

JOURNEY 101

KNOWING GOD



LEADER GUIDE

SESSION I



RECEIVING CHRIST

BACKGROUND

Key Scripture

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let those who boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Theme

Today you will explore three topics: knowing God, the problem of sin, and receiving Christ. At the heart of the Christian faith is a relationship. We were created by God to experience a relationship with God. Relationships by nature involve a connectedness and knowledge of one another. The material in this session will help participants understand that personal knowledge of God comes through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. By God’s grace, everyone who gathers will have received Christ at some point along his or her journey, will choose to receive Christ now, or will be drawn closer to that decision point.

Main Points

1. We were created to be in relationship with God, to know God, and to be known by God.
2. Sin separated us from the union that God intended.
3. Jesus Christ is God's answer to the problem of sin.

Core Traits

- Christian Essentials
- Knowing God's Will

WELCOME (5 MINUTES)

As participants gather, invite them to get some refreshments and find a seat. If you have more than six to eight participants, set up tables so that everyone may join a table group upon arriving. When it is time to begin, speak some words of welcome and lead an opening prayer. If you choose, you may want to use the following for opening words and prayer:

Welcome to our first session of Knowing God. I trust that God is going to meet us here and illuminate Scriptures and conversations for us so that we might know God more and more. Let us pray.

Eternal God, we have come here today to get to know you better. You have shown us in your Word that you created us for relationship with you. So here, in this place, we seek you. Show us who you are and what you have planned for us. We love you, Lord. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

After the prayer, introduce the learning objectives for the session (see the "Main Points" above).

CONNECT (5 MINUTES)

Now it's time for participants to connect. Refer participants to the Connect section in the participant guide and invite them to get to know one another better by sharing freely in response to the following:

- Take a few minutes to introduce yourself. Share why you are interested in taking this class.
- Describe a favorite gift you received as a child and why it was special.

- If you could choose, would you rather be an excellent athlete, artist, or musician? Why?
- Who has most inspired you personally and why?
- What life experience has strengthened you the most?

REFLECT (3-5 MINUTES)

Point out the activity in the Reflect section in the participant guide. Explain that periodically reflecting on where we are on our faith journeys can help us look back and see where we've come, recognize any fruit that is evidenced by our relationship with God, and identify anything that has knocked us off course. Ask participants to take a minute to complete the exercise individually, writing about what knowing God means for them.

This activity is for personal reflection only and does not need to be shared or debriefed.

1

VIDEO: A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (10 MINUTES)

Introduce the DVD segment “A Relationship with God” by explaining that we were created to know and be known by God. Participants will hear Scriptures and stories to help them discover that God longs for relationship with each of them. (Video highlights are included in the participant guide.)

1

GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

Discuss with your group the following questions. Make sure that participants have Bibles readily available if they didn't bring them. Encourage participants to open their Bibles and have someone read aloud the Scriptures as you come to them.

1. Describe how your journey to know God began. When did *God* become more than just a word for you?

2. Have someone read Genesis 2:7 aloud. How might this Scripture give insight to your understanding of the type of relationship God intended to have with humankind?
3. Have someone read John 1:9-13 and Ephesians 2:8-9 aloud. What clues do these verses give us about our relationship with God and God's desire to be known by us?
4. Have someone read Genesis 1:26-30; 3:8 aloud. In the space below, write the verses in your own words. What do they tell you about why we were created?
5. Have someone read John 15:4-5 aloud. What is the role of Jesus and what is the role of his followers according to these verses? In your opinion, how does this passage apply to this week's lesson?

2

VIDEO: THE PROBLEM OF SIN (10 MINUTES)

Introduce "The Problem of Sin" DVD segment by explaining that sin thwarted the perfect relationship God created between God and humankind. Participants will hear Scriptures and stories to help them discover that sin and separation were never part of God's plan. (Video highlights are included in the participant guide.)

2

GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

Discuss with your group the following questions. Remind participants that we are all sinners. Encourage them to share honestly without being fearful of shame or feeling like they need to share any deep, dark secrets. The point here is that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. The questions serve to help group members identify where sin comes from and realize our need for the saving work of Jesus Christ.

1. Have someone read Genesis 3:1-15 aloud. How is sin exposed in these verses?
2. Who did the woman blame the sin on?

3. Who did the man blame the sin on?
4. Whose fault is the sin? Why?
5. Have someone read Luke 15:11-24 aloud. What is the sin in this story?
6. What is the father's response to the sin?
7. How do we sin by making "good things have ultimate importance in our lives"?

3 VIDEO: THE ANSWER TO SIN (10 MINUTES)

Introduce "The Answer to Sin" DVD segment by explaining that because we are all sinners in need of a Savior, there is good news for each one of us. God had a plan to rescue us from the fate of sin. God's plan was Jesus Christ. (Video highlights are included in the participant guide.)

3 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

Discuss with your group the following questions. Encourage any participants who might have just made the decision to receive Christ to share that with the group. Oftentimes, telling someone about that choice helps us take the first steps on our faith journeys. If you feel your group members are at ease with one another and would not make anyone uncomfortable, you may want to celebrate any first-time decisions as a large group.

1. Maybe you've been a Christian as long as you can remember, maybe you accepted Christ when you were a teen or young adult, maybe you just prayed the prayer a few minutes ago, or perhaps you are still undecided. If you have accepted Christ, share about your experience.
2. What was Jesus' ultimate mission during his earthly life?
3. Why did God send Jesus to save us from our sins? (Refer to John 3:16.)
4. What does the good news require?

5. Before you came here today, what did you imagine it took to become a Christian?
6. How would you describe your understanding now of why Jesus came to earth and how we can receive him into our lives?

REVIEW (3-5 MINUTES)

Help to solidify the content with participants by inviting them to name the three main points covered in this session. Ask volunteers to name them in their own words, assisting them as necessary.

In this session, the three main points were:

1. We were created to be in relationship with God, to know God, and to be known by God.
2. Sin separated us from the union that God intended.
3. Jesus Christ is God's answer to the problem of sin.

Ask the following questions:

1. What is God's answer to the problem of sin? (Jesus Christ)
2. How do we participate in that saving work? (Receiving Christ)

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Remind participants of the story at the end of the last video segment about the retired executive who came to receive Christ personally and discovered that it is never too late to begin a new life through Jesus Christ. Explain that over the course of the study, group members will reflect on and piece together more and more of their own faith stories as a way to identify growth, name what God has done in their lives, and gain comfort in sharing their stories. In the last session, they'll be invited to share their stories in a time of closing worship.

Ask participants to begin to describe their own God stories using the questions in the participant guide:

1. What was life like before you met Jesus Christ?
2. What was the tipping point that led you to choose and receive Christ?