene?

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2. What do you think these images represent:

- Lion of Judah/Root of David
- Sacrificial Lamb
- Mysterious Scroll

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3. What is the connection between chapter 4 where God is worshipped as our Creator and this chapter where the Lamb is worshipped for opening the scroll? What is so important about this scroll? What does the scroll have to do with us?

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4. Why is the Lamb worthy to open the scroll? How does being a sacrificial lamb give Him the right?

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5. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song because the Lamb takes the scroll from the One Who Sits on the Throne. What is the content or message of this song? What does it say to us about the scroll and the human family?

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6. If you could write a song to Jesus about his triumph in your life, what would it say?

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"It was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.' For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Isaiah 53:10-12



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. What do you cherish most about Jesus' sacrifice for you?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# Becoming Superman

My friends in the neighborhood where I grew up were really into comic books. They had stacks of Marvel comics and knew all the characters and how they were connected with their superpowers, whereas I never really knew any of them. The only superhero I had any limited knowledge of was Superman. I guess I related to him best because he was the most like me. I imagined myself flying like Superman, running fast, and, of course, helping others.

Jesus was a kind of Superman, as Sufjan Stevens sings in the *Illinois* album. He was human, but what human beings were meant to be and have: super compassionate, super faith, superpowers to heal and raise the dead! But what made him the most superhuman of all were not His superpowers, but how He raised us up with Him. All His powers were meant for one purpose: to help us regain our one superpower of being like God again, the image of God lost in the Garden of Eden because of sin. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, the image of God has been restored and we are being transformed back into the super people we were created to be. Life in Jesus is the new normal! It's time we embraced our resurrection life and become the super people made in the image of God we were created to be!



1. Who was your favorite childhood superhero and why?

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2. If you could have one superpower what would it be? How would you use it?

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## Romans 6

1. Paul begins this chapter with a question: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace can increase?" Where does such a question come from and how shall we answer it?

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2. How would you describe your baptism? What enduring difference has it made in your life?

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3. What is the connection between Christ's death/resurrection and our baptism? How have you experienced both aspects of Christ's death and resurrection through your baptismal experience?

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4. What is the difference of being "under" law or being "under" grace? How would you compare a triumphant life in Jesus with trying to live a godly life through our efforts to keep God's law?

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5. Have you ever confused grace as a license to sin? Why do you think Paul spends a whole chapter on this issue? Why do we think the law is a better enforcer for righteous living than grace?

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6. What does being raised up with Christ look like for you? How does Christ's resurrection help you live a triumphant daily life?

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"For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!"

Romans 5:17



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. How has being raised up with Christ impacting your daily life?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# King of Glory

In the story of the “Prince and the Pauper,” two boys who are direct look-alikes trade places; one is a poor peasant boy and the other heir to the throne of Henry VIII, king of England. In their role change, they learn to appreciate life from their new circumstances. Edward Tudor, the true prince, learns about his future kingdom first-hand in his experience as a peasant. It enables him to be more sympathetic when he finally rules.

In John 17, Jesus prays for the glory He once shared with His Father and that His followers might see Him as He really is. Jesus’ ascension is as much about His coronation as king as about completing His mission on earth. Like the story above, taking on humanity and sin for us did not ruin His divine status. On the contrary, it made Him an even greater sovereign, one who truly understands our human predicament. The incarnation, life on earth, crucifixion, death, and resurrection prepared Him well to be our King of Glory. More importantly, His ascension raised us up and seated us with Him. His coronation is our coronation. His reign is our reign. We share His glory. Jesus’ journey from heaven to earth and back to heaven not only helped Him understand us but also reign in life with Him!



1. What are some things you would do if you suddenly became president or made king/queen?

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2. How have your eyes been opened to the real needs of others?

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3. How did Jesus' time on earth help Him become an even greater king?

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### Ephesians 2:1-7

1. In these few short verses, because of the work of Christ, we go from death to life and seated in heaven with Christ, from the depths of hell to high heaven. What are some of the specific impossible barriers listed here keeping us from the life of God? How have you experienced these barriers in your life?

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2. What specific things does Paul mention here that Christ has helped us overcome? How have you experienced these freedoms in your life? What difference has the death, resurrection, ascension, and reign of Christ made for you?

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3. Heaven formed a reception party to receive Jesus back from earth. It's recorded in Psalm 24 where angels announce Him as the "King of Glory." Our verse claims that we are now reigning with Him. What would it be like for angels to receive you like this?

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4. In Colossians 3:1, Paul reminds us to “set our minds on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.” How does it help you to think of reigning with Christ? How is Christ reigning in your life right now?

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5. How does reigning with Christ help you cherish God more?

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“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3:1-4



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. How have you been “reigning” with Christ this week?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# Force from the Throne!

Unfortunately, I was in an automobile accident a few years back and totaled my car. I mistakenly thought I was in the left turning lane and when the green arrow flashed, I took off and side swiped the car making a left-hand turn in front of me. In spite of having moved only a couple of car lengths, it did a lot of damage to both vehicles. Two of the passengers in the other car were taken to the hospital.

I could not be sure how badly they were hurt, but a few years later I faced a lawsuit for their injuries. As part of the process, I had to give a deposition of my account of the accident. You can imagine my relief when my attorney showed up and counseled me through the whole ordeal, coaching me on how to answer each question, and guiding every step of the way. He protected me from answering questions that the deposing attorney could not lawfully ask and cautioned me with a gentle tap of his left foot when the questions needed careful consideration. In the end, I was thankful to have someone so well-informed and stepping in on my behalf. The role that Jesus plays in heaven for us now is a bit like my loyal attorney representing my case and defending my rights. When our eternal life is at stake, Jesus' advocacy is our only hope.



1. Besides Jesus and family, who is your best friend and why?

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2. Describe a time when someone had your back.

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## Hebrews 2:14–18

1. What do these verses tell us about how far Jesus was willing to go to help us?

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2. Jesus is referred to here as our Brother, Author of Salvation, and High Priest. Which one means more to you right now and why?

**Note:** Close your eyes while someone reads Revelation 1:9–20

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3. What impresses you most about John's vision of Jesus? What things stand out in your mind? How do these verses compare with the verses we just read in Hebrews 2?

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4. This is the first vision John is given in the book of Revelation. What is so foundational about this vision and how does it help define the rest of the book?

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5. John's vision of Christ in His glory is both terrifying and comforting. What is so important about both as our High Priest?

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6. Sometimes we may wonder what the ministry of Jesus is now as our reigning king. What aspects of this vision of Jesus help explain His ministry in heaven and how is it helping you? What do you need most from Christ's priestly ministry?

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"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

Romans 8:31, 32



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. What do you appreciate most about Jesus as your priest?

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3. What can we pray about today to help you cherish God more?

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# Death has Ended!

My first heartbreak with death involved my dog Spooky. Spooky was a black and white spitz runaway. He was a wanderer, so he had to always be on a leash or he would run off. I loved him and he was my dog, my first pet. We kept him and our other dog, Ted, chained up behind the garage when we had to leave the house. When we were home they were housedogs.

I can still remember getting home from seeing some friends and running out behind the garage to let Spooky off his chain. When I got to him, I found him lying on the ground, lifeless, with his chain wrapped around his neck. He had gotten tangled in some boards stacked behind the garage, his collar caught on something, and he suffocated. At first, I couldn't believe it. I just knew he was okay. But I finally had to come to terms with his death. I cried myself to sleep that night thinking about how horrible it must have felt choking to death in the cold.

Death is our worst enemy and greatest fear; it's why Jesus came. He came to put an end to death, to triumph over the grave. In fact, because of Jesus' resurrection, we no longer refer to someone who has placed their life in Jesus and died as "dead." As Jesus suggests in today's passage, this kind of death is really "sleep" – sleeping in Jesus, since all those who believe in Him will one day awaken from death to resurrection and eternal life in Him.



1. How did you cope with your first experience with death?

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2. How has the Gospel changed your thoughts about death?

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### John 11:1-44

1. What impresses you most about this story?

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2. What questions do you have?

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3. Why do you think Jesus intentionally stayed behind when He heard that Lazarus was sick?

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4. What do we learn about Jesus' emotions and His compassion for those who have lost family or friends that they love? What surprises you most about this?

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5. What do we learn about Martha's faith when she explains that her brother will one day rise from the dead? What did Jesus mean by announcing that He is the resurrection and the life?

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6. How does this story change the way you think about death? How does Jesus raising Lazarus after being dead four days, and Jesus' own resurrection from the dead help you face death?

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7. What further questions do you have about death and the promise of resurrection in Christ?

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8. How does Jesus' victory over death help you cherish God more?

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"Death has been swallowed up in victory. 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But, thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I Corinthians 15:55-56



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. What do you appreciate most about Jesus' victory over death?

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# Happily Ever After!

“And they all lived happily ever after...” So goes the ending to most fairytales. Most fairytales have ideal endings: the wicked witch get her due, the kingdom is restored, the prince or princess slays the dragon. Does the story of God have this type of ending? Is the story of God a fairytale? Not in the sense of a fable or fictional mythology. Our lives are being judged by the story of God, not the other way around. But the ending of this biblical tale is a genuine happy ending, the greatest of all! *Cherishing God* reaches its peak with life in His kingdom and God at the center. The book of Revelation brings us back home – it is a glorious story where our Creator comes for us, waking those who have died from their eternal sleep or lifting those who are alive and waiting for the grand reunion above. This is our God! This is our Savior! This is our King! There are many reasons to love Him and place Him first in our lives, but this is the greatest one of all. He has not forgotten us. He rejoices to be with us and is coming to bring us home!



1. Did you ever run away from home? What was it like and what lessons did you learn from it?

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2. Describe a time when you were rescued. What did you appreciate most about it?

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## II Peter 3

1. What are your first thoughts, impressions of this chapter?

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2. How does Peter build his argument here for the return of Christ? What is his explanation for the seeming delay in Christ's return?

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3. Describe what you imagine the "Day of The Lord" to be like. What fears or concerns do you have about this event?

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4. What do you think Peter means by hastening the day of the Lord? What is our role in determining the day of Christ's return?

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5. Peter reminds us that the day of the Lord will come and not to give up hope. Do you sometimes find it hard to believe that Jesus is coming back? Why? What is so important about keeping Jesus' return always before us?

**Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18.** Afterwards, close your eyes and imagine this scene.

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6. What were the underlying questions about death and the return of Christ that Paul is answering here for the Thessalonian people? What questions do you have about resurrection and Jesus' return?

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7. Paul describes Jesus' return as a surprising event: like a thief in the night. How does this analogy make you feel? What fears or concerns does this evoke for you?

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8. Paul writes to give the Thessalonian people hope about the resurrection and Christ's return. What hope do these words give you? What excites you most about Jesus' return?

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"In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.'"

Isaiah 25:9



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

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2. How does the hope of Christ's return help you every day?

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# A Wrinkle in Time!

My father built me a tree house when I was nine or ten years old. It was a magical place where my friends and I could escape, play for hours, and pretend we were pirates or whatever we could imagine. My tree house was my refuge, my sanctuary, my time-out from life.

We all need a place like that: a time-out to gather ourselves and remember that we are more than what we do or make. We need a chance to be children again, to escape, play, and recapture why we are here. Turns out God knew how much we needed such a refuge, so He created a wrinkle in time in creation week. The Bible calls it Sabbath; this day reminds us that we are more than what we do, more than flesh, bones, and brain. We are spiritual beings made in the image of God to reflect His goodness and love. If we were only the material units we appear to be on the outside, we would not need Sabbath. The mere fact of our craving for such a sanctuary in time is evidence that we are much more than what we produce.



1. Describe your secret place of refuge or sanctuary as a child.

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2. Have you ever experienced Sabbath? How would you describe it?

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## Genesis 2:1–3

1. Why are there 7 days in a week? What was so necessary about Sabbath before sin even entered the world?

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2. On days one, two, and three, God created light, the atmosphere, and land. These were placeholders for the sun, moon and stars, which came on day four. He created birds in the sky and fish in the sea on day five and mammals on day six. If Sabbath was a placeholder on day seven, what did God fill it with and how important is it to us today?

**Note:** Sabbath was significant to Israel's entire economy. As a weekly day of rest, Sabbath was a reminder of creation and freedom from slavery in Egypt. It also was a weekly foretaste of life in the Promised Land. Sabbath was Israel's sanctuary in time.

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3. Ready Matthew 11:28–30. What do you think Jesus means by taking on His yoke? In what way has your life been yoked up to God?

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4. What does Sabbath teach us about God and our relationship with Him? How does Sabbath teach us to love God more?

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