

LEADER'S GUIDE



PLANT Lesson 2: The Plan and the Problem

Q: If someone were to ask you, what would you say is the purpose or meaning of life? God is the Author of all creation and we can see design and purpose in all that He has made. Because He is our Creator, we are here to glorify Him, to serve Him, and to carry out His will. He has revealed His heart to us in the Bible. Many people might say that happiness or pleasure or love are the meaning of life, but without God's will as our motive, we will fail to fulfill our purpose to please Him.

Q: Read Psalm 19: 1-6. What examples do you see in creation that affirm God as the designer of all things? Sunrises and sunset and scenery display His beauty. The birth of a child touches our spirit. The intricacies of the cellular structure and the immensity of the universe point to His omniscience. How everything works together reveals it's design. Photosynthesis. The water cycle. Life and death. If we really take time to look at creation, we can see the fingerprints of an absolutely amazing God!

Q: In what ways do you think that our culture has distorted God's plans for the family? More than ever before, today's culture has perverted what God created good. One man and one woman, united together in holy matrimony for life, bearing children in an environment that is stable, safe, and reverent. The culture's drive for pleasure and self gratification has led to instability, insecurity, fear, and confusion. People no longer know what it means to have family in the sense the God intended, where you are loved unconditionally, offered grace, and told the truth when you need to hear it.

Q: Do you feel that God loves you or hates you? Why do you feel this way? Take time to read 1 John 4:9-10. Some people think that God hates them for what they've done. Though God cannot allow sin in His presence, He loves us just the same so He provided a way to deal with our sin. Because of Christ's death, we exchange our sin for His righteousness. God sees us as having no guilt (Col. 1:22).

Q: Look at 1 John 3:4-6. What is sin? How would you describe it? Sin is an archery term that means "to miss the mark." We aren't perfect, but God is and He cannot allow our imperfection to remain in His presence. Sin is any thought or action that goes against the perfect will of God. Anytime we make a mistake or have a bad thought, we separate ourselves from the presence of God.

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a sinner? Why or why not? Consider Romans 3:23. Most people would agree that they sin from time to time, but very few people understand that they are sinners from birth and therefore are, by default, separated from God for eternity. It's not a question of whether or not we are sinners, or even how bad of a sinner we are. It's a matter of whether or not we accept that we are sinners and recognize that we are not worthy of heaven or God's generous grace and forgiveness. There is no one righteous before God, not even one (Rom 3:10; Eccl. 7:20).

Q: Read 2 Corinthians 4:18. When we stand before God, what kinds of things that we do in this life do you think will really matter? NOTE: Workbook says 1 Corinthians... Sorry about the typo!

We are here to bear fruit that will last into eternity (Jn. 15:16). When we bring people into the kingdom of God, when we show love to the unlovable, when we extend grace and mercy to those who don't deserve it... any time we reflect the heart of God in the way that we treat people we are storing up treasure in heaven. We aren't earning our salvation, but we act in love in response from a heart of gratitude.

Q: How does the idea of eternal condemnation affect you? Do you believe that God will punish people who don't receive the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ?

We cannot ignore the Bible's warnings about hell and eternal separation from God (Mt. 5:29-30, 18:8-9; 25:46). If we don't believe that God punishes sin severely then we won't see our need for a Savior. Jesus is the only remedy for our sin (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Whether or not we believe it does not discount that it is real and that we will one day have to face judgment (Rom. 14:12; 1 Pet. 4:5).

Q: How can a good and loving God condemn people to eternal destruction? Isn't that unloving?

God is loving and God is good and that will never ever change. What we forget is that God is also just. It is not just to allow people to sin without consequence. We deserve punishment. Why for eternity? Because He will always be good and sin will always be evil.

Progress update on the Class Assignment: Write down your life purpose statement. Encourage your group to continue thinking about how God has uniquely prepared them to do His will. Help them to understand that everyone is different and everyone has a purpose in God's plan. Questions you might use to get the creative juices flowing might be:

Q: What resources has God blessed you with that you could use to bless others? (Financial, time, knowledge, a house, a boat, a car, tools, etc.)

Q: What abilities has God given to you that you are especially good at or bring you great joy? (Spiritual gifts, love for people, baking/cooking, hospitality, heart for the lost or hurting, proficient at a trade, fixing cars, plumbing, crafting, etc.)

Q: What experiences have you had might God use to encourage others? (Lost a loved one, administrative/leadership experience, witnessed a miracle, overcame an addiction, a testimony, etc.)

For this week, have everyone make a long list of all of the gifts, talents, and treasures that God has given to them that they might be able to use to bring others to focus their attention to God. Ask them to come up with at least 20 ideas. If they want to do more, that's great. Let them know that we will be asking about this next week and we are hoping that they will be up to the challenge!

Review Memory Verse: Matthew 13:31-32 - *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

PRAYER REQUESTS: