

Life with God
A 20 session Study

Section One: Understanding Life with God

Study One: God's Design

Study Two: The Great Divide

Study Three: The Restoration of all things, God's design restored.

Life With God

Study One: God's Design

Introduction to the series: Life with God is an intriguing concept. At one level, since God created the world and sustains it, it is impossible to avoid Him. But it is also evident that there are many different ways in which people perceive and relate to God. This series of studies is designed to encourage us to reconsider our most basic assumptions about who God is and what He wants for us. It asks the question what would life with God look like and how might it be cultivated.

2 Samuel 5: 10 reads simply “*and David became greater and greater, for the LORD **God** of hosts was **with him.**”* David’s success was attributed to the simple fact that God was with him. Whatever else we might think about life with God, we should reject the notion that it is opposed to our well being or harmful.

Each study will have an introduction, some passages of scripture, some questions for discussion and some follow up exercises. The intent is that as a Life Group you would discuss the material, then during the following week(s) each person would act on at least one of the exercises, and finally in a subsequent session you would discuss what the Lord taught you through the experience.

Introduction to Study One:

Genesis one and two is pivotal to understanding all that follows in Scripture. It gives us a glimpse of a time when everything was ordered perfectly. As you reflect on the questions, try to go deeper than simple God made everything statements. Think about what living in a world like this would be like. Especially reflect on the interaction we observe between God and man.

1. Have each person read one verse in Genesis 1, taking turns until you have read the entire chapter out loud.

2. What was God's description of creation before man was created? What kind of pleasure do you think God takes in what he creates?
3. What is man's role in the created order? What do you think that means?
4. What kind of things do you think God wanted Adam to do?
5. What does this say about God's attitude toward man?
6. Have each person read Genesis 2 to himself.
7. What kind of relationship do you observe between God and Adam in this chapter?
8. The chapter ends with the statement that the man and the woman were naked and unashamed. What is the source of shame? Try to imagine a world without shame. What is the effect of shame in our lives today?

Summary: The psalmist says that God has crowned man with glory and honor and has put all things under his feet. (Psalm 8) God gave man great dignity and responsibility in creation. He was invited into a relationship with God as God's regent in the creation. This is a high and lofty calling. In this role, God undertook meeting man's need by supplying him a helper. So not only was God willing to give him responsibility, he was working to meet man's needs in the process. The final glimpse of the man and the woman together without any shame is almost unimaginable isn't it? God's design of meaningful interaction and cooperation of man with God is truly a beautiful picture of His heart toward us.

Practical Exercise Ideas: (For each session there will be multiple ideas given. It would be good to select at least one of these ideas so that you can share what happened with your group during the next study time. Feel free to do all of them of course, or to devise your own. If you come up with an idea you particularly like e-mail it to mfesmire@graceefc.net so we can put it in the second edition of these studies.)

1. Meditate on the task of naming the animals. What would have been difficult about that task? What would have been fun? Come up with your own name for two different animals to share with the group next week.
2. In prayer, thank God for all of the things you have been given. This would include more than your possessions. Think also of your family, relationships, and responsibilities. As you do this be ready to share with your group the item you are most thankful for, and the item or idea that surprised you the most as you started thanking God.
3. Reflect on the picture of marriage given in Genesis 2. What ideas stick out to you as the important elements in a marriage? If you are married, how would you rate your own marriage based on this element?

Life With God

Study Two: The Great Divide

Follow Up from Study One: Because the first study involved looking at two chapters, you may want to finish discussing those questions before continuing with Study Two. There is no need to rush these sessions. Either way, be sure to answer **both** of these questions as a group before you start the second study.

1. Have each person share one thought that has stayed with them from the first study. As you do, describe what impact this thought has had on your life, (actions, feelings, thoughts etc.)
2. Share which exercise you did and what came from that exercise. (These were listed at the end of Study One.) What did the Lord teach you from the steps you took?

Introduction to Study Two: Something is horribly wrong. Yes, there is much about life that is amazing. The creation proclaims the glory of God. But the presence of evil creates all kinds of problems for humanity. Creation is described as suffering in Romans 8: 20-22 because of this condition. This study considers this problem at its beginning. Because this is a familiar passage take some time as a group to prepare for your discussion. Begin your time by praising God from Psalm 8. Just say sentence prayers (simple short statements) to God praising Him for his Creation. Then ask for His help as you discuss these questions.

1. Read Genesis 3.
2. The serpent questions the woman about God. What is the nature of those questions? What do those questions suggest about God?
3. Where do you think Adam was during this conversation between the woman (she wasn't named Eve until after the fall) and the serpent?
4. What do you think the woman (she wasn't named Eve until after the fall) began to believe about God as she took the fruit?
5. What does verse 8 suggest about the normal way God and man communicated before the fall?
6. How did eating the fruit change the man and woman's interaction with God? What emotions did they have when they heard God? What did they do?
7. Creation changed because of the fall. List all the ways you can find in this chapter.
8. Why did God remove man from the garden? Was this an act of judgment or mercy?
9. What promise does God make to the woman about her seed? Do you know who this refers to?

Summary: Sin changed everything. That is why Romans 8 says the creation actually “groans”. But there is something deep inside people that changed as well. Instead of completely trusting God and being comfortable in His presence, we lost our trust in God. We believe the wrong things about Him. We believe that He is self serving in some kind of way that means He is holding out on us. In other words, we doubt He is truly good. In our sinfulness, it is hard to imagine one who is completely righteous. This is a great hindrance to truly trusting God.

Practical Exercises:

1. Reflect on the prevalence of sin. Make a list of professions that would no longer be needed if there was no sin in the world. This may be harder than you think because of how much we assume sin’s presence.
2. Reflect on work before the fall. What does it mean that we “sweat”? How would work be done without “sweat”?
3. Make a list of “thanksgivings”. Pray this list two times before the next session to help you balance any negative thoughts about life, God and circumstances you may have.

Life With God

Study Three: God's Design Restored

Follow up from Study Two: Before you begin discussing this study share some of the thoughts and reactions that came from the follow up exercises. Have each person share which of the exercises they did and what they learned or experienced as they were doing it. Here they are as a reminder.

4. Reflect on the prevalence of sin. Make a list of professions that would no longer be needed if there was no sin in the world. This may be harder than you think because of how much we assume sin's presence.
5. Reflect on work before the fall. What does it mean that we "sweat"? How would work be done without "sweat"?
6. Make a list of "thanksgivings". Pray this list two times before the next session to help you balance any negative thoughts about life, God and circumstances you may have.

Finish this section by spending some time discussing the prevalence of sin in our society. Brainstorm on the list of professions that would cease to exist in the absence of sin.

Introduction to Study Three: In the first two studies we have discussed the nature of God's creation and the incredible position of responsibility and relationship that He has given mankind. Man's response to God's instruction amounted to a lack of faith in God's character and resulted in rebellion. This first sin substantively changed creation and mankind. Man is now separated from God. But that is not God's desire and He is not going to leave it that way. We have seen how things began. Now it is time to see how the "first things", as Revelation terms them, end. Understanding this will help us understand God's heart for His creation and His ultimate plans for us.

1. Read Revelation 21: 1 – 10 and Revelation 21: 21 – 22:6.
2. What is the first image that captures your attention in this passage? Explain your reaction to it.
3. Who is present in these scenes?
4. What is absent from these scenes? (They are specifically mentioned.)
5. What details say something about God's heart or attitude or character as relating to His creation?
6. Read Revelation 5: 1 – 14
7. Who is going to worship before God?

8. Where are these people from? (What is noted about them?)
9. What is God going to make of them?
10. Where have you heard this phrase before? (Hint: Exodus 19)
11. The text says that they will reign upon the earth. What do you think this will look like?

Summary: These two passages show God's heart for His creation. He is calling out a people who will be His for all eternity. He wants them to be in an eternal relationship with Himself engaged in priestly and kingly activities. He is going to give them authority. They will reign. But there will be no evil opposition present anywhere. So we see God's heart is to heal thoroughly what has gone terribly wrong. The question is how do we go from where we are to what God intends for us? What do we do in the meantime? Since we can't live with God in this way now, how do we live in the present? That will be the focus of the rest of our studies.

Practical Exercises

1. Memorize Colossians 3: 1 - 4. Meditate on what it means to set your mind on the things above.
2. Pray Revelation 5 before the Lord asking him to bring people from all nations to him. Use this as a chance to pray for our missionaries and for areas that have no missionaries.
3. Spend some time worshipping Jesus with the words used in Revelation 5 giving him honor for what He has accomplished for us.