

PLANT Lesson 3: The Good News



Q: Can you remember the time in your life when you were the most excited? So excited that you couldn't hold in your emotions? This question is mostly for fun, to share a good memory, and to get to know one another a bit more. The transitional idea is that God's gift to us in Jesus should impact us in a similar way. God has been so good to us!

Q: Can you imagine, just for a moment, what it would be like to be eternally separated from the loving presence of God? What thoughts go through your mind? Consider the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. It is a scary thought that we really don't like to think about. We prefer the loving and gracious and merciful aspects of God, but He is also just and perfect and cannot allow sin to continue without consequence. Sadly, those who reject God and push Him away will get exactly what they have asked for.

Q: Why do you think that God made a covenant with the Jews? What was His goal? They were chosen by God to reveal His love to the world, but they were unfaithful to Him. Before we judge them too harshly, however, we could say that we are no different than they. Our hearts are prone to wander and we consistently choose to please ourselves instead of following the will of God. The old covenant shows us that we are unable to keep the law and maintain a relationship with God apart from Christ.

Q: Why would God send Jesus to die in our place? Why doesn't He just give us what we deserve? Discuss and then look at Hebrews 12:1-2. God loves us and He couldn't allow our sin to go unpunished so He punished Jesus in our place. Jesus, knowing that in the end we could be reunited with God, willingly endured the wrath of His Father so that we could live. It is mind-blowing if we stop to think about it, and very sobering to consider what we truly deserve.

Q: We have offended God with our sin and need to make it right. How can we pay Him back? Trick question. We can't. We cannot do enough good, pray hard enough, or say that we're sorry enough times. We are so far removed from meriting His grace that we could never do anything to correct the wrong that we've caused. We are hopeless without Christ. Our condition is destitute. We have all fallen short of God's standard and the only option (apart from Christ) is spiritual death.

Q: Have you given up everything to follow Jesus? What does this look like lived out? Following Jesus means that His will is our main focus in life. Jesus' will was to please the Father. Therefore, our greatest goal in life is to bless the heart of God above all else. We can do that when we talk with our family members, in our attitude at work, in how we use our time, talents, and treasures. Most people follow their hearts and pleasures, but to follow Jesus requires us to make some sacrifices so that we can bear fruit for God's kingdom instead of building our own kingdom.

Q: What do you think it means to have a relationship with God? You can't give God a hug; you can't visibly see Him smile; you can't relate to Him with your senses. It is a spiritual relationship that is mutual. Our relationship with Him will only be as good as the time we invest into it. If you want a better connection with God, then make sure that you are seeking to engage with your spirit and then watch as He reveals Himself to you through His Word, through answered prayer, and as He guides you through the adventure of life!

Q: Have you ever done this? Have you asked Jesus to come into your heart? Let's not assume that everyone has made this decision. Just because you come to church doesn't make you a disciple of Christ. It requires a statement of faith, a declaration to put all other desires aside to pursue the will of God. You might not know the day or the time you made this decision, but we should be able to communicate that there was a time where we drew a line in the sand and said, "I'm never going back." Those who make this commitment are a new creation in Christ and are given a new spirit and passion to live for God. Often times, this commitment is expressed through a prayer of response. Encourage anyone who has never prayed a prayer of response to do so. Likewise, anyone who hasn't been baptized might consider making a formal profession of faith to announce it to the world! Please let Pastor Tim or another on our staff know about any confessions of faith or any desire to get baptized. We'd love to connect with people and encourage them in their next steps!

Q: Read Acts 5:42. Who do you know that needs to hear the good news? Do you think that God wants you to talk to them? The good news is that God has opened up a door to reconcile our relationship with Him through repentance and forgiveness. People need to personally make this decision, and many people just assume that they are Christians because of their parents or church attendance. We are called to proclaim the truth about God's love and the way to salvation. Let's not let people settle for less than what God intended - there is so much more to the good news than giving your tithe and sitting in pews!

Progress update on the Class Assignment: Write down your life purpose statement. Okay, let's hear that long list of gifts, talents, and treasures! How has God blessed you with opportunities to introduce His love to those around you? Please share some of the highlights. If you know each other well, perhaps you could add to the list. What qualities do you see in the people in your group that might make God attractive to others?

For next week we have just one question to consider.

Q: What is one interesting fact that would make your life interesting to others?

Perhaps you have had a unique experience. Perhaps you have a unique talent. Perhaps you have a special interest. The answer is likely on the list that you made for this week. After you answer the question, start to think about how it applies to your faith and God's master plan for salvation.

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: