

SMALL GROUP

FOUR

INTRO

There is nothing quite like the anticipation that comes with waiting for something really awesome. Whether you're waiting for a new phone, an upcoming event with friends, a family vacation, or anything similar, the emotions you experience in the waiting are part of the fun.

But the other side of the coin is when you're waiting for something unpleasant to be over. Maybe you have a teacher who is not very nice and you're waiting for the semester to be over. Maybe you just broke up with a boyfriend or girlfriend and you're waiting to get over them. Maybe your parents are going through a divorce. Maybe you have a relative who is sick. Sometimes, waiting can be pretty rough.

When we look at our lives, it's so easy to feel overwhelmed. Sure there are times when we wait for really fun things. But there are times when we wait through tough things that can leave us depressed and down. And yet, God has promised that one day He will make all things new. We can trust His word. We can actively live as children of this promise, all the while hoping in a future where everything will be made right and we are fully redeemed.

That is what this session is about. Let's dive in.



WAIT FOR IT!

When is the wait worth it? Work with your group to complete the following activity.

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GETTING
STARTED

CAN YOU NAME A TIME WHEN YOU FOUND YOURSELF LOOKING FORWARD TO SOMETHING REALLY AWESOME?

Answers will vary, here and following.

HOW LONG DID YOU HAVE TO WAIT?

WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE WHILE YOU HAD TO WAIT?

WHAT EMOTIONS DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FINALLY GOT TO EXPERIENCE THE THING YOU WERE WAITING ON?

FINAL QUESTION: WAS IT WORTH THE WAIT?

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DIGGING IN

HOLDING ON FOR THE FUTURE

Work through the following passages with your group to learn about how the Gospel will one day TRULY change everything.

“16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” - 2 Corinthians 4:16–18.

Paul makes a number of contrasts here. Can you name them all?

Outer self	vs.	inner self
Wasting away	vs.	renewed daily
Light	vs.	weighty
Momentary	vs.	eternal
Affliction	vs.	glory (or "weight of glory")
What we can see vs.		things unseen

- Now, look at vs. 16. When Paul says we don't lose heart, he is talking about being bold. Can you guess what Paul is encouraging us to be bold about?

Due to space restrictions, refer to answers in the Leader Guide.

- What do you think Paul means when he says, “our outer self is wasting away”?
- What does Paul say happens to our inner self? Does anyone have any idea what Paul may be talking about here?
- Whoa! How does Paul describe his troubles in vs. 17? Knowing what you just read in 2 Corinthians 11, would you describe them as “light”? What words would you use to describe them?
- Here's another contrast: “Light and momentary affliction” versus an “eternal weight of glory” so good it can't be described. What exactly is Paul saying?
- In verse 18, Paul helps us know how to process the hard times we experience because we're Christ-followers. He does it with another contrast. What is he contrasting, and how does this help us deal with the tough times we face?

READ REVELATION 22:1-5 AS A GROUP TO SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING TO CHANGE EVERYTHING.

“1Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” - Revelation 22:1–5.

Take a moment and circle every place in the passage that speaks to a new future where God has redeemed the world from the consequences of sin.

River of the water of life; the throne of God; the “city”; tree of life; names of servant's foreheads; no more night; no sun; eternal existence with God.

- The first hint we have of God redeeming a broken world is in verse 2. What were the leaves of the tree of life for?

Healing the nations.

- In the world around you every day, what are some examples of the kind of conflict you see between people?

Answers will vary.

- What are some examples of the conflict we see between countries and nations?

The strife we see between people and people groups, and even between nations will no longer be an issue. There will be a day when God will usher in a new reality where there is only peace, not war or conflict.

- Look at verse 3. When John talks about the “accursed,” he is talking about the consequences of sin. He says here that there will be no consequences of sin anymore. What are some of the consequences of sin?

Separation from God; spiritual death; physical death; disease; war; famine, and so on. How cool it is that when God returns to make all things new, these will all be gone!

- Look at verse 4. What will be our relationship with God?

We will know Him personally, face-to-face.

- What does verse 5 tell us about the future of this new reality?

It will be eternal! It will last forever.



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WRAPPING UP

FAITH IN THE FUTURE

Work through the following activity with your group.

CLOSING

KNOWING THE FUTURE THAT GOD IS PLANNING GIVES US HOPE. AND HOPE MAKES US BOLD.

THE FUTURE GOD IS PLANNING COULD HAPPEN AT ANY MOMENT. IT COULD HAPPEN RIGHT NOW. HOW DOES THAT CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT LIVING YOUR LIFE FOR CHRIST?

Answers will vary, here and following.

CAN YOU THINK OF THREE TO FIVE WAYS IN WHICH YOU COULD BE BOLDER IN LIVING OUT YOUR FAITH?

WHAT ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDE? DO YOU GET HOPELESS AT TIMES? HOW CAN KNOWING WHAT GOD IS PLANNING IN THE FUTURE IMPACT YOUR PRESENT?

If there's one thing we know about the Gospel, it's that it demands a reaction. Once you hear the story of Jesus leaving heaven and coming to earth to redeem us, you have to respond.

Over the course of the last four sessions, you and your friends have walked through the story of the Gospel: from the fall of man, to Christ's death and resurrection. You've seen how believers are called to live. You've seen how we have a hope that is greater than any temporary hope this world has to offer.

No matter what, now that you've experienced these last four session, you KNOW. You've encountered the Good News and there's a choice set before you.

Maybe you came into this event already in a relationship with the Lord. It's possible that you renewed that commitment, or asked God to help you re-tune your heart to Him. Maybe you walk closely with the Lord already, and this was just a sweet time to grow in Him and in your community.

Of course, there's always the option of apathy. Maybe you came to this event because a parent made you, or your crush was here. Maybe you just came because that's what you've always done. And when the choice was set before you: life or death, it's not that you chose death, it's that you didn't choose life. You can ignore the question, but that, in and of itself, is an answer.

But it's very possible that something changed within you during this event. That the Holy Spirit revealed to you that Jesus loves you, died for you, and deeply wants to have a relationship with you. That your life is more than just about who you date, what sports you play, or where you live. Your life can be about the gospel. It can be used to bring glory to God.

If you're still on the fence, keep praying. If you don't know what next steps to take, ask someone. If you're confused, keep seeking. Look for the ways God is calling you out of your normal life, and into change that transforms all of it.