

TWENTY
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save
the
date

Invitations from...

Jesus

LIFE GROUP SERIES BOOK

you are
invited

RSVP

INVITATIONS FROM JESUS

We all love receiving an invitation.

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SERIES OUTLINE

The excitement of an imminent wedding, the colourful invitation to a child's birthday party or the fun of a baby shower. These little are a celebration of a significant event in someone's life. An invitation makes us feel loved and we know we are included; we are important to someone. An invitation is an expression of love and friendship.

The God who flung stars into space, the perfect Son of God, extends a personal invitation to every one of us. He invites us into a significant relationship with Him. Jesus' invitation speaks of His love and care for us. He invites us to a fuller, richer, healthier and better life.

In 2020 we have all experienced the feeling of being out of control, an dour sense of safety and security has been threatened. But even when we find ourselves lost and afraid, Jesus invites us back. No matter what is happening in our lives, we are never disqualified from Jesus' invitation.

Jesus invites us to **rest** in His presence when we are weary, giving Him the burdens of our heart to carry. Jesus invites us to **surrender** our earthly lives to Him, dying to ourselves, so we can live in the abundance of eternal life with Him. Jesus invites us to drink living water, that will **refresh** our thirsty soul. And Jesus invites us to **follow** Him closely, walking in relationship with Him every day.

Will you accept His invitation?

DIGITAL LIFE GROUPS

With changing restrictions, we may have to host our Life Groups digitally again for a while. It is a lot different than meeting like we normally would. So here is a link to a comprehensive resource: [**How to Host a Gateway Online Life Group**](#). If you are struggling to get your group set up, please do not hesitate to contact your Life Group Coordinator or Campus Pastor for help.

YOU ARE INVITED!

During each week of this series there will be an invitation to respond to Jesus in personal and practical ways. Some personal responses may be an invitation to adopt a habit or practice that further aligns you with Christ, while others may be a challenge to let go of things holding you back from a growing your relationship with Jesus and with those around you.

During the series we'd invite you to think of ONE THING where you can invite someone to experience life and community together. You may want to invite someone to...

- a pot luck dinner with your life group,
- do Alpha with you in Term 4,
- a girls night out
- a blokes bbq,
- a day at the beach,
- to clean up the neighbourhood etc...

Who is someone you live, work and laugh with that you can invite to do ONE THING together?

AN INVITATION TO REST

There have been many times in our human history where life has felt like a burden. Today, the 24-hour news cycle can overwhelm us with information and lead to compassion fatigue. There is little respite from the ding of notifications, and we scroll and compare feeling the pressure of expectations. Now more than ever, we are making significant decisions about our lives in an uncertain environment. We are contactable 24/7. There is not much room for rest, and we are weary and anxious.

Jesus knows the struggle we face, and He extends to us an invitation to rest. Jesus invites us to live for an audience of one, rejecting the expectation of constant busyness, productivity and people-pleasing, and take on His yoke. Jesus invites us to trust Him with an uncertain future. He invites us to cast the fear and anxiety in our hearts on Him, because He cares for us. He invites us to share our burdens, living in community with one another. He invites us to spend time in His presence and find rest.

Jesus invites us into a regular rhythm of **rest** for every part of our being: physical, mental, spiritual and emotional. We need to intentionally plan and prioritise time to spend in Jesus' presence and allow Him to restore our weary soul.

When we are tired and weary, **Jesus invites us to rest** in His presence.

KEY PASSAGE: MATTHEW 11:28-29

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

SHARE TOGETHER:

- How have you experienced God's goodness and Jesus' gentleness?
- When was the last time you felt truly rested?

READ TOGETHER:

The key passage Matthew 11:28-30 in the Message version.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

- What stands out to you between the two versions of these verses?
- What do you think Jesus means when the Message version talks about the unforced rhythms of grace?
- What do you think is the difference between simply getting enough down time and finding true rest in Jesus?
- What normally fills your spiritual, physical and emotional tank? Is 'busy' getting in the way of self-care and time with Jesus to rest?

ACCEPT THE INVITATION:

- What is Jesus inviting you to do more of, or less of to find rest

from your burdens?

EXTEND THE INVITATION:

- How will you invite someone else to experience rest with you this week?

PRAY TOGETHER:

- What do you need to do in this season to create a rhythm of rest and prioritise your relationship with Jesus? Pray into this for each other.

Lord, we lay before you the anxiety and fear in our hearts and we seek Your rest for our souls. We chose to spend time in your presence, listening to your voice, and trusting in your love for us. Amen.

FURTHER READING:

Luke 11:46, Galatians 6:2, 1 Peter 5:7, Mark 6:31, Mark 2:27

AN INVITATION TO SURRENDER

As Christians, the culture we live in can feel very self-centred. As we become more aware, we start to notice how things like advertising target that selfish desire in us. If we're not careful, our sinful nature can lead us to devote our lives to our own personal pleasure and comfort.

The invitation to surrender goes against our selfish nature. We want to hold on tight to our own plans. We value our independence and self-sufficiency. Jesus invites us to a better life, but in order to accept it, we first have to let go of the selfish life our sinful nature draws us to.

Jesus isn't calling most of us to sell everything we own, but He is inviting all of us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. So, what does it look like in real life? The invitation to surrender is an invitation to choose Jesus over self.

Jesus invites us to honour Him in the choices we make each day. Like choosing the salad over the chips, Jesus invites us to choose a better life. We can choose to read the Bible over watching TV, going to church over a day at the beach, giving to the poor over buying a new phone, following the dream Jesus puts in your heart over climbing the corporate ladder.

Jesus invites us to lay down our immediate pleasure, the gratification of the world, and take up a cross. A cross that means embracing the death of our sinful nature, to live a resurrected life. Jesus invites us to surrender.

KEY PASSAGE: MATTHEW 16:24-26

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

SHARE TOGETHER:

- What is the first picture from everyday life that comes into your mind when you think of 'surrender'?

Read together: Mark 10:17-31

- What stands out to you about both the Matthew & Mark passages?
- Many times, Jesus says deny yourself and take up your cross. Why does Jesus emphasise this for those who would follow him?
- What do these passages teach us about the character of Jesus?
- What might God be trying to say to us that would guide the way we live for Him?

ACCEPT THE INVITATION:

- Who and what are you living for? Jesus invites you to let go of the things that will never truly satisfy and surrender your life to him.

EXTEND THE INVITATION:

- Jesus calls us to follow him, and this includes surrendering to God for the sake of others. Who will you show love to, by denying yourself and living sacrificially this week?

PRAY TOGETHER:

- What are the everyday things or distractions that get in the way of fully surrendering to Jesus? Pray for each other and carry each other's burdens.

Lord, we surrender our lives to you. We choose to take up your cross, dying to ourselves, so we can live for you and experience the abundant life you promise. Amen.

FURTHER READING:

John 10:10, Matthew 6:19-20,
Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 11:24-27

AN INVITATION TO REFRESH

You can live for over a month without food, but you can only last a few days without water. We need water to live. Without regular hydration our body becomes weak and ineffective and we couldn't survive for very long.

Just like we need physical water for physical life, we need spiritual water for spiritual life. Jesus invites us to drink living water, the source of spiritual health and strength. Without living water, our spiritual strength evaporates, and we won't survive.

So often we neglect our spiritual strength; we limp from Sunday to Sunday with the occasional Bible reading or prayer meeting top-up. We are spiritually ineffective, lacking vitality and power, because we do not invest in our spiritual strength. When the enemy attacks, we are vulnerable to defeat. We are spiritually dehydrated and weak.

Jesus invites us to constant refreshment in the living water He provides. In the power of His Spirit we have the power to overcome the plans of the evil one to destroy us.

The living water Jesus invites us to drink is not just to satisfy ourselves, it overflows out of us to others. We become a spring that living water flows through. We share the love and power of God through the living Spirit within us. We live and serve out of a generous and abundant overflow of God's provision, rather than rationing our own limited resources.

KEY PASSAGE: JOHN 7:37-38

37...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

SHARE TOGETHER:

- Share a story of a holiday or a time that just felt totally refreshing.

READ TOGETHER: JOHN 7:37-38

- What do rivers of living water look like in your life? How does it look different than a trickle of living water?
- What role do spiritual disciplines play in keeping us refreshed? How do we stop them becoming stale and wearisome?

READ TOGETHER: JOHN 4:5-15

- What does this passage teach us about the character of Jesus?
- What do you think Jesus means when he asks "if you knew the gift of God?"

ACCEPT THE INVITATION:

- Do you know how satisfying it is to be refreshed by Jesus? How will you accept Jesus' invitation to drink deeply from his living water?

EXTEND THE INVITATION:

- How can you extend an invitation to someone close to you this week to find refreshment together?

PRAY TOGETHER:

- Is your soul dry and thirsty? Are you living a dry, dehydrated spiritual life, lacking strength and vitality? Pray we would all be refreshed.

God, may we become a fountain of living water as your Spirit fills us to overflowing. May the love and grace of God permeate every part of our lives, and overflow from us into our community, nation and world. Amen.

FURTHER READING:

Psalm 42, Isaiah 46:4, Acts 3:19-21, Jeremiah 31:25, Psalm 16:8-11

AN INVITATION TO FOLLOW

When Jesus invited His disciples to follow Him, what He really wanted was a friendship and relationship with them. Jesus wanted them to walk alongside Him day by day, spending time with Him and becoming a part of His ministry.

And the good news is, Jesus invites us to do the same thing! Jesus is the One who will stay closer than a brother. He will never leave us or forsake us. Jesus is "God with us", and He invites us into a close relationship with Him.

Just like the disciples, we can accept Jesus invitation to follow Him. We can set aside a life of striving and achieving, and learn the ways, the works and the words of Jesus as we walk closely with Him every day. Through Jesus' death and resurrection there is no longer a barrier that prevents us from having a friendship with a holy God. Through Jesus' sacrifice we are forgiven from our sin and set free from a life of striving and achieving.

KEY PASSAGE: MARK 1:16-18

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

SHARE TOGETHER:

- What is one thing that you follow closely and are heavily invested in more than most? (it might be a sports team, native birds, orchestral music, impressionist art etc...) Share why you're passionate about it.

READ TOGETHER: MATTHEW 4:18-22

- Why do you think that these ordinary people, immediately left all they knew and followed Jesus? Would you do the same in their shoes?
- What do these passages teach us about the character of Jesus?
- When we look at the life of Jesus in the gospels, what kind of life is he inviting us into as we follow him?
- What changes about us when we decide to fall into step behind Jesus?

ACCEPT THE INVITATION:

- The disciples spent a LOT of time with Jesus. How will you spend quality time learning his ways, works and words this week? How will you make that a long-term habit?

EXTEND THE INVITATION:

- "Go and make disciples" is the final command of Jesus in Matthew's gospel. Who is a trusted friend who doesn't yet know Jesus that you will invite to read the Bible with you?

PRAY TOGETHER:

- Following Jesus isn't easy and is something we do best in God's strength. Pray for your daily walk with the Lord and bless one another by holding each other to the life-long journey with Jesus.

God, give us boldness to take the invitation to follow you to broken and hurting people in our community. We pray that many will hear and answer Jesus' invitation to come and follow Him. Amen.

FURTHER READING:

Matthew 9:9, John 8:12, John 12:26, John 16:33, Psalm 119:133

thank you

from the bottom of my heart

DEAR

YOU ARE INVITED TO REST IN MY PRESENCE WHEN YOU ARE WEARY. SURRENDER YOUR EARTHLY LIVES, DYING TO ONESELF, SO THAT YOU CAN LIVE IN THE ABUNDANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE WITH ME.

I WANT TO GIVE YOU A DRINK OF MY LIVING WATER, REFRESHING OUR THIRSTY SOUL. FOLLOW ME CLOSELY, WALKING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH ME EVERY DAY. YOU WILL BE REFRESHED.

I LOVE YOU.
FROM YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

PLEASE
JOIN ME

gateway
BAPTIST CHURCH