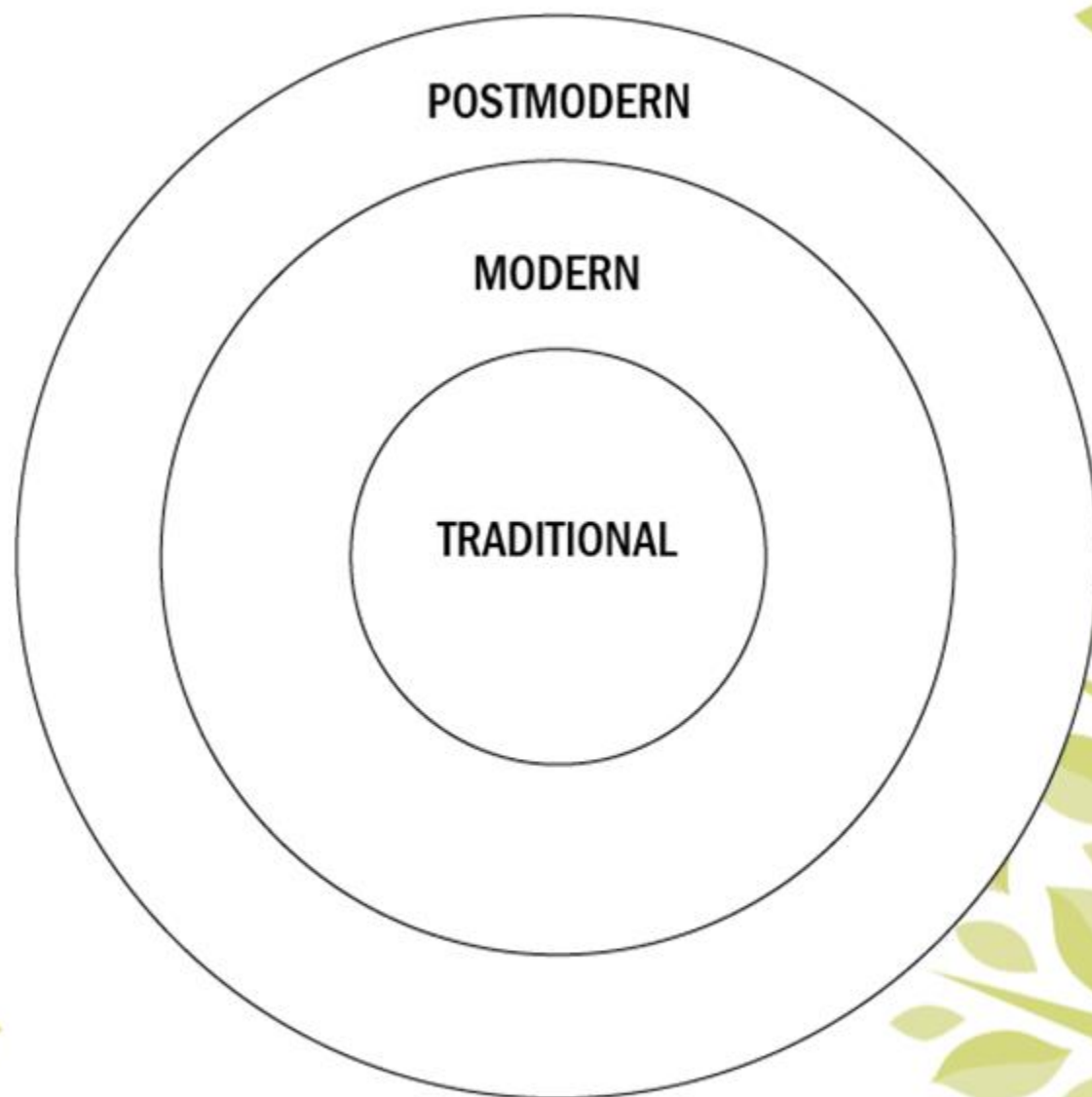


CULTURAL FACTORS IN DISCIPLING: CRITIQUING CULTURES TOGETHER

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ACMI 2013

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(size of circles varies according to the individual)



MAIN POINTS

- ✦ Individuals and cultures reflect both the image of God and the distortion of that image.
- ✦ When discipling cross-culturally, we need to draw out and celebrate the image of God and help people learn how to discern distortions of that image.
- ✦ Cultural factors, some of them unconscious assumptions at the worldview level, often distort the ways we understand and live Scripture and the Christian life.

MAIN POINTS

- ✪ We need to discern these distortions , both those impacting us and those impacting the students we disciple.
- ✪ We are able to see our own cultural weaknesses more easily when we have contact with other cultures. So critiquing cultures in the light of the Bible is best done in a cross-cultural group. The cross-cultural context is actually a gift to our discipleship.
- ✪ In the *I-DIG* , we pay attention to culture in several ways in hopes of helping groups begin to critique cultures in the light of Scripture.

ASSUMPTIONS

- ✦ **Necessity of dependence on the Spirit to reveal truth to us, direct and empower our disciple-making (Ps. 139:23-24)**
- ✦ **Disciple-making is an extension of evangelism and involves spiritual conflict (2 Cor. 4:4, 10:3-5)**
- ✦ **Regular specific prayer is crucial in disciple-making: see Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1: 17-19 and 3:16-19, Colossians 1:9-12**

CULTURE AND WORLDVIEW

- ✦ **Culture:** a system of meanings and values that shape the behavior of a society
- ✦ **Objective culture** is visible and changes most quickly; **subjective culture** is invisible and includes values, feelings and beliefs.
- ✦ **Worldview:** a society's mental picture of reality that "makes sense" of the world. Worldview is the deepest, most unconscious level of culture.



DIMENSIONS OF WORLDVIEW FROM P. HIEBERT

- ✦ **Cognitive:** Vision of reality: What do they believe about the nature of the world?
- ✦ **Affective:** Deeply held feelings that accompany that vision: What feelings accompany that belief?
- ✦ **Evaluative:** Commitments/priorities/allegiances: What do they depend on and worship?

AREAS FOR CULTURAL DISCERNMENT

- ✦ **How our own culture influences disciplers**
- ✦ **How culture influenced the writers and recipients in the Biblical cultures**
- ✦ **How North American culture influences the student**
- ✦ **How the students' cultures influence them**

WHAT DOES CULTURE INFLUENCE?

- ✧ The ways we read the Bible and live as followers of Jesus, thus what we model.
- ✧ The ways we and students understand the gospel, conversion, discipleship & discipling.
- ✧ The content we include in discipling
- ✧ The ways we and students communicate.
- ✧ The ways we and students interact with God.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES THAT IMPACT DISCIPLING

✧ **Analytical /Objects**

✧ **Individual**

✧ **Propositional Thinking**

✧ **Rules define reality**

✧ **Learn knowledge/books**

Holistic /Relationships

Group

Concrete or Intuitional

Relationships/ reality

Learn wisdom /life

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES THAT IMPACT DISCIPLING

☀ **Low Power Distance**

High Power Distance

☀ **Innocence/ Guilt**

Honor/Shame

☀ **Less Face**

More Face

☀ **Direct**

Indirect



SOME DEFINITIONS

- ✦ **Power Distance:** the extent to which members of a society accept the unequal distribution of power. **Low:** subordinates not overly deferential. **High:** subordinates defer to those over them.
- ✦ **Face:** Honor or public image. To lose face is to bring shame on oneself, one's family or the group to which one belongs. Individuals, families, groups and nations can all lose or gain face.

PEOPLE CAN LOSE FACE BY:

- ✦ **Being corrected or blamed in public, not knowing the answer to a question**
- ✦ **Not living up to a goal or expectation of others**
- ✦ **Receiving a direct "No" to a request**
- ✦ **Saying "No" to a request directly**
- ✦ **Causing a person to be out of unity with the group**

DIRECT/INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

- ★ **Direct:** purpose of communication: get across a message, burden of communication on sender of message, context (setting, facial expression, gestures) less important to message.
- ★ **Indirect:** purpose of communication: maintain relationship, burden on receiver to figure out message, context a part of the message.



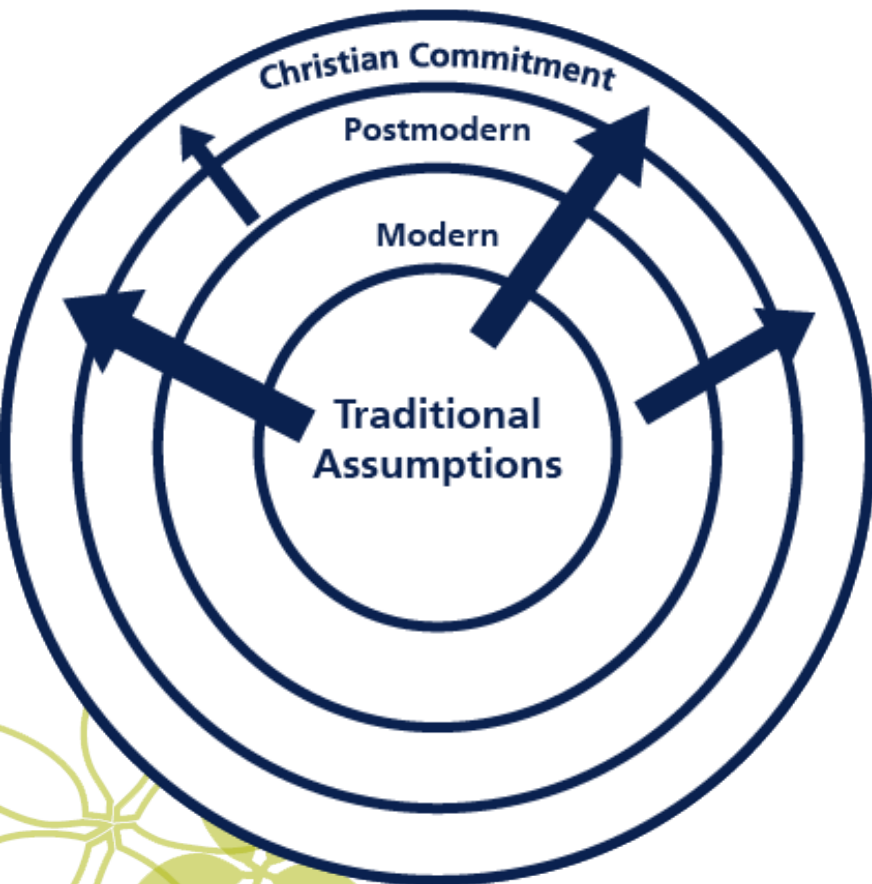
GUILT/SHAME

- ✦ **Guilt:** an internal sense of having done wrong, disobeyed moral law.
- ✦ In innocence/guilt societies, people are motivated by avoiding a guilty conscience and by obeying law
- ✦ **Shame:** a sense of impurity or exposure (nakedness) before God, self or others.
- ✦ In honor/shame societies, people are motivated to avoid shame in the eyes of others (to save their own and others' "face").

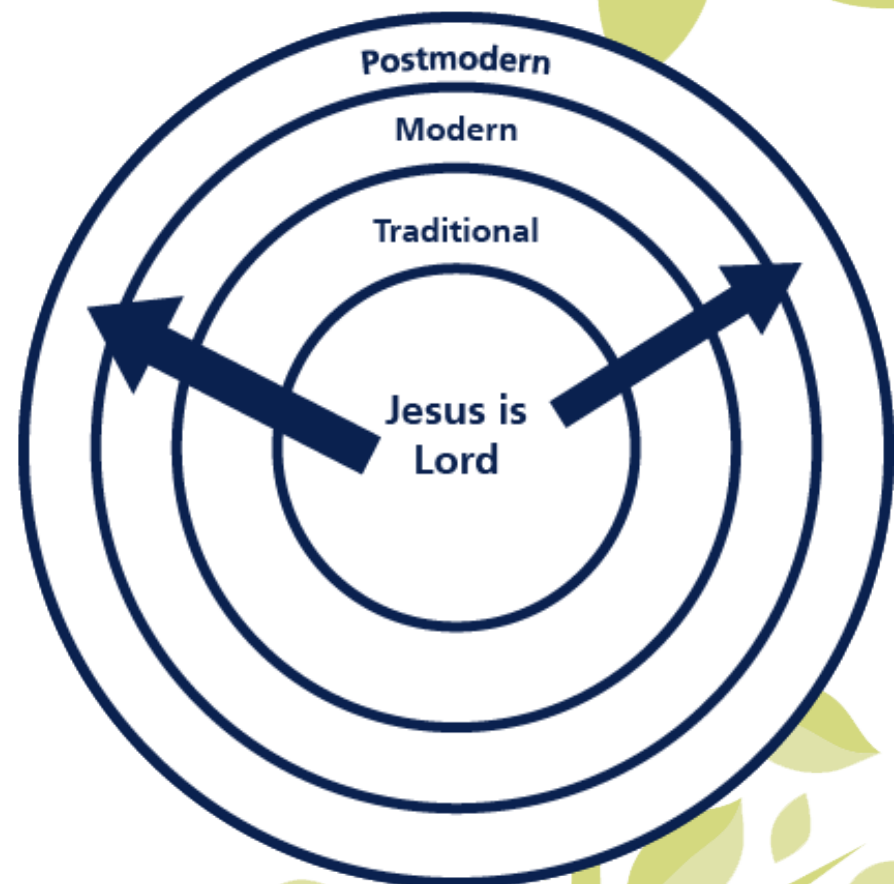
WESTERN VERSUS OTHER CONVERSION PROCESSES

Evangelism → Discipleship → Community

Community → Discipleship → Evangelism



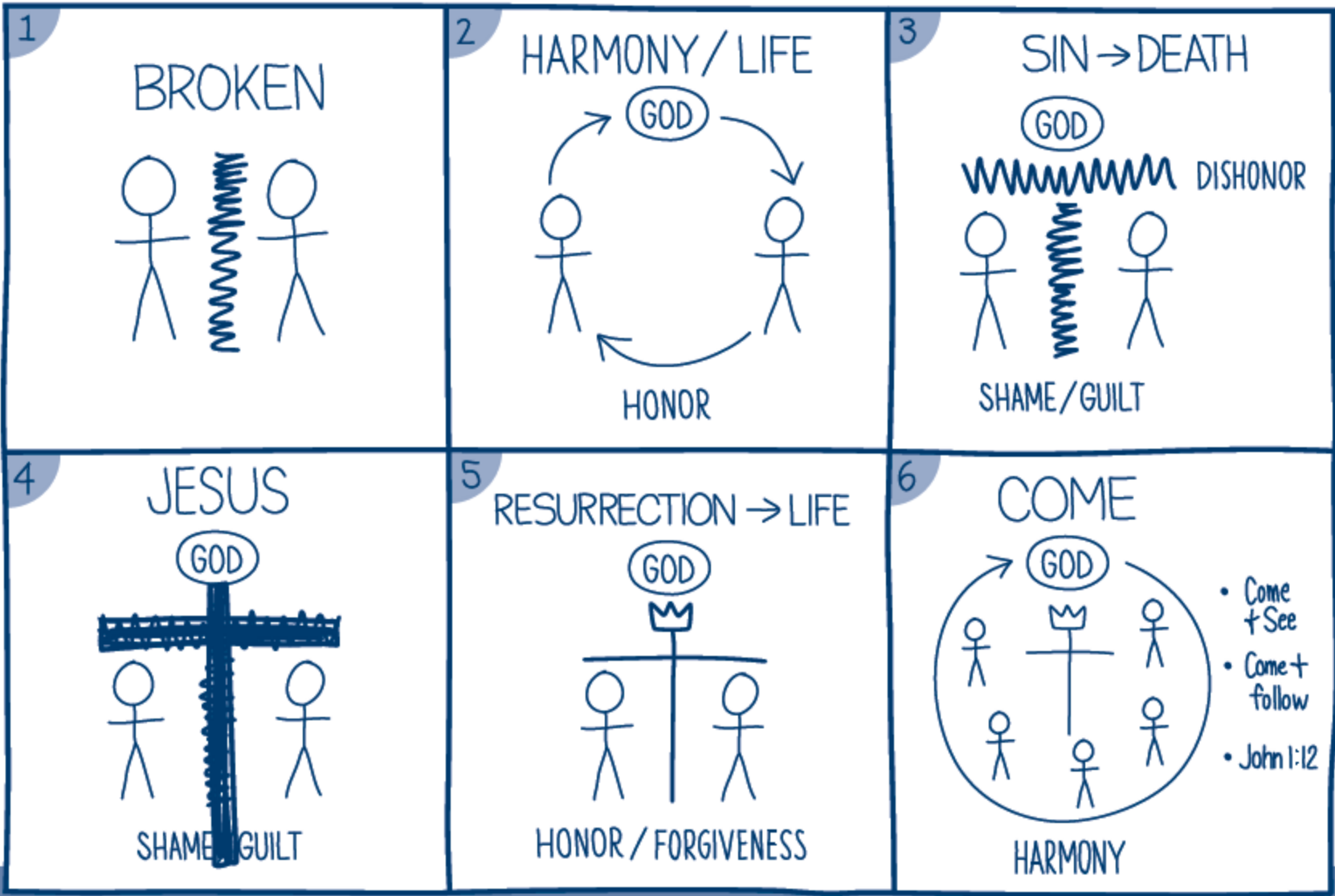
COMMITMENT (surface level)



CONVERSION (deep level)

GORDON SMITH'S ELEMENTS OF CONVERSION

- ✧ **Belief**
- ✧ **Repentance**
- ✧ **Feeling**
- ✧ **Will**
- ✧ **Baptism**
- ✧ **Conscious awareness of the Spirit**
- ✧ **Involvement in community**
- ✧ **Cultural (*Rawson addition: convert can see the faith as viable in the home culture)**



CONTEXTUALIZATION IN "BROKEN" DIAGRAMS

- ✦ Problem is lack of harmony, broken relationships
- ✦ Sin is our dishonoring God
- ✦ Results: shame as well as guilt
- ✦ Jesus takes our shame and is honored in the resurrection
- ✦ Elder brother Jesus offers honor, forgiveness and life
- ✦ Followers work to heal broken relationships
- ✦ First invitation is to seek, avoids premature decisions
- ✦ Seekers invited in to community, obedience
- ✦ Phrasing of invitation allows a "No" without saying "No"

GROWING IN CULTURAL DISCERNMENT

- ✦ Pray for God to reveal “planks” in our eyes
- ✦ Study cultures, including our own, talk about cultures with students
- ✦ Learn about the biblical cultures
- ✦ Read *Misreading Scripture ...* and other books
- ✦ Study Scripture with and spend time with Christians from other cultures
- ✦ Study Christian history and theology

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLING

- ✦ Start discussing culture and worldview with seekers
- ✦ Ask to hear their spiritual autobiography in order to discern where they are in the conversion/discipleship process
- ✦ Help people discover the image of God in their cultures, honor their cultures!
- ✦ Pray for the tearing down of strongholds, erroneous views about God, self and the world that come from personal, family or cultural backgrounds
- ✦ Pray for the tearing down of cultural idolatries

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLING

- ✦ **Strive for role reversals, where staff are learning from students- cuts down power distance**
- ✦ **Give people easy ways to say no- example of “Broken “diagrams**
- ✦ **Disciple in peer-led groups**
- ✦ **Use Jesus’ apprenticeship model**
- ✦ **Monitor relationships with God, self and others**
- ✦ **Is Christ being formed in the group? (Gal. 4:19)**
- ✦ **Look for legalistic instead of love-motivated behavior**



HELPING STUDENTS CRITIQUE CULTURES

- ✪ **Large group exercise (with both seekers and Christians):**
Have regional groups answer the questions:
 - What in your culture would make it hard to choose to follow Jesus?
 - What would make it hard to live as a follower of Jesus?
- ✪ **Have groups come back together and share**
- ✪ **Include questions relating to culture and cultural critique in Bible discussions**

SAMPLE QUESTIONS RELATED TO CULTURE

- ✪ What is the historical and cultural background of this passage? ...
- ✪ How do people from your culture relate to God or the gods? ...
- ✪ What questions do you have? Answer the questions from the text and the context.
- ✪ What would this text have meant to the original readers?...
- ✪ How does what you learned from the text affirm and/or challenge aspects of the culture you're living in today? The culture you grew up in?

QUESTIONS FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- ✿ How has my culture impacted my reading of Scripture and living of the Christian life? My view of discipling? What cultural strongholds might there be in my life?
- ✿ How has the home country culture and host country culture impacted the students' views of God and relationships? What cultural strongholds might be hindering students' discipleship?
- ✿ How has culture impacted communication patterns for both me and the students? How about relationship with God?



We have a multicultural church. We do small groups in very multicultural settings. A lot of this focuses on a group of people who are similar. How would you preach scripture to a congregation that is so multicultural?





I can guess why the younger generation is getting more pictorial, but why do you say they're becoming more honor-shame oriented?



THE I-DIG: WHAT AND WHY?

- ✦ **“An Introductory Small Group Discipleship Guide” for peer-led groups of three to five**
- ✦ **Employs the hear/respond/debrief model**
- ✦ **Peer leadership lessens power distance**
- ✦ **Smaller number helps develop transparent trust and accountability (same sex groups better)**
- ✦ **Prepares students to reproduce the study**
- ✦ **Raises cultural and reentry issues**



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR *I-DIG* GUIDE

Welcome to your I-DIG group! Committing to help one another grow during a specific time period can be very powerful for group members. To help you get the most out of your group experience, we encourage each new I-DIG group to read and agree to the following practices. Some groups actually sign this page to show their commitment.





We will:

- participate in a one-and-a-half-hour meeting once weekly for twelve weeks. (Some groups may decide on one hour per week with a little more homework).
- listen well to other members of the group.
- share our thoughts freely but not dominate the discussion.
- stay focused on the Bible passage or topic being discussed.
- keep everything group members share inside the group.
- memorize the memory verse and practice the suggested discipline each week.
- pray for one another in-between group meetings.
- encourage one another and challenge each other to put into practice what we are learning.
- celebrate our group experience at the end of the twelve weeks.
- prayerfully consider finding two or three others whom we can lead through the same material once we have completed the *I-DIG*.
- decide on a group time, place, and dates.



THE I-DIG GROUP MEETING: A PREVIEW

INTERVARSITY

- 
- OPEN** gives group members a chance to share how obedience to the previous week's passage, the practice of the spiritual discipline, and memorization of the verse went. Spend 15 minutes on this part (10 if your meeting is only one hour).
- 
- DIG IN** is the Bible discussion time. Take 55 minutes (35 for a one-hour meeting) to read the introduction and go through the questions. The week's facilitator should decide in advance which questions are essential and which can be omitted if time runs short.
- 
- RESPOND** contains instructions for a practice that will help you apply the study to your life and as well as a memory verse chosen to help you remember the topic of the study for the week. Spend 20 minutes (15 for a one-hour meeting) reading the instructions for the week's discipline, going over the memory verse, and praying together.
- 
- DIG DEEPER** includes suggested studies to help you go deeper into the subject or "customize" the topic for people from different cultural backgrounds. You can do these studies during the twelve weeks or return to them later. Some of them will fit into your daily time alone with God. For those who lead a new group of friends through the I-DIG after finishing the material yourself, "Dig Deeper" will help you go more in depth on the topic so that you can be even more prepared to lead others.

The "Guidelines and Notes for Facilitators" section found in the back of the guide has important notes for the first meeting and for each additional one. If you are the facilitator, read it before the first meeting and each week as you prepare the chapters.

If you have only one hour to meet, here are a few tips:

- Keep your group size small, three at the most.
- Have everyone read the chapter introduction under "Dig In" and then read and mark the Scripture text as suggested in question two in each study in advance. You can each do this during one or two of your times alone with God each week.
- Focus on the questions with an asterisk* as you go through the Bible discussion.



TINY.CC/IDIG





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2 GOD THE SON

3 GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

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J SUGGESTIONS & DISCUSSION
GUIDE FOR ADDITIONAL I-DIG
STUDIES: BOOK OF EPHESIANS

THE I-DIG COMMITMENTS

- ✦ participate in a one-and-a-half-hour meeting once weekly for twelve weeks.
- ✦ listen well to other members of the group.
- ✦ share our thoughts freely but not dominate the discussion.
- ✦ stay focused on the Bible passage or topic being discussed.
- ✦ keep everything group members share inside the group.
- ✦ memorize the memory verse and practice the suggested discipline each week.
- ✦ pray for one another in-between group meetings.
- ✦ encourage one another and challenge each other to put into practice what we are learning.
- ✦ celebrate our group experience at the end of the twelve weeks.
- ✦ prayerfully consider finding two or three others whom we can lead through the same material once we have completed the *I-DIG*.

CULTURAL AWARENESS AND I-DIG GROUPS

- ✦ Staff should model critiquing their own cultures when prepping students in advance
- ✦ Groups with members from several countries will permit better cultural critique and guard against misreading Scripture with one lens
- ✦ Go over the “Cultural Tips for Communication” at the beginning
- ✦ Find ways to make inductive Bible study more concrete (tell stories, mark the texts).

CULTURAL TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION

We all want to communicate clearly. This is especially true if we are speaking with people whose home language and culture are different from our own. We may feel that we are missing the right words or that our pronunciation is getting in the way. We repeat ourselves and check for understanding. However, even when we are comfortable with our language, we can still have communication problems. Listen to what these people are thinking:

ANN: How boring! She just sits there and doesn't say anything.

MARY: How rude! She talks and talks and never lets me say a word.

JOE: He's not listening. He won't even look at me.

JOHN: The way he looks at me makes me uncomfortable.

What can we do with problems like these? The best answer is to go out of our way to show interest and respect as we speak. However, we have different ways of showing interest and respect. Our style or pattern of communication can differ from culture to culture, family to family, and yes, even between men and women. These differences often cause us to send – and receive – wrong messages. But if we see the problem, we can make small changes to adjust to the other person's style.



TOOL

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1 reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

K.T.

10 sufferings / glory Math 5

Trials

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be over-joyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as meddler. However, if you suffer as a christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And,

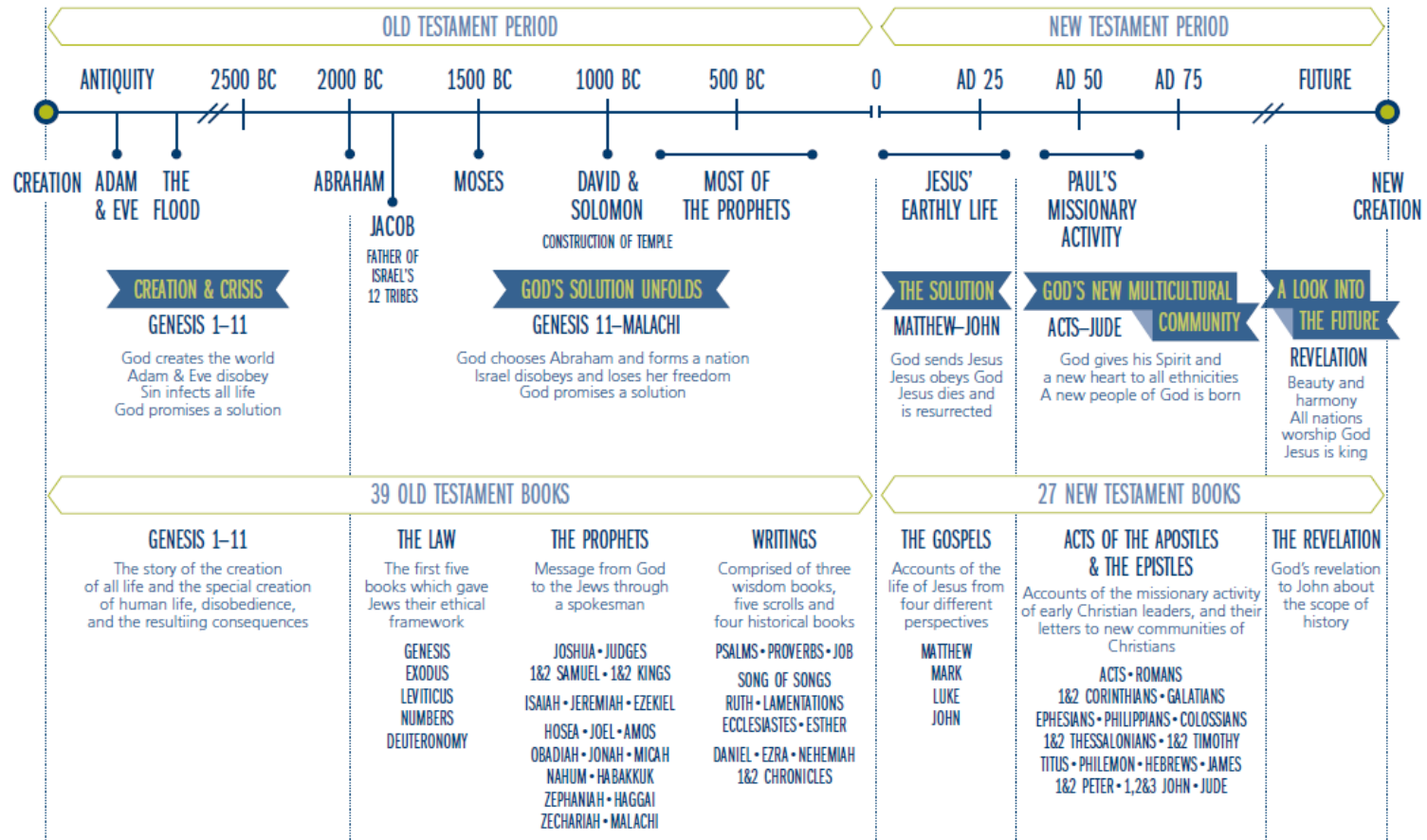
"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

20 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good. To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of

To Elders



THE BIBLE AT A GLANCE



This chart is taken from the I-DIG International Disciples Group guide (tiny.cc/digid), published by InterVarsity International Student Ministry in May, 2013. "The Bible at a Glance" chart is adapted from *Passport to the Bible* by Fred Wagner. Copyright © 1999 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400 Downers Grove, IL 60515. www.ivpress.com. Download this chart at 2100.intervarsity.org



GUIDELINES & NOTES FOR FACILITATORS



TOOL

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GETTING STARTED WITH THE *I-DIG* GUIDE

1. Make sure that everyone gets a copy of the guide in advance and reads "Discipleship and Digging: Introduction to the *I-DIG* Guide," "Getting the Most Out of Your *I-DIG* Guide," and "The *I-DIG* Group Meeting: A Preview" before your first meeting. Highlight key parts of these articles for yourself, so that you can mention them in the first group meeting.
2. During your first meeting, read aloud and discuss the commitments listed in "Getting the Most Out of Your *I-DIG* Guide." Agree together to these commitments for the next 12 weeks. If someone finds that they cannot attend regularly, ask them to attend one more meeting (at least the beginning of it) so the group can pray for them. Hopefully this will help them feel less awkward about not being able to continue and more likely to try again later.
3. If someone new joins the group within the first three weeks, have them read and agree to the commitments. After three weeks, close the group.
4. Your group can take turns facilitating or let one older Christian facilitate. You will grow more if you take turns. Each facilitator should read and follow the guidelines in this section.
5. Prepare each chapter in advance. Mark more important questions so that you can focus on them if time is running out (we have marked the ones we consider important with an asterisk [*]). The "APPLY" section is the most important, so be sure to leave plenty of time for that.
6. Find an older Christian who can advise you and answer questions. Ask this "coach" and additional people whom you recruit to pray regularly for your group and group members. Keep them informed!
7. Keep the meeting on schedule. You may need to shorten the passage or have fewer people share.





8. Invest in a pack of three-by five index cards. Take some to the meeting each week so people can write the memory verse on one side and record prayer requests for group members on the other side.
9. Don't be afraid of silence in the meeting. People need time to think about the questions.
10. Don't answer or comment on all the questions yourself. The goal is to help the group find answers together.
11. Here are some suggestions for common problems:
 - ⦿ Someone asks a question that's not related to the passage: Say, "Let's discuss this question after the meeting." If it's an important question, assign someone in the group to research it or talk to your coach.
 - ⦿ Someone gives a strange or wrong interpretation: Say, "Where is that found in the passage?"
 - ⦿ Someone shares from outside material: Say, "Let's focus on what our group is seeing."
12. Make sure the weekly facilitator has a copy of this guide and the notes for the appropriate chapter.
13. The I-DIG website tiny.cc/idig has suggestions for coaches and facilitators and will add more information as additional people use the I-DIG and share their experiences. Please email all comments about what went well, what needs improving and suggested changes to idigcomments@gmail.com.



CHAPTER 1: FACILITATOR'S NOTES

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- ⦿ To help participants understand and start to experience the extravagant forgiveness, **grace**, and love of God the Father.
- ⦿ To help students understand more deeply the difference between a personal relationship with God and religion based on performance.
- ⦿ To help participants understand in particular that God's love is not dependent on our actions, no matter how much we have failed him or served him, and to understand the concept of grace.
- ⦿ To provide an opportunity for students to turn from the "hired servant" or "older brother" mentality of working to please God.

NOTES ON THE QUESTIONS:

1. Pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is doing as you begin this I-DIG journey with your group (and every week). Relationships with fathers are often connected to much pain. Stop to pray if something important comes up, especially during the application time.



OPEN

- Introduce yourselves.
- Discuss key points from "Discipleship and Digging."
- Read aloud and discuss the guidelines listed in "Getting the Most Out of Your I-DIG Guide" (p.10) and look at the time-use suggestions in "The I-DIG Group Meeting: A Preview" (p.11). As a group, agree to these guidelines and decide on your weekly meeting time and place.
- Pray for your time of Bible discussion, which we call "Dig In."



DIG IN

The Bible is the story of God's pursuing love. It tells us that God created human beings for relationship with him. He wants our obedience, but more than that, he wants our love. Ever since the first people disobeyed God, human beings naturally run from him. We do not like to depend on him, obey him, or stay in relationship with him. We think we know what is best for our own lives. Again and again we find ourselves in trouble, like the two sons in the story you are about to read. But God keeps looking for us.

The story begins with a son asking his father for his inheritance while his father is still alive. He is so eager and impatient for the life he desires to live that he is not willing to wait for his father's death to receive his share of the family wealth.



- *1. In your culture, what are relationships with fathers like? How would parents react to a request like the one this son makes?
- *2. Take a few minutes to read through the texts silently. Mark words you do not know, items that impress you and questions you have. Also look for repeated words and ideas as well as contrasts.

.....

.....

.....

.....

This story is told to tax collectors, who were some of the most despised people in Jewish society during the time of Jesus. They collected taxes required by the Romans (who ruled over the Jews) and often became rich by collecting extra money. Jesus spent time with such people, along with others who were simply labeled "sinners." When the religious leaders of the time saw Jesus eating with such people, they questioned him and grumbled. Jesus told three stories to explain why he was eating with "sinners." Verses 3-10 include stories about a lost sheep and a lost coin.



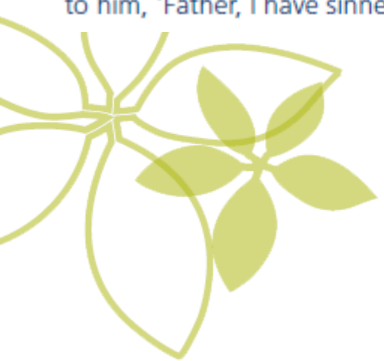


LUKE 15:1-2, 11-32 (CEV)

¹ Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus.

² So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

¹¹ Jesus also told them another story: Once a man had two sons. ¹² The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons. ¹³ Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat. ¹⁵ He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. ¹⁶ He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing. ¹⁷ Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! ¹⁸ I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you.



¹⁹ I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

²⁰ The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

²¹ The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son." ²² But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. ²⁴ This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.



► INTERPRET

Feeding pigs was a very shameful job for a Jewish person; the son cannot be in a worse situation. He plans to go home and ask to be a hired servant. Perhaps he thinks he can pay his father back for the wasted money! The father sees his son while he is still far off, meaning he is out looking. The father shames himself by leaving the house and running out to greet his son. He interrupts the son's speech and welcomes him. The robe, ring, and sandals are signs of sonship and honor. The older son insults his father and the guests by refusing to come in to the banquet, an action that was shameful. But the father humbles himself once again by leaving his guests and the banquet to talk with his older son.

- *5. The younger son was expecting to become a hired servant and instead was treated like a son. If you had been the younger son, how would you have felt when your father treated you this way?
- *6. What was going on in the mind of the older brother? What did he not understand about his father?
- *7. This story, which would have been shocking to Jesus' hearers, is a very clear picture of **grace**, the unconditional and undeserved love of God. What was the lesson for the sinners and tax collectors?

For the Pharisees and teachers of the law?



► APPLY

- *8. How does this picture of God differ from the ideas of God (or gods) in your culture?
From the idea of God you used to have?
- 9. When and how did you first come home to God?
- *10. At different times, we can identify with the younger son, older son, or even the father. Which one do you identify with most right now?
Are there cultural, family, or personal obstacles keeping you from experiencing the Father's love?
What is the Father saying to you through this story?
- *11. How does this picture of God the Father change your view of the **Christian** life?



WORD & CONCEPT LIST



TOOL

apostles. In the Gospels the word refers to one of Jesus' twelve original disciples. In Acts and the Epistles the word has a larger meaning: a disciple specially sent by Jesus to share the gospel. An apostle had to be an eyewitness of Jesus after he rose from the dead. Paul's experience of Jesus on the road to Damascus qualified him (Acts 9:1–15; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).

baptism. In the New Testament, baptisms were done by dipping someone under water as a sign of washing sin away. John the Baptist, the prophet who prepared people for Jesus, baptized people when they had a change of heart and mind and turned from sin to God. This change of heart and mind is called *repentance*.

Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18–20). Paul, when speaking of baptism, said that the act of going under the water and coming out of it is a sign of dying to sin and starting new life in God (Romans 6:3–11, Colossians 2:12).

For new believers, baptism is an outward sign of something God has done inside; *it does not bring salvation*. However, it is an important (usually public) testimony of who we are and an act of obedience to God.

Christian. A Christian is someone who follows Jesus Christ and believes that he is the Son of God, was sent to earth through a virgin birth, lived a sinless life, was killed, rose again from the dead, and lives now in heaven. Today the word *Christian* is often misused. A true Christian is not identified by a certain religious background or ethnicity or by how "good" they are. Instead, a true Christian can be identified as someone who has given his or her life over to God's control, obeys God, desires to become more like Jesus, and pursues Jesus' purposes in the world.

Note: Because people from certain cultural backgrounds may have an inaccurate idea of what the word *Christian* truly means, it may sometimes be helpful to describe yourself first as a "follower of Jesus" and then explain to friends or family what the term *Christian* really means.



 RESPOND

Your practice for the week and throughout the 12 weeks of the I-DIG group is *daily time alone with God*. If you are not used to daily time with God, you can find some tips following this chapter. Each *I-DIG* chapter gives suggestions for Scriptures you can read during your daily time with God in **bold** print in the “Respond” or “Dig Deeper” section.

Adoration is reverent praise—our human response to God’s amazing love for us. In your times alone with God this week, practice adoration by praying aloud **Psalms 103** and **other psalms** and using them to lead you into prayer. You can make them even more worshipful by changing pronouns that refer to God as “he” to “you.” Other psalms that you can pray include **Psalms 145, 96, 98, and 146**.

Read the memory verse together:

- ▶ **1 JOHN 3:1 (NIV)** See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Write this verse in your heart language here:

Handwriting practice area with two horizontal dotted lines on a light green background.

Memorize it in your heart language and in English this week.

Handwriting practice area with ten horizontal dotted lines on a white background.



WHY MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE?

- Memorizing helps you take in the verse at a deep level. God can use it to change you as you think about it over a period of time.
- Memorizing can help you obey God and defeat the enemy more easily.
- It can help you recognize lies being told in the world around you.
- Memorized verses help you remember God's presence and depend more on him.

HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

- Study the verse or verses and apply them in your life; ask God to write the Scripture on your heart as you memorize it.
- Get an index card and write the reference on the front and the verse on the back. Place the card in a visible place where you will be reminded to review it.
- Repeat the verse aloud often. Speaking aloud will actually help you memorize more accurately and remember longer.
- Review your verses daily and prayerfully think about them as you review.



DIG DEEPER

- If your relationship with your earthly father is distant or difficult, it may be hard to relate to the love and grace of God the Father. If this is the case, share this with an older Christian who can pray for and with you. And think about verses that talk about God's love.
- Matthew 6:9–13, the "Lord's Prayer," is the prayer of a well-loved child. Think about the various requests of this prayer and put them into your own words as you pray.
- Chapters one and two of *Losing Face & Finding Grace* by Tom Lin (InterVarsity Press) explore the implications of Luke 15:11–32 for people like the younger and older brothers.
- Timothy Keller's *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (Riverhead Books/Penguin) is a powerful look at the Father's love.
- *I Dared to Call Him Father: The Miraculous Story of a Muslim Woman's Encounter with God* by Bilquis Sheikh (Chosen Books) tells one woman's story of understanding God's Father-love for her.



OPEN

- How did you put into practice what you learned from the Word last week?
- How did your practice of adoration and time alone with God go last week?
- Take turns repeating the memory verse without looking at the guide.
- Pray briefly about what you just shared and for your time in the Word.

DIG IN

Across cultures and throughout history, Jesus' character, life, and teachings have often been debated. In this chapter, we will explore Jesus' power and authority through a letter Paul wrote to the Colossians around 60 A.D. The Colossians were a group of **Christians** in Colossae, which is in present-day Turkey.

- *1. Your picture of Jesus may have developed as your spiritual understanding has progressed. What words have you used to describe Jesus over the years?
How do you describe him today?
2. Take a few minutes to read through the text. Mark words you do not know and questions you have.



Paul is writing from a Roman prison to encourage the Colossians to remain true to what they know about Jesus Christ. There are some new teachings in Colossae that are false. The false teachers are saying that Jesus' power and authority are not enough to offer complete salvation. They believed that, to be saved, people should follow Jesus but also continue searching for secret truth and wisdom from other sources. Although the church in Colossae has witnessed some great fruit from sharing the gospel, they are tempted to believe these new teachings that deny the full authority and power of Jesus.

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR TIME ALONE WITH GOD



TOOL
D

- Decide on a quiet place and time where you can be alone and focus on God, and then have your time with God at the same time each day. Many Christians find that starting their day with God is a great help in living as a disciple.
- Fifteen minutes per day is a good amount of time to begin with, but you may want to increase that time as you grow in the Lord.
- We recommend that you read Scripture and pray in your heart language precisely because it is your *heart* language. Communicating with God in your native language will enable you to grow closer to him and also better prepare you for living as a disciple back home.
- Spend 10–20 minutes reading through Scripture and listening for what God may be saying to you through the verses you read. Write down your thoughts about Scripture in a notebook.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN SCRIPTURE:

- **SIN** to confess
- **PROMISE** to claim
- **EXAMPLE** to follow
- **COMMAND** to obey
- **KNOWLEDGE** about God, self, or the world



FORGIVENESS



TOOL

F

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

It is canceling the debt of a person who has wronged us while taking on the cost of repayment ourselves. It includes:

- ▶ acknowledging what really happened: *hurting*
- ▶ sending away our emotional reaction to what happened
- ▶ canceling the punishment we want to give the person
- ▶ paying the cost ourselves by going through the emotional work needed for our own healing and eventual reconciliation

Restored friendship can/should only occur if the other person is ready and trustworthy.

WHY FORGIVE?

- ▶ To obey God and follow Jesus' example
- ▶ To prevent emotional and even physical torment and allow healing into our lives
- ▶ To prevent hurt to other people
- ▶ To open up the possibility of restored relationship with the person
- ▶ To remain in strong relationship with God



SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADING I-DIG GROUPS

- ✦ Consider training facilitators and prepping Bible studies in advance in a small group where staff model everything
- ✦ Motivating students to do the homework- stronghold of academic idolatry needs to be torn down- challenge with Matthew 6:33
- ✦ Use a Friday night slot and divide Christians into several I-DIG groups that meet at the same time
- ✦ Prayer is critical- consider recruiting a prayer warrior for each group and having the student facilitator communicate with that person
- ✦ Do the *I-DIG* during the summer

MATTHEW 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



THE I-DIG WEBSITE

- ✦ tiny.cc/idig
- ✦ Free downloads of “Bible at a Glance Chart” and “Broken” diagrams
- ✦ Suggestions for customizing the “Broken” diagrams
- ✦ Video for students to watch at the beginning- will announce when we post it
- ✦ Additional helps for I-DIG coaches and facilitators: we will add to the website as we receive feedback
- ✦ Send us feedback by emailing idigcomments@gmail.com

SUMMARY: CRITIQUING CULTURES TOGETHER

- ✪ Prayerfully engage in a process of discerning cultural strengths and weaknesses of self and students.
- ✪ Help students learn to engage in this discernment process in a group, preferably of mixed cultures: critiquing cultures together.
- ✪ Lead them through Jesus' disciple-making cycle: Hear in community/ Respond through obedience/ Debrief and grow deeper.
- ✪ Look to see Christ formed in the group as well as in individuals.