

Sermon Based Study Guide
Series: New Covenant Community

Acts 1:1-11

Cornerstone Church

January 3, 2016

Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. Use what you know will best benefit your group.

Todd started our new series in the Book of Acts called 'New Covenant Community'. He talked about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and that we can have the same transformation that Jesus did. We have the same Holy Spirit, and He can work just as powerfully in our lives as He did in Jesus' life.

1. How has the Holy Spirit transformed your life? What is "new" about your life? How have you seen Jesus' good reign and rule in your life? Share specific examples and stories.

2. Do you know anybody who claims to be a follower of Jesus but does not really demonstrate a transformed life? Do you think they really are a Believer? Discuss why or why not.

3. Why was it so important for the disciples to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit? How do you think that this pertains to us?

4. Power is there to change our lives, to bring about transformation; it is not necessarily a 'dynamite' power or some "BAM" power. His power is there to enable us to live every day, to accomplish the daily, mundane tasks—day after day after month after month after year after year.

How have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your everyday life lately? Think about everyday, 'normal' areas where the power of the Holy Spirit made a difference. If you have not experienced it, discuss why not.

5. Like the disciples, we may be really excited about Jesus coming back and taking us “Home”. But how should we be living until that happens? What should be our attitude? How should the power of the Holy Spirit help us live each day? What kinds of tasks should we be engaged in while waiting?

The idea here is that we shouldn't be sitting around on a mountaintop twiddling our thumbs waiting for Jesus to come back. Think about what the angels told the disciples in Acts 1:10-11. What was their point? How would the transforming work of the Spirit enable them to do what they needed to do?

Sermon Based Study Guide
Series: New Covenant Community
Cornerstone Church

Acts 2:1-41 – New Power

January 9, 2016 -- Spencer MacCuish

January 10, 2016 -- Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. The first thing this new church did after Jesus left was to meet together and pray. They were a bit confused, uncertain what to do. Discuss why this is such a great example for us. What are the implications if we ignore this example?
2. Practicing the lordship of Jesus in our lives means being completely dependent on Him. Discuss each of the following questions:
 - How is prayer an expression of dependence?
 - How is time in the Word an expression of dependence?
 - How is being in community with other believers an expression of dependence?
 - How is participating in the Lord's Supper an expression of dependence?
3. We need to create the right conditions, put ourselves in the right place, for the Holy Spirit to work His mysterious power in our lives. What are those right conditions? What is that right place? How do we keep ourselves there?
4. There is a mystical, unknown element in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2 that mystical element was manifest in tongues of fire and people speaking in unknown languages. Later in Acts 2 that mystical power was manifest through Peter preaching an amazing sermon. Discuss other ways the mystery and power of the Holy Spirit might (or has) show up in your life.
5. There is always a result when the Holy Spirit is at work. What was the result at the end of Peter's sermon? What "results" have you seen in your life when you yield to the power of the Holy Spirit?

Sermon Based Study Guide
Series: New Covenant Community
Cornerstone Church
Acts 2:42-47 – New People
January 16-17, 2016 – Chris Hay

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Discuss the four priorities that Chris talked about that we see in Acts 2:42. Which ones are you more devoted to? Which ones are not very high priorities in your life? Discuss what needs to happen to make these 4 things higher priorities in your life.

2. How has God rearranged the priorities in your life. Share specific examples. Share areas where you think some more rearrangement needs to take place.

3. Chris talked about the word 'unction.' Explain your understanding of this word. Google it if you need to.

Assuming it is missing more than it is present in your life....What are the things that prevent unction in your life? How would your life be different if you had the unction of the Holy Spirit?

3. Discuss the mystical element in the Lord's Supper. This might make some of you nervous, but at least talk about it! Do you think it is there? What might it be?

4. Has the Holy Spirit impressed upon you the need to move out in a step of faith? What does that look like as best you know (commit to a Community Group, start leading a group, take a Bible class, pursue a relationship, or stop a relationship, liquidate some assets to help a needy person, or something else....)?

5. Will you commit to attending the Night of Prayer on Jan 27 and the Lord's Supper on Jan 31?

Sermon Based Study Guide
Series: New Covenant Community
Cornerstone Church

Acts 3:1-4:31 – New Boldness
January 23-24, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Christian made this statement: "They shared Christ in common, and so they shared life in common." Discuss how this impacts and/or defines your Community Group relationships.
2. In his speech to the crowd in Acts 3, Peter connects the new life and power of the New Covenant Community to promises that God made in the Old Testament. Discuss some of the Old Testament promises Peter mentions. Which ones has Jesus already fulfilled? Which ones are yet to be fully realized?
3. How well are you able to connect the mission of Jesus to the story of the Old Testament? Does your understanding of the gospel typically start with Jesus, with little thought to what went on before? What could be the danger of separating Jesus' mission from the larger biblical story?
4. Peter's transformation from 'scared denier' (Luke 22) to 'bold proclaimer' (Acts 4) is because of the filling (unction) of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, any time believers are "filled with the Spirit," it is always for the purpose of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to others. Share some examples of how the filling (unction) of the Holy Spirit has empowered you to proclaim Jesus.
6. Why is our church named "Cornerstone"? What is the significance of that for each of us? How does it help us? ...challenge us? ...motivate us? ...change us?
7. In 4:15, how did the temple leaders determine what to do with Peter and John? In 4:24, how do the believers determine what to do with the threats of the temple leaders? In our decision-making, do we tend to be more like the temple leaders or the believers? Which is better? How can we change?

8. As we head into the Prayer Emphasis week, Christian gave us four points on prayer to consider:

- **Prayer is an act of dependence** – It's one of the main ways that we "line ourselves up" with God's purposes and confess our need for His power.
- **Prayer is a privilege of our relationship with God** - We can talk to God and know that He hears us, because we are in His son Jesus.
- **Prayer is "answering God"** – The believers' prayers in Acts are always full of scripture. We "answer" (or respond to) God based upon what He has said to us in His word.
- **Prayer is mission-focused** – We are not primarily praying for safety and comfort. We are asking God to fill, empower, embolden, and position us to proclaim Jesus.

Don't just discuss these points; practice them as you pray as a group.

Sermon Based Study Guide Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 4:32-5:11 – New Fear

January 30, 2016 – Spencer MacCuish

January 31, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Killing Ananias and Sapphira for keeping a little bit of their profits seems pretty harsh. But was that really the issue?

Discuss the deeper sin issues in their act of lying. What sin is at the root of this story? Where do you see it in yourself?

2. In Acts 5:5 and 5:11 Luke writes that 'great fear' came upon the people. Why do you think they were so afraid? What were they afraid of? Do you have any cause to have the same level of fear?

3. Sin issues are usually more about the motives or reasons why we do something than about the actual action or deed. Talk about this statement. Agree or disagree? Why or why not? Is it possible to do the right things with a wrong motive? Give some examples, maybe even from your own life!

4. What does it mean to do something to "make a name" for yourself? Why is this such an affront to God? (See Romans 1:18-23)

How can you tell if your motivation for doing something is for God's name or your own? (See Psalm 139:23-24; Hebrews 4:11-16).

Idea for Prayer: Ask God to show you what motivates your actions at the heart level. Be ready for Him to show you the good, the bad, and the ugly! Confess where you have been seeking your own glory rather than His. Thank Him for where His glory really has been your motivation. Ask Him for grace to disentangle the desires of your heart and purify your motives.

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. – 1 Timothy 1:5

Sermon Based Study Guide Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 5:12-42 – New Authority

February 6, 2016 – Spencer MacCuish

February 7, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Todd talked about where our ultimate authority rests (see Acts 5:29). Talk about if and when it is appropriate to disobey our government authorities. According to the text, what are the only conditions that permit us to engage in civil disobedience?
2. Todd talked about the collision of two zeal's. One zeal is what the Sadducees had and the other zeal is what the apostles had. There is also a collision of zeal's in our culture today. How will the gospel confront the zeal of our world's culture? Where do you think that the zeal of our culture will be confronted by the gospel? Why do you think our zeal is dimmed, preventing us from sharing the gospel with people?
3. Todd mentioned that resistance is an opportunity in disguise. The apostles viewed resistance as a work of God. How do you tend to react when there is resistance to the gospel (do you tend to fight, flight, freeze, or faith)? Do you want to change that reaction? How do you change it?
4. Should we rejoice every time we suffer for any reason? Is all suffering something we should rejoice in? Why or why not?
5. What does it look like to experience joy in suffering? How in the world is that even possible? What kind of attitude and perspective do we need to be able to rejoice in suffering?

Sermon Based Study Guide Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community
Acts 6:1-7 – New Leaders
February 13-14, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Todd talked about failure this weekend. He told us that it isn't "if" we fail, but "when." God has built into his plan the reality of human failure, but he deeply cares how we fail. Discuss how you tend to fail, i.e. do you tend to fail into mediocrity or maturity? Share some examples with your group.
2. Todd mentioned that there is no such thing as a church that doesn't fail and that not all "complaints" are wrong. If we really believe that failure is an opportunity to grow and "fix" what might be wrong, then we need to talk about failure. Where do you see this Community Group failing? Where do you see Cornerstone failing? Explain your answer in an "Acts 6:1-7" complaint way.

*** CG LEADERS:** Please share these "complaints" with the pastors and/elders! Seriously, we want to know! You can email me directly—Chris.

3. When working through the text, Todd emphasized the importance of both caring for the church through the ministry of the Word/prayer and through the ministry of physical needs. Think back to your response to #1 in regards to your Community Group. How might your group restructure to best minister the Word/prayer and minister to the various physical needs you might have? What is being "overlooked" among you? Is too much falling on a few people? Make sure to think about this more along the lines of a "people" solution and not a "program" solution.
4. At the beginning of Acts 6:1-7 and also at the end, the highlight is that people were added to their number (even priests!!!). Why do you think that Acts puts such an emphasis on numbers when we are often told not to focus on numbers?
5. One of the things that Todd asked us to do was to pray and think about men and women that might be the first identified Deacons/Deaconesses for Cornerstone. These men and women will be essential to our future, so he told us to make sure that we take some time to wrestle with this before we submit any names. The "grid" for helping us to determine these men and women were this:
 - (1) They are to be from amongst you—people you see regularly serving the body.
 - (2) People who are of good repute—they have a good reputation within the church and to those outside.

(3) Men and women who are full of the Holy Spirit—you and others have seen the power of God in and through their life as dependent followers of Jesus.

(4) People who are wise—they know how to come up with godly solutions to real problems. You can also look at 1 Tim 3:8-13.

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community
Acts 6:8-8:4 – Covenant Opposition
February 21, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

Note: During his message, Christian shared a video from the Bible Project, called “Heaven and Earth”, which described how the Temple fit into God’s plan to dwell with His people. If you want to watch this video again as a part of your discussion, go to www.jointhebibleproject.com, scroll down and click on “Theme Videos.” “Heaven and Earth” is the first one on the list.

1. The Temple in Jerusalem was good, but it wasn’t the ultimate. How is Jesus better than the Temple?
2. If God no longer dwells in a physical temple, and Jesus is not here physically right now, how does God dwell with His people now? (see Eph. 2:19-22 and 1 Cor 6:19). Discuss the implications of this for how we live our day-to-day lives.
3. Christian described how the men of the Sanhedrin were so fixated on the **Good** (the Law and the Temple) that they rejected the **Better** (Jesus), which was **Bad**. When we share the Gospel with others, this same tension is often present. Many people reject Jesus not because they think He is bad, but because they fail to see him as *better* than the good things they fixate on.
 - a. Share where you have experienced this *good/better* tension as you have shared the Gospel with others.
 - b. Where do you see this *good/better* tension in your life? Where do you struggle to believe that Jesus is better than other good things?
 - c. Describe a time where you were able to see and believe that Jesus is Better. Why do you think you were able to see this when many can’t? (See 2 Cor. 4:3-6).
4. The story of Stephen reminds us that the Gospel creates tension. Those who believe and trust in Jesus often find that “what used be home isn’t home anymore.” How have you encountered this kind of Gospel tension in your life and relationships? How have you dealt with it?
5. Yet, like the blowing of a dandelion, the story of the stoning of Stephen and the scattering of the Church reminds us that God can use opposition to the Gospel to spread his word farther than before (8:4)! How have you seen God use the Gospel tension in your life and relationships to advance the Gospel?

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 8:1-40 – A Covenant for Outsiders

February 28, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt/Rick Utleby

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. In verses 9-24, while Simon the Magician was amazed at the signs Philip performed, it seems he never understood what those signs were pointing to: the resurrected rule of Jesus the Messiah. This story shows us that it is possible to miss Jesus, even when we are surrounded by his people and seeing how he works in others' lives. We can pursue power, community, healing, morality, even leadership through the church, and miss the fact that it's all about Jesus.
 - How have you wrestled with this in your life? Where do you tend to miss Jesus, even while you pursue "spiritual" things?
2. Even as we talk with those who don't know Jesus, we can easily get sidetracked into only talking about morality, or family, or even condemnation (hellfire & brimstone), rather than *"the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"* (v.12).
 - Can you think of a time when you have done this? Or maybe it was done to you?
 - A conversation about the gospel will naturally involve topics like morality or judgment, but how can we make sure that our focus is on Jesus and what He has done, rather than us and what we should (or shouldn't) do?
3. In this passage, we learned that the Holy Spirit is a gift (v. 20), He is a person (v. 29, not just a power or a force), and He leads us (v. 29 & 39). How have you experienced these realities in your life?
 - Share some times when you believe the Holy Spirit led you to do something or talk to someone. Did you obey? Ignore? Avoid? Not realize it until later?
 - Are there things in your life that may be making it harder for you to be sensitive and obedient to the Spirit's leading? (sin, busyness, timidity, prayerlessness, etc.)
 - Can you think of a time when you (or someone else) thought you were following the Spirit, but ended up heading in a direction that contradicted scripture? How can we know if it really is the Holy Spirit leading us? (1 Thess. 5:19-22)
4. In this passage, we saw that the New Covenant Community follows the example of Jesus by embracing and pursuing outsiders. How have you seen this in your life?
 - How were you pursued and embraced by this community of believers?
 - How is God empowering you to embrace and pursue others, both inside and outside this community of believers?
 - How can your Community Group do this as a group?

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community
Acts 9:1-31 – A Covenant for Enemies
March 6, 2016 – Chris Hay

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Have you ever had an unusual encounter with God? Why do you think God met you in that way? Share this with the group.
2. Was your salvation experience dramatic like Saul's? Or was it a quieter process? Have some group members briefly share how they were confronted with the gospel and came to place their faith in Jesus. Every story is different!
3. Discuss the emotions that are invoked when you think about going to a dangerous place for the sake of the gospel, or sending your kids to a dangerous place. Are you willing?
4. What would it look like to live completely radically for Jesus? What needs to change for that to be true in your life? What would look the same? [It doesn't necessarily mean you have to sell everything and move to the Middle East!]
5. Share how times of suffering and difficulty have brought you closer to Jesus.
6. Discuss ways in which you live too safely. What would it look like to risk more for the sake of the gospel? What is one step you could take to live more risky for Jesus?
7. How can you, or how have you, positioned yourself to have an encounter with Jesus?

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community
Acts 10:1-11:18 – A Covenant for Gentiles
March 13, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. What groups of people do you consider “unclean”? Why? How can you change your view of these people groups?
2. What are some of the barriers that we (the people of Cornerstone) have erected to other people, or that keep us from engaging the people of our community or the world? What are some of the prejudices that lie deep within us? Explain.
3. How do you know when to share your faith, when to not say anything, and to know how much to say? In other words, how do we continually walk in the Spirit? Discuss how to make this real in your everyday life.
4. Can you think of a time where you saw that God had prepared both 1) the person you shared Christ with and 2) you as the one sharing Christ? Do you think we should see this kind of thing more often than we do? Why or why not?
5. When Paul writes about his own evangelism, he asks for prayer for himself, that he would be prepared to share well. He doesn't often ask for prayer about a specific community or person. What does that mean for us? How do you think our evangelism might be different if we spent more time asking for God to open our eyes to those in need of the gospel and our own readiness?

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Church

Acts: New Covenant Community
Various Texts – *Sign of the Covenant*
March 20, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Discuss Cornerstone's change in philosophy of how we will baptize people from now on. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?
2. Share the story of your baptism. Was it a positive experience? Or a negative experience? What made it positive? How could it have been a better experience?
3. What scriptures that Todd used in his sermon are still confusing to you? Discuss these. Perhaps grab some commentaries or Bible study resources and do some further study on these passages.
4. If you have not been baptized, is that a step you are ready to take? We will have an outdoor baptism pool at the Easter service. Are you willing to consider being baptized on Easter Sunday?

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Church

Easter Sunday

Matthew 28:4-10, John 20:19-20; Luke 24:13-35

March 27, 2016 – Terry Earwood

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Discuss as a group what Easter means to you? What Easter traditions should you get rid of, and what Easter traditions should you keep?
2. Can you relate to how the disciples felt let down and disappointed by Jesus' death? Share different ways you have felt let down, disappointed, and betrayed by those you trusted.
3. How do you struggle with fear? What are the things that cause you to fear? Which of the fears that Terry shared can you relate to:
 - Health, career, being exposed, finances, family, will I ever get married, being alone, being left out?
 - Or exterior circumstances: terrorism, politics, government?
 - Or circumstances around our faith: God won't accept us because of our sin, God won't be enough so we hang onto our sin. The fear of death?
4. How does the resurrection help us deal with fear? Discuss how you can keep your eyes on Jesus in order to deal with your fear.
5. Discuss how the words "Peace be with you" summarizes the Easter story.

Sermon Based Study Guide

Cornerstone Community Church

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 12:1-24 – An Unstoppable Covenant

April 3, 2016 – Josh Walker

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. What are you willing to suffer or sacrifice in order for the gospel to go forward into your neighborhood, at your workplace, in your city?
2. How do you reconcile the different outcomes of James and Peter? I think it is safe to assume that the church was praying for both of these apostles. Discuss the different ways God answers prayer, or seemingly doesn't answer prayer.
3. Read John 12:24-26 and discuss the pattern for advancing the kingdom that Jesus established and then showed with his own life, death, burial, and resurrection. As you consider how James and Peter were called to advance the kingdom with their lives, what do you think God is calling you to do with your life?
4. Read 1 Peter 2:13-25. Consider Peter's story here in Acts as you consider the implications of those words, especially vs. 21-23. What did it mean for Peter that "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps"? How does it apply in your life?
5. As you consider what happened to Herod, think about how Peter's perspective under suffering was to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, which meant "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23). Why was justice brought on Herod? What was different about how Peter responded to suffering? How can we apply this into the situations in our current context? Do we tend to respond more like Herod ('he did not give God the glory') or more like Peter? How can we respond in a more 'Peter-like' way to suffering and hardship?



Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 11:19-30; 12:24-14:28 – *Planting New Covenant Communities*

April 10, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Discuss whether or not you think your Community Group is 'missional.' Why or why not? If not, what changes would need to be made in order to be more 'missional'. Discuss what it looks like to encourage group members in their individual 'missions' compared to what it looks like for you as a whole group to be 'missional'.
2. One of the characteristics of healthy Missional Churches is that they have multiple leaders (Acts 13:1). I think the same is true of healthy Missional Community Groups. How are you currently sharing leadership in your group? Could God be calling some of you to play more of a leadership role in your group? Or, if you're already leading, is God calling you to share leadership, or invest in those in whom you see leadership potential?
3. Discuss the difference between being led by the Holy Spirit versus following your personal ambition. How can you tell which is driving you? How can you involve people in helping you discern whether the Spirit or your own desires are driving your decisions?
4. If and when you share your faith, do you tend more toward listening or talking? Discuss what it would look like to do more 'evangelistic listening' in your witnessing.



Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community
Acts 15:1-35 – *The New Covenant and the Old*
April 17, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

Here is the link for the Bible Project Video on the Law:

<https://jointhebibleproject.com/?video=2-5>

1. The biggest difference between the Old and New Covenants is that the New Covenant changes our hearts (Ezekiel 36:25-27, Acts 15:9, 1 Peter 1:22-23). If you are a follower of Jesus, how have you seen the Holy Spirit change your heart (desires, motivations, loves, etc.)? How have you seen the Holy Spirit change each other's hearts?

2. How well do you understand how the Old and New Testaments fit together? Why is it important to understand the whole biblical story? What are the dangers and/or pitfalls of not understanding the Old Testament?

3. Share with each other if you have ever read through the entire Old Testament. What were the challenges? What were the benefits?

What can you do individually, or as a group, to better understand the Old Testament?

Here are a few suggestions:

- Challenge one another in your group to read the entire Old Testament, starting in Genesis and reading it in order.
- If you are interested in a more structured teaching setting, check out The Silo Project produced by Eternity Bible College, particularly the three-part Old Testament Overview: <https://silo.pathwright.com/school/catalog/>
This could be a great group study—the videos are 5-7 minutes long then you could have a group discussion.



Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 15:36-16:14 – A New Covenant for New Places - Part 1

April 24, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

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<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

Here is a summary of Todd's main point:

"Ministry (serving Jesus through serving others) is one of the greatest joys in the life of the Christ follower, but this task will always demand sacrifice. No one escapes it, and the greatest sacrifice—the one that will determine all other sacrifices—is the daily choice to forgo making a name for myself so that we might make a name for God."

1. Those daily choices might be big decisions, but more often than not they are the small, everyday choices. Think back through your week. How purposeful were you in choosing to be a sacrifice? Remember the three adjectives Paul uses for a sacrifice:

- "living" (becoming an alive, dead thing)
- "holy" (seeing myself as set apart for God's purpose)
- "acceptable" (choosing to give God my best and not the leftovers)

Share with your group the choices you made this week that were (and were NOT!!) sacrificial based on these three adjectives.

Why do you think that Paul calls this "your spiritual worship"?

2. Todd talked about how we tend to be fashioned in the shape of this age (conformed to this world). In Acts, Paul was faced with many choices. When facing the magistrates, he could have claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. When the earthquake hit, he could have run. But he chose instead to make a name for God. Share where you see yourself acting most like this world. This can be brutally convicting, but be open, honest, and vulnerable.

3. God's main purpose in our lives is to transform us into the image of his Son so that we might make a name for Him. Paul in Romans 12:2 described this as being "transformed by the renewal of your *mind*."

Discuss how you think we are transformed by the renewal of our minds. How does changing our mind and thoughts work to transform our whole being?

These passages also speak to the renewal of our minds: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. Colossians 3:1-17. 2 Corinthians 11:3. Ephesians 4:20-24.

4. Todd talked about knowing the “will of God,” specifically that we can make daily decisions that make a name for God. The outcome of this, Paul writes, is “good and acceptable and perfect.” If we know that God designed us to make a name for him and that this is “good and acceptable and perfect,” why do we struggle with desiring and doing God’s will?



C O R N E R S T O N E

Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 17:1-34 – A New Covenant for New Places - Part 2

May 1, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger/Spencer MacCuish

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

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1. Why is it so important that we understand the culture to which we are taking the gospel message? If you can, share some examples of how your understanding of the culture helped the gospel message be understood. And some examples of how NOT understanding the culture made the gospel difficult to understand.
 2. How can you bring your understanding of scripture to bear on a pre-evangelism conversation, without necessarily quoting scripture?
 3. If your community group were to spend the next 2 years in a foreign country, why would it be so important to learn the language of that country?
 4. It is hard to understand our own culture when we are part of it. Sometimes outsiders have a better understanding of our culture. Is there anyone you can ask what stands out about our culture? Or discuss as a group what you think stands out in our culture. If your group includes different cultures, discuss those differences.
 5. The upcoming Grow Week will provide some great training in how to understand a lot of 'pre-evangelism'. Talk with your group about joining the sessions in lieu of your regular group meeting.



CORNERSTONE

Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 18:1-20:38 – A New Covenant for New Places - Part 3

May 8, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion. You might want to send these Study Guides out to your whole group so they can think through the questions also.

1. Discuss the significance of Jesus being both powerful and personal. How did Paul testify to both of these realities during his time in Ephesus? How have you experienced Jesus' power and personal care in your life?
2. In his farewell message to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:18-35), Paul repeatedly reminded them of his example. This is one of the most important traits of a leader in the church: they aren't perfect, but their lives are worthy of imitation (Heb. 13:7; 2 Tim. 3:10).
 - a. Who in your life gives you an example that is worth following? How are you seeking to imitate them? Be specific.
 - b. Are you an example that others could follow? Why or why not? Be specific. Where do you need to grow, confess, repent?
3. Christian listed several things that can hold us back from opening our lives to others:
 - a. busyness,
 - b. fear of being known, settling for superficial relationships
 - c. finding identity in our sins and/or struggles rather than in Christ and His people
 - d. lack of love, desire to receive rather than give (20:35)
 - e. "ingrown fellowship," settling for those we already know.Which of these is the biggest obstacle for you? Any others you would add to the list? How do you want God to change you?
4. The upcoming Grow Week (May 18-22) will provide some great training in how to share the gospel relationally. Talk with your group about joining the sessions in lieu of your regular group meeting. Remember to sign up by next Sunday, May 15, especially if you will need childcare! <http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/forms/grow-week>

EXTRA CREDIT QUESTION!!

5. In 20:28-31, Paul makes a big deal of the elders' responsibility to protect the church from false teachers: "ravenous wolves," men speaking "twisted things" to lead people astray.
 - a. Read Titus 1:9. What does Paul tell elders to do in order to protect the body from false teaching?
 - b. Compare this with how Priscilla and Aquila interacted with Apollos in 18:24-26.

Discuss the difference between a teacher who is trying to deceive people and one who has gaps in their understanding. How should they be handled differently?



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Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 21:1-23:11 - *The New Covenant on Trial, pt. 1*

May 15, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt/Rick Utley

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

Be sure and sign up for Grow Week which is this week! These sessions will provide some great training in how to share the gospel relationally. You will need to sign up right away, especially if you need childcare! <http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/forms/grow-week>

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1. Describe a time when you were “following God in the fog” – when you knew that God was leading you in a certain direction, but were unclear of what the final outcome would be.
 - a. How and when did clarity come?
 - b. Looking back, can you see how God guided you, even when you weren’t aware?
 - c. How did this experience increase your trust in God going forward? If it didn’t, share why it didn’t.
 2. Have you ever sensed (or thought you sensed) the Holy Spirit directing you to do or say something?
 - a. How did you respond?
 - b. How did you seek wisdom from other believers?
 - c. How did you determine if what you felt led to do was biblical?
 3. Christian defined **wisdom** as “the **understanding** of how to properly apply what God has revealed to a given situation, and the **courage** to do it.”
 - a. Describe a time when you acted wisely, with both understanding and courage.
 - b. Ever had one but not the other?
 - i. understanding what to do, but not the courage to do it? Share about it with your group.
 - ii. courage to act, but lacking understanding of *how* to act? Share about it with your group.
 - c. How can we seek to grow in wisdom? (see Prov. 2:1-6, James 1:5-8, 3:13-18; Col. 1:9-10)



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Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 23:12-26:32 - *The New Covenant on Trial*, pt. 2

May 22, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

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1. If you attended any of the Grow Week events, take some time and discuss what you learned, and how you plan to implement those things.
 2. Think about how Paul entered the Roman political system as a means of God working out His perfect will. How have you seen God's sovereignty work events together in your life in odd ways? How hard is it to trust the systems of this world to work out good for you? Does your trust in God's sovereignty make it easier to trust our government? Other leaders? Other systems?
 3. So often we miss the fog of the journey because we are so focused on the end result. How can we live in a more deliberate way and embrace the questions, the uncertainties, the process—and less on the end result?
 4. Todd defined the sovereignty of God by looking at Romans 8:28. He wanted us to understand that for those of us who "love him and are called according to his purpose," God causes "all things to work together for good." Discuss as a group how these "things," even bad things, work out "for good." Why is this so difficult to believe? Share some events from your life that you really had a hard time believing that these things "worked out for good."
 5. Todd used examples of Joseph, Job, Esther, and the cross to illustrate this. Hebrews calls this "so great a cloud of witnesses" (12:1). Take a look at the rest of the passage (Heb 12:1-2), and discuss how this should stir us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us."



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Sermon Based Study Guide

Acts: New Covenant Community

Acts 27-28 - *The New Covenant on Trial*, pt. 3

May 29, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclassess>

1. Last week, Todd talked about the sovereignty of God in our lives, and that even when it doesn't look like God will get us where he wants us, he always will (most often in spite of us...the Jonah principle). How have you seen God's sovereignty through difficulty in your life in the last week (if you can't think of anything within a week, what about the last month? Year?). Explain your answer and discuss it with your group.

2. The video Todd showed about the gospel of the kingdom talked about an "upside down kingdom" where the greatest is the servant that serves in love...even one's enemies (as modeled in Jesus' death). What does the upside down kingdom look like in your Community Group? Explain your answer thinking through Jesus' lordship in your lives and how this might communicate good news.

3. Whether the good news of the kingdom was preached to Jews (Acts 2), Samaritans (Acts 8), Jewish rejects (Acts 8), or Gentiles (Acts 17), some believed and others didn't. The rejection seems to be in regards to Jesus and his kingship. Why do humans tend to reject this King and his reign in their lives? Where do you see the rejection of Jesus' kingship in our community? ...our church? ...your life?

4. Todd talked about the church being "outposts of God's kingdom in the world." We are groups of people that live and announce the good news of the kingdom and the reign of Jesus. The remainder of the New Testament describes how this can happen. Take what you know of the Bible and discuss what these outposts could look like. How is Cornerstone an outpost? How is your Community Group an outpost? How is your family an outpost? Take time to discuss with your Community Group how you might be more effective together in living and announcing the kingdom.

5. The last thing that was discussed on Sunday was the reality of the future kingdom of God. God has kept his word up to now and has moved everything along towards this time, fulfilling every promise and prophecy He has made. How does staying focused on the certainty of the future kingdom affect you now? How do you not see yourself living in light of your future resurrection?