

Group Reading Guide for

Beautiful,

Disappointing,

Hopeful



What's Included

GUIDES AND SAMPLES

The Starter Guide is what you are reading right now that explores using the tools and group study. Chapter 1 of the *Beautiful, Disappointing, Hopeful* is also included. Chapter 1 of the book will come in handy if any group members have not received their copy of the workbook in time for the first meeting.

We've also included a Lenten reading plan that guides your group through the Gospel of Luke while reflecting on the themes of beauty, gratitude, disappointment, grief, hope, and grace through the narrative of the life of Christ. We hope this might be helpful even beyond the Lenten season.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Use the communication tools and graphics to invite people in your congregation and community to the Bible study. Use the graphics to spread the word through email, social media, websites and more. Many of the PDF files can be edited using the free version of Adobe Acrobat so you can add the details about your group.

ADDITIONAL SMALL GROUP TOOLS

You will also find a folder with general small group resources provided by Zondervan Reflective. There are infographics that provide tips for group leaders, especially newer leaders as they take the step to help facilitate a group study, and a one-sheet to help you pick your next group study.

Timeline

ESTABLISH VISION AND UNITY (90 DAYS BEFORE LAUNCH)

- Present an overview of the group study and message to your leaders and staff to gain vision and unity. The resources found along with this Starter Guide will help you with this.
- Based on the church calendar and wisdom of leadership, decide when the group study or small group can be scheduled.
- Develop a strategy to announce the study to your congregation and the surrounding community. A small group study like this is especially effective for those times of the year when you would like to reach out to your community. The resources along with this Starter Guide will help you with this.

ANNOUNCE AND ORGANIZE (60 DAYS BEFORE LAUNCH)

- Recruit a prayer team to pray for the Bible study and recruitment efforts.
 - Pray for unity, spiritual growth, and victory over the enemy.
 - Pray that lasting relationships are developed through this study.
- Identify study and/or Sunday school teachers.
- Meet with group leaders for orientation.
 - Set anxious minds at ease. Group leaders are acting as hosts and facilitators. They do not need to be experts on this topic. They need only focus on keeping the conversation going. All the questions and prompts for group discussion are in the study guide book.
- Order books and study guides. Ordering early allows leaders to become familiar with the content. You can always order more late. ChurchSource.com offers bulk discounts.

INVITE PEOPLE (30 DAYS TO LAUNCH)

- Plan a sign-up Sunday for registration. Provide a brief introduction to the six-week study or play the trailer which can be found on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/9KMDCVDVvEQ>
- Consider adding the information about the study to video announcements, emails, text messages, social media posts, and the church web site.
- Make sure that people who sign up know where to purchase their book and study guide.
- Once registration begins, ensure that you have enough leaders so each group can be 4-6 people.

Leading a Group

GROUP SIZE

The *Beautiful, Disappointing, Hopeful* group study is designed to be experienced in a group setting where meaningful discussions can take place. This could be a Bible study, a Sunday school class, or any small group gathering. To facilitate greater participation, larger groups can split up into smaller circles of four to six people after the teaching video is viewed. If you do move into smaller groups, be sure to select one person in each group to act as the facilitator during the discussion time.

MATERIALS NEEDED

To gain the most from this study, each participant should have their own copy of the Bible, as well as their own copy of the book *Beautiful, Disappointing, Hopeful*. This guide contains all the proposed session questions and might be a handy tool to have printed for group leaders, but isn't necessary for participants.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

At the beginning of each week, the guide provides information on which chapters of the book should be read prior to the next group meeting. Each personal study day will lead you deeper into the biblical content of the video or book. Please note: It is recommended that participants read the introduction and chapter 1 before the first group session. On the next page is a sample of the schedule you will find at the beginning of every new week.

Proposed Reading Schedule

Below is a 6-Week plan that includes readings of the Gospel of Luke. This was initially designed as a Lenten Reading plan in the wake of the release of *Beautiful, Disappointing, Helpful* where participants read through the book of the Bible, discerning how the themes of beauty, disappointment, hope, gratitude, grief, and grace ran through the life of Christ.

If you would like to model the plan with your group, here is the schedule used:

- **Ash Wednesday—Week 1: Introduction**
 - Wednesday — Luke 1:1-38
 - Thursday — Luke 1:39-80
 - Friday— Luke 2:1-52
- **Week 2: Chapters 1&2— Why Faith Matters**
 - Monday, March 7 — Luke 3:1-38
 - Tuesday, March 8 — Luke 4:1-30
 - Wednesday, March 9 — Luke 4:31-44
 - Thursday, March 10 — Luke 5:1-32
 - Friday, March 11 — Luke 5:33-6:16
- **Week 3: Chapters 3&4—The Relationship Between Beauty and Gratitude**
 - Monday, March 14 — Luke 6:17-49
 - Tuesday, March 15 — Luke 7:1-35
 - Wednesday, March 16 — Luke 7:36-8:18
 - Thursday, March 17 — Luke 8:19-9:9
 - Friday, March 18 — Luke 9:10-36
- **Week 4: Chapters 5&6—The Relationship Between Disappointment and Grief**
 - Monday, March 21 — Luke 9:37-62
 - Tuesday, March 22 — Luke 10:1-42
 - Wednesday, March 23 — Luke 11:1-36
 - Thursday, March 24 — Luke 11:37-12:12
 - Friday, March 25 — Luke 12:13-59
- **Week 5: Chapters 7&8—The Relationship Between Hope and Grace**
 - Monday, March 28 — Luke 13:1-35
 - Tuesday, March 29 — Luke 14:1-35
 - Wednesday, March 30 — Luke 15:1-32
 - Thursday, March 31 — Luke 16:1-31
 - Friday, April 1 — Luke 17:1-37
- **Week 6: Chapter 9 and Conclusion—The Invitation of Christian Faith**
 - Monday, April 4 — Luke 18:1-43
 - Tuesday, April 5 — Luke 19:1-44
 - Wednesday, April 6 — Luke 19:45-20:19
 - Thursday, April 7 — Luke 20:20-47
 - Friday, April 8 — Luke 21:1-38
- **Holy Week: Reflect the practices of Gratitude, Grief, and Grace**
 - Monday, April 11 — Luke 22:1-38
 - Tuesday, April 12 — Luke 22:39-71
 - Wednesday, April 13 — Luke 23:1-43
 - Thursday, April 14 — Luke 23:44-24:12
 - Friday, April 15 — Luke 24:13-53

Discussion Questions

Part One: Why Faith Matters

CHAPTER 1: A Quest for Faith

1. What is your personal experience with the church and other Christians?
2. Have you ever been on a spiritual quest for truth? Why or why not? If yes, what was your spiritual quest like, and what conclusion (if any) did you come to, and why?
3. Aside from Christian faith, what other religions or philosophies might people find truthful and compelling when searching for meaning, purpose, and a feasible way to make sense of the world?
4. If someone were to ask you, “What is Christianity about?” how would you respond, and why?
5. Would you be open to exploring Christian faith? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 2: Is Christianity True and Compelling?

1. What gives you meaning and purpose in life (e.g., job, relationship, philosophy, and so forth)? When, where, and why do you look to your source for meaning and purpose?
2. Why is it important that Christianity—or any faith system—is true when committing one’s life to it?
3. Why is it important that Christianity—or any faith system—is compelling when committing one’s life to it?
4. Absolute truth exists, but absolute knowledge does not, which is why we need to have “critical realism” or reasonable faith to operate in the world. Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Why do you agree or disagree?
5. Do you think the four mysteries of death, suffering, eternity, and love spur questions about faith and a higher power? Why or why not? What are your thoughts about death, suffering, eternity, and love?

Part Two: The Christian Story and Our Response

CHAPTER 3: Life is Beautiful

1. God creates the world to be beautiful. Why is this teaching so important for how we approach and value creation, culture, and people?
2. The call of Adam and Eve to cultivate and shape the world is a mandate to create culture that is beautiful. What are some of your favorite places to visit, foods to eat, and music to listen to that are evidence of the beautiful world we live in? What do you like about these places, food, or music?
3. Human beings, made in the image of God, are the crown of God’s creation. Why is it significant that the inherent dignity and worth of human beings are given at the very start of the Christian story?
4. Which of your current relationships are most meaningful to you right now, and what do you appreciate most about those relationships?

5. How does the Christian teaching that beauty in the world is God's original intent in creation—in nature, in culture, and in humans—resonate with you? What do you find most compelling? What do you find least compelling?

CHAPTER 4: Gratitude: The Response to a Beautiful Life

1. Gratitude is an appropriate response to beauty. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
2. Why is it so difficult for people to be grateful? Why is it sometimes difficult for you to be grateful?
3. In the temptation in the garden, Adam and Eve are tempted to be “like God,” creating entitlement, envy, and discontentment. How does ingratitude relate to these three words?
4. Who am I grateful for today, and why?
5. What am I grateful for today, and why?

CHAPTER 5: Life Is Disappointing

1. What are some examples in your life when even in beauty (whether a relationship, place, or experience) there has been disappointment? Describe what the experience was like.
2. How do most people you know deal with disappointments in life? How do you deal with disappointments in life?
3. How do most people you know make sense of pain, suffering, and evil in the world? How do you make sense of pain, suffering, and evil in the world?
4. Christians believe that although everyone is made in the image of God, everyone is also a sinner, thereby making people both good and bad. Do you think this is an accurate description of the human condition? Why or why not?
5. How does the Christian teaching on disappointment in the world because of the fall of Adam and Eve—in nature, culture, and humans—resonate with you? What do you find most compelling? What do you find least compelling?

CHAPTER 6: Grief: The Response to a Disappointing Life

1. Why is grieving so difficult for some people?
2. There are two kinds of pain—dirty pain and clean pain. How is this distinction helpful when thinking through how we might respond to the various difficulties we encounter?
3. How can grief become redemptive? How can grief beget more grief? Can you describe a time in your life when grief became redemptive or when grief beget more grief? What was that grieving experience like?
4. What do I need to confess and repent of before God and others (where appropriate) today?
5. What am I mad, sad, anxious, or afraid about today?

CHAPTER 7: Life Is Hopeful

1. Have you ever lost hope in a situation? Describe the situation and what it felt like to lose hope.
2. Why is hopefulness so important to one's disposition and mental health?
3. How do most people you know deal with the tension between beauty and disappointment (e.g., distracting themselves, becoming embittered, losing hope, and so forth)? How do you deal with the tension between beauty and disappointment?
4. "If God can raise the dead, God can raise the bread." How might this thought be helpful for you today? What are you going through in your life where this phrase might be a source of encouragement for you?
5. How does the Christian teaching on hopefulness in the world because of Jesus' resurrection resonate with you? What do you find most compelling? What do you find least compelling?

CHAPTER 8: Grace: The Response to a Hopeful Life

1. When someone is secure (filled with hopefulness), that person becomes a more gracious person. Do you agree or disagree with this statement, and why?
2. What part of the prodigal son story resonates with you, and why?
3. When you think of the people who have received grace and regularly dispense grace, what is it like to be around them? Can you think of gracious people in your life? Who are they, and what are they like?
4. In what ways might God's gracious love be inviting you to deeper humility and confidence in God today?
5. In what ways might God be inviting you to offer more grace to others through your thoughts, words, resources, and deeds today?

Daily Practices

During the course of the group study, we recommend participants make time to ask themselves the questions of the daily practices of Gratitude, Grief, and Grace each day. A wonderful way to open group sessions might be to ask what came up for each person as they participated in the daily practices.

Practicing Gratitude Daily

Pray or journal a response to the following questions every day:

1. Who am I grateful for today, and why?
2. What am I grateful for today, and why?

Practicing Grief Daily

Pray or journal a response to the following questions every day:

1. What do I need to confess and repent of before God and others (where appropriate) today?
2. What am I mad, sad, anxious, or afraid about today?

Practicing Grace Daily

Pray or journal a response to the following questions every day:

1. In what ways might God's gracious love be inviting me to deeper humility and/or confidence in God today?
2. In what ways might God be inviting me to offer more grace to others through my thoughts, words, resources, and deeds today?

Lenten Reading Schedule

Below is a 6-Week plan that includes readings of the Gospel of Luke. This was initially designed as a Lenten Reading plan in the wake of the release of *Beautiful, Disappointing, Helpful* where participants read through the book of the Bible, discerning how the themes of beauty, disappointment, hope, gratitude, grief, and grace ran through the life of Christ.

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