

## **Six Weeks in the Gospel**

### **Study Guide Answer Key**

Pastor James Madsen prepared this answer key as a help in guiding small group discussions. Please note that many questions have multiple "right" answers, and he is providing just a sample of one good answer.

### **Lesson 1**

**Q1a.** John 3:16: I need to be rescued or else I will perish; I need to believe in Jesus in order to be saved. God loved me so much that he sent his Son to die for me.

**Q1b.** Ephesians 2:1-10: Was dead in my sins, followed inclinations of my sin nature, now saved by grace through faith in Jesus, seated on the right hand of God, united with Jesus, a masterpiece of God created to do good things for the kingdom. God rescued me from the dominion of darkness, showed great mercy, loved me so much, gave me life in Christ, raised me from the dead, gave me grace upon grace.

**Q1c.** Colossians 1:19-23: Was far away from God, His enemy, separated by my evil thoughts and actions...but now reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, holy and blameless because Christ has credited His righteousness as my very own. Jesus is the fullness of God. Through Christ's work on the cross, we are reconciled to God through faith in Him.

**Q1d.** Colossians 2:13-14: Dead in my sins, but made alive in Christ. God made me alive in Christ, forgave my sins. Jesus took all my sins and bore them on the cross to save me.

**Q2a.** Romans 3:10-12: No one is righteous apart from God. No one seeks God on their own. On my own, I follow my sin nature which is always hostile to God because it wants to do what it wants to do.

**Q2b.** Romans 3:23: We are all sinners. We all fall short of God's standard of perfection. We all desperately need Jesus to save us from our sins. (See also Romans 3:24-25)

**Q3a.** Romans 7:14-25: Paul says that he is a slave to sin. He continues to struggle to do the right thing for his sin nature wants to do its own thing apart from God.

**Q3b.** 1 Timothy 1:14-16: Paul knows that he is saved only by the grace of Jesus. His struggle with his sin nature is real, and his only hope is the work of Jesus on the cross.

**Q4a.** Believing in Jesus is more than just acknowledging that Jesus exists; believing is trusting that Jesus is our only hope for salvation. We know that we don't bring any righteousness of our own. Our rightness with God comes only through the work of Jesus on our behalf.

**Q4b.** We are saved by faith in the work of Jesus for us. I think it is helpful to think of the synonyms for faith that include words like trust, believe, rely, and depend. Faith is an action verb calling us to put all our trust in Jesus and let go of the idea that we contribute some righteousness of our own.

**Q4c.** We naturally resist grace, as if we are allergic to it. Our pride wants to believe that we contribute something to our salvation. We struggle to accept that we need God to rescue us.

**Q5.** There are a lot of good answers to this question. Our culture says that our identity is our successes/failures. You are what you do. Our culture is increasingly unforgiving about people's mistakes. Consider all the ways our culture wants to measure if we are

good enough; whether it is our appearance, the car we drive, how much we weigh, the list goes on and on.

**Q6.** Answers will vary. I know for me, it helps me breathe a sigh of relief. I don't have to get my act together for God to accept me. God's love propels us to love others and live for Him.

## Lesson 2

**Q1.** Your answers will vary based on personal experience. I have many personal examples! Sometimes, when I am actually paying attention, I find that I have higher expectations for my kid's behavior than my own. Also, when I am trying to get my needs met by others' approval of me, I am easily frustrated when they don't tell me how wonderful I am. I find myself pointing out my hard work like, "did you notice that I emptied the dishwasher?" It is very hard to actually love people when you are trying to earn their approval.

**Q2.** Your answers will vary based on your experiences. I think one place where comparison traps are common is in parenting. Why are your kids better behaved than mine? I'm a terrible parent. Oh look, that kid messed up. Maybe I'm not such a bad parent. None of that comparison is helpful, is it? While we can continually learn to be better parents, our identity is not in our parenting or in our kid's successes/failures. Our identity is in Christ. That actually gives us freedom/courage to face the places where we need to grow.

**Q3-Part 1.** Many possible answers! We feel like others should always do the right thing, even when we often fail. We have an ingrained sense of justice. And we demand to get it. Though when we mess up, we want mercy.

**Q3-Part 2.** Answers will vary. My thoughts range from "they don't deserve my forgiveness...why doesn't God smite them...oh, I am a terrible person for not being able to forgive them."

**Q3-Part 3.** Unforgiveness is a prison. Someone once said that bitterness is like drinking the poison you intend for the person who hurt you. Hanging on to unforgiveness erodes our contentment, hope, and other relationships.

**Q3-Part 4.** Forgiveness then is more for us than the other person. It is putting justice in God's hands, leaving our baggage on His doorstep. I think it is also helpful to remember that forgiveness and reconciliation are two different things. Forgiving someone doesn't require the person who hurt you to do anything. It is releasing yourself from the need for justice and giving it to God. Reconciliation, on the other hand, requires the other person to move towards you in repentance. Often this includes boundaries (and hard work) until the trust is restored.

**Q4.** There are many correct answers. Often my issues in marriage, parenting, or work arise because I have put myself at the center. I expect my kids to behave better than I do. Our internal sense of rights and "needs" blinds us to how we are actually treating other people. When we get a glimpse of our need for Jesus and the wonders of his grace, it can open up the reality that what will really be helpful in that relational issue is giving grace instead of laying down the law. Laying down the law rarely changes the other person's heart, but instead builds a wall between you. Particularly in marriage and parenting, what your relationships need to flourish is a deeper heart connection, not bigger walls!

**Q5.** Some are concerned that an environment of grace will encourage sinful behavior. But how does grace actually bring about healthier behaviors in the end? (You can look at Galatians 5:13-16, 3:10-11, 3:21-25.) Consider

the difference of a household with a lot of rules compared to a household that lives in truth and grace.

**Q5.** See the answer above. We should also point out that grace doesn't turn a blind eye to sin. Grace confronts sin as wrong, but offers redemption and reconciliation. We can also acknowledge that love is a better motivator than rules. When you are in love with someone, your heart naturally wants to do things that please them. We inherently keep the rules. But when the relationship is presented as conditional on keeping rules, we don't feel loved and feel burdened by the law. While boundaries are super helpful for us, they are not life giving. This is certainly one of the struggles of parenting...how do we help our kids have healthy boundaries without building a wall between us.

**Q6a.** What are examples of transactional relationships in your life? The barista at Starbucks! Often relationships that should not be transactional become transactional...like in marriage. When it does, it sucks the life out of that relationship.

**Q6b.** To love someone is to do what is best for them without expecting anything in return. True love comes freely with a lack of self-interest or manipulation. When we try to love out of duty or obligation, we often do it from a place of fear or a need for approval from that other person. In that case, we are actually doing it for ourselves...though it doesn't feel like it. It often feels more like enslavement to the approval of the other person.

**Q6c.** Love, goodness, devotion, honor, serving, joyful in hope, patient, and faithful in prayer. Practice hospitality, bless others, rejoice, mourn, live in harmony, and humble ourselves.

## Lesson 3

**Q1.** Answers will vary. For a longer answer on this, you can check out the video: Identity Anchored in Christ: <https://www.cpconline.org/discipleship/>

**Q2.** George Mueller, the missionary to orphans, noted that God was not able to use him until he was able to die to what other people thought of him and die to what he thought of himself. We are released from the bondage of having to prove ourselves when we rest in Christ and we are freed to love others just as they are.

**Q3.** Many possible answers such as control, fear, manipulation, promise of reward, threats, and love. Many of these get short term results but rarely propel us from a heart level. Love is the one thing that draws us to do good from a heart level.

**Q4.** We often want the blessings of God instead of God Himself. This story exposes that many of the good things we do, we actually do for ourselves, for reward or so people will like us or even to avoid punishment.

**Q5.** Answers will vary based on personal experience.

**Q6a.** The short answer: those who know they need Jesus to die for their sins are the ones who will receive God's gift of salvation. Self-righteous people do not accept the grace of God thinking they have enough righteousness on their own.

**Q6b.** The woman is overwhelmed. She shows it through affection, weeping, worship, and giving her most valued possession to Jesus.

**Q6c.** Grace becomes amazing. Only as much as we see the holiness of God and the depths of sin, do we see the wonder of God's grace.

**Q6d.** Generosity comes from the heart when we see the wonders of God's grace.

**Q7a.** When we are propelled by God's grace, we are moved by God's love toward us. We don't serve because we think we are capable, deserving, special...but in humility we step out in love because we see how God first loved us. When we step out in love, we see also that we must die to self-interest. This in turn shows us again our need for grace, because dying to self is hard. Having received grace again, we rejoice and are propelled to serve again out of grace.

**Q7b.** Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 for insight on this question.

**Q7c.** Grace moves at a heart level. Grace comes new every morning, it never runs out. Grace is not about me, but about Jesus. As grace flows into me, I can love others out of the overflow of my heart.

**Q7d.** It is not about me, my successes or failures. Jesus is glorified even in my weakness.

**Q8.** Paul is driven by love. Personal answers will vary.

## Lesson 4

**Q1a.** They were expecting Jesus to say follow the rules and keep the commandments. Jesus tells them the way to please God is to believe in Jesus. Your answers will vary in how it surprises you...but so often we feel like we are judged by our performance

**Q1b.** The people wanted free stuff. They were focused on their physical needs. We can easily miss the true blessings from God when our expectations for what God should be doing get in the way.

**Q1c.** Your answers will vary. Trusting, relying, depending really get down to the nitty gritty of our daily life.

**Q2a.** The rich young ruler was trusting in his wealth and his good behavior. We tend to be a self-reliant people who base our identity on our successes and failures.

**Q2b.** Jesus was pointing to the reality that He is God and that we are not! The main point is really that God is the one who saves. We cannot save ourselves.

**Q3.** Your answers will vary based on your personal experiences.

**Q4.** Some of the answers include: every spiritual blessing, chose us, holy and blameless, predestined, adopted to Sonship, loves us, redemption, forgiveness of sins, lavished grace on us, made known the mystery of His will, sealed by Holy Spirit, eternal inheritance.

## Lesson 5

**Q1.** The simple reason is that we want to be self-reliant. We are inherently allergic to grace.

**Q2.** Your answers will vary.

**Q3.** Your answers will vary.

**Q4.** There are a lot of right answers to this question! For example, how you see yourself shapes how you see other people. Or our emotions so often shape how we interact with others.

**Q5.** Remember each morning the Gospel promises about who we are in Christ. All of these promises...that we are beloved, accepted, belong, and so on...are true for us in Christ whether we believe them or not, but we only experience them as much as we believe them!

**Q6.** Answers will vary based on each person's experience. Growing in dependence is often by prayer, talking to God honestly about the situation, trusting that He is in charge of the outcomes. The Gospel speaks sanity into each situation. My anxiety says that this is the end if it doesn't work out, but the Gospel reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ...neither sword, danger, persecution, hunger, poverty, hardship, or even my sin!

**Q7.** By one sacrifice, Jesus has made us perfect forever. We should approach the throne of grace with confidence because Jesus is our righteousness. He has cleansed our consciences and purified us. Let us hold on to that hope!

## Lesson 6

**Q1.** Before conversion people usually see themselves as better than they really are. Or sometimes they see themselves as so bad that no one could save them or love them. So often people judge God claiming they could do a better job running the world than He does.

**Q2.** Your answer will vary based on your personal conversion.

**Q3a.** While there are good motivations for doing good things, sometimes people serve, go to church, give money, and so on to try to score points with God or other people. Certainly, another way we perform is attempting to fill this gap by trying to earn the acceptance of others. We do that through achievement, the car we drive, our Instagram account...

**Q3b.** Another name for this is sin management. This would include things like:

- Denial – "I am not that bad"
- Rationalization – "I have a good reason for doing that sin"
- Blame-shifting – "Well, she made me do it"
- Wearing a Mask – "I am fine"
- Judging others
- Comparison – "I am not as bad as so and so"
- Minimize God's law so that it is doable – "Well, I haven't actually murdered anyone." We forget Jesus says if we are angry at our brother it is the same as murder. Then we minimize that further and don't include being irritated with someone as a sin.

**Q3c.** How quickly we naturally go back to thinking that we are better than we really are!

**Q4a.** My acceptance is not determined by my performance, so I can be honest with myself. I can face my sin and weakness with courage and ask the Spirit to help me grow in those areas. Jesus came to die for me because I am a sinner. The Gospel reminds me there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! (Romans 8:1)

**Q4b.** The more I see my need for Jesus, the more amazing grace becomes for me. The more I see my identity in grace, the more joy I experience. But this is the hard work of the believer, to really believe this is what Jesus has done for me.