



JON THOMPSON

CONVERGENCE

Why Jesus needs to be
more than our Lord
and Savior for the
church to thrive in a
post-Christian world

Convergence

by

Jon Thompson
C4 Church
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA



WELCOME

Copyright 2018 by Jon Thompson

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published by Lifetogether Ministries

Copyright and use of the curriculum template is retained by Brett Eastman.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotes are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 and 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

ISBN 978-1-7322325-3-2
Printed in Canada

The background of the page features a blurred image of a crowd of people. In the foreground on the left, a hand is raised in a gesture, its silhouette dark against the lighter background. In the lower right corner, there are two large circles: a solid yellow one and a white one with a dotted outline. The word "Contents" is centered in a large, white, serif font.

Contents

Introduction	6
Using This Workbook	9
Outline for Each Session	10

SESSIONS

Session One:	The World as We Know It	12
Session Two:	Jesus; Lord and Model	26
Session Three:	Necessary Spiritual Practices	40
Session Four:	What Are Spiritual Gifts	54
Session Five:	The Gifts of Love	68
Session Six:	The Gifts of Word	82
Session Seven:	The Gifts of Power	96
Session Eight:	Welcome to Convergence	110

APPENDICES

Frequently Asked Questions	126
Small Group Agreement	128
Expectations	129
Small Group Calendar	130
Spiritual Check-in	131
Memory Verse Cards	132
Prayer and Praise Report	133

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Hosting an Open House	136
Leading for the First Time	137
Leadership Training 101	138
Small Group Roster	140

Introduction

Welcome to Convergence, a journey we're going to take through God's Word and into God's work in the world throughout history. I'm really glad you've joined us. Whether you realize it or not, your decision to participate in a small group to engage in this study is your first step toward convergence. More on this as the study unfolds.

No doubt you've heard the old saying about our inability sometimes to see the forest because we're face to face with a tree. It's hard to get the big picture if we can't see beyond our noses. Or to put it bluntly, most of us are so caught up in our immediate circumstances that we find it difficult to step back and consider that our lives and everything around us came from somewhere and is going somewhere. But unless we get a big picture perspective once in a while, what we do during our present moment of history will lack guidance, purpose, and direction.

I hope you are part of a church. If you are not, expect to experience a significant challenge to engage. And if your view of the Church is mostly that it's an organization you include in your list of groups you're part of, I'm praying you will think again. There are profound differences between being a member of an organization and a part of an organism. One of those differences is life. You're going to have many opportunities to discover this during these sessions. They may simply be more or less interesting discussions about an aspect of your life, or they may become an eye-opening panorama of what God is doing around you, in you, and throughout history.

That last thing; that's what we're going for: to see the Church as God has always intended it to be and made sure that it actually was in every moment of history. And to realize we're part of that life right now.

Enjoy the journey,

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'JTH', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jon Thompson

“There are profound differences between being a member of an organization and a part of an organism.”





Using

THIS WORKBOOK

- 1.** Notice in the Table of Contents there are three sections: (1) Sessions; (2) Appendices; and (3) Small Group Leaders. Familiarize yourself with the Appendices. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.
- 2.** If you are facilitating/leading or co-leading a small group, the section Small Group Leaders will give you some experiences of others that will encourage you and help you avoid many common obstacles to effective small group leadership.
- 3.** Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions pages and the Small Group Leaders section.
- 4.** Enjoy your Small Group experience.
- 5.** Pray before each session—for your group members, for your time together, or wisdom and insights.
- 6.** Read the Outline for Each Session on the next pages so that you understand how the sessions will flow.

Outline

FOR EACH SESSION

A typical group session for the Convergence study will include the following sections. Read through this to get a clear idea of how each group meeting will be structured:

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES.

Each session opens with a Memory Verse that emphasizes an important truth from the session. This is an optional exercise, but we believe that memorizing scripture can be a vital part of filling our minds with God's will for our lives. We encourage you to give this important habit a try. The verses for our five sessions are also listed in the appendix.

INTRODUCTION.

Each lesson opens with a brief thought that will help you prepare for the session and get you thinking about the particular subject you will explore with your group. Make it a practice to read these before the session. You may want to have the group read them aloud.

SHARE YOUR STORY.

The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family. You build that connection by sharing your story with a few people who really know you and who earn your trust. This section includes some simple questions to get you talking—letting you share as much

or as little of your story as you feel comfortable doing. Each session typically offers you two options. You can get to know your whole group by using the icebreaker question(s), or you can check in with one or two group members, your spiritual partner(s), for a deeper connection and encouragement in your spiritual journey.

HEAR GOD'S STORY.

In this section, you'll read the Bible and listen to teaching, in order to hear God's story—and begin to see how His story aligns with yours. When the study directs you to, you'll pop in the DVD and watch a short teaching segment. Space will be provided for you to take notes during the teaching.

You'll then have an opportunity to read a passage of scripture, and discuss both the teaching and the text. You won't focus on accumulating information but on how you should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from scripture practically and creatively, from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ should be your greatest aim.

STUDY NOTES.

This brief section provides additional commentary, background, or insights on the passage you'll study in the Hear God's Story section.

CREATE A NEW STORY.

God wants you to be a part of His Kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change. It will require you to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By making small, simple choices, we can begin to change our direction. This is where the Bible's instructions to "be doers of the Word, not just hearers" (James 1:22) comes into play. Many people skip over this aspect of the Christian life because it's scary, relationally awkward, or simply too much work for their busy schedules. But Jesus wanted all of His disciples to know Him personally, carry out His commands, and help outsiders connect with Him. This doesn't necessarily mean preaching on street corners. It could mean welcoming newcomers, hosting a short-term group in your home, or walking through this study with a friend. In this study, you'll have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study to biblical living. This section will also have a question or two that will challenge you to live out your faith by serving others, sharing your faith, and worshiping God.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY.

If you have time and want to dig deeper into more Bible passages about the topic at hand, we've provided additional passages and questions, which you can use either during the meeting, or as homework. Your group may choose to read and prepare before each meeting in order to cover more biblical material. Or, group members can use the additional study section during the week after the meeting. If you prefer not to do study homework, this section will provide you with plenty to discuss within the group. These options allow individuals or the whole group to expand their study while still accommodating those who can't do homework or are new to your group.

DAILY DEVOTIONS.

Each week on the Daily Devotions pages, we provide scriptures to read and reflect on between sessions. This provides you with a chance to slow down, read just a small portion of scripture each

day, and reflect and pray through it. You'll then have a chance to journal your response to what you've read. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.



THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

JOHN 16:33



As you begin this first session, I hope you're curious about convergence. What is it? What does it look like? Where is it happening? And mainly, what does it have to do with me?

What I can tell you here at the start is that the world will make a lot more sense if you can grasp the idea of convergence. The title of this first session invites us to answer some questions about the way we know our world: 1) Do we know where it came from? 2) How aware are we about what's going on right now? 3) Where are we headed? You may think a lot about these questions or they may be a new effort for you—either way, let's do it together.

Before the session, think a little about the memory verse above. There will be a new one for each session. In this particular case, this was a statement Jesus made during His last supper with His disciples the night before He was crucified. He made this statement even though He knew He would be dead before the next evening. Break it down to five phrases and consider what each of them can mean. We'll come back to this verse several times in this session.

1



Share

YOUR STORY

Each of us has a story. The events of our life—good, bad, wonderful, or challenging—have shaped who we are. God knows your story, and He intends to redeem it—to use every struggle and every joy to ultimately bring you to Himself. When we share our stories with others, we give them the opportunity to see God at work.

When we share our stories, we also realize we are not alone—that we have common experiences and thoughts, and that others can understand what we are going through. Your story can encourage someone else, and telling it can lead to a path of freedom for you and for those you share it with.

Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to give you insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Before you start this first meeting, get contact information for every participant. Take time to pass around a copy of the Small Group Roster on page 140, a sheet of paper, or one of you pass your Study Guide, opened to the Small Group Roster. Ask someone to make copies or type up a list with everyone's information and email it to the group during the week.

Then, begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking.

What brought you here? What do you hope to get out of this group?

What are your earliest memories of participating in church—sights, sounds, feelings?

Maybe you Googled or Wikied the term convergence, but let's hear what some of you think it might mean.

Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to reflect on and review your values together. On page 128 is a Small Group Agreement with the values we've found most useful in sustaining healthy, balanced groups. We recommend that you choose one or two values—ones you haven't previously focused on or have room to grow in—to emphasize during this study. Choose ones that will take your group to the next stage of intimacy and spiritual health.

If your group is new, welcome newcomers. Introduce everyone—you may even want to have name tags for your first meeting.

We recommend you rotate host homes on a regular basis and let the hosts lead the meeting. Studies show that healthy groups rotate leadership. This helps to develop every member's ability to shepherd a few people in

a safe environment. Even Jesus gave others the opportunity to serve alongside Him (Mark 6:30-44). Look at the FAQs in the Appendix for additional information about hosting or leading the group.

The Small Group Calendar on page 130 is a tool for planning who will host and lead each meeting. Take a few minutes to plan hosts and leaders for your remaining meetings. Don't skip this important step! It will revolutionize your group.

Watch

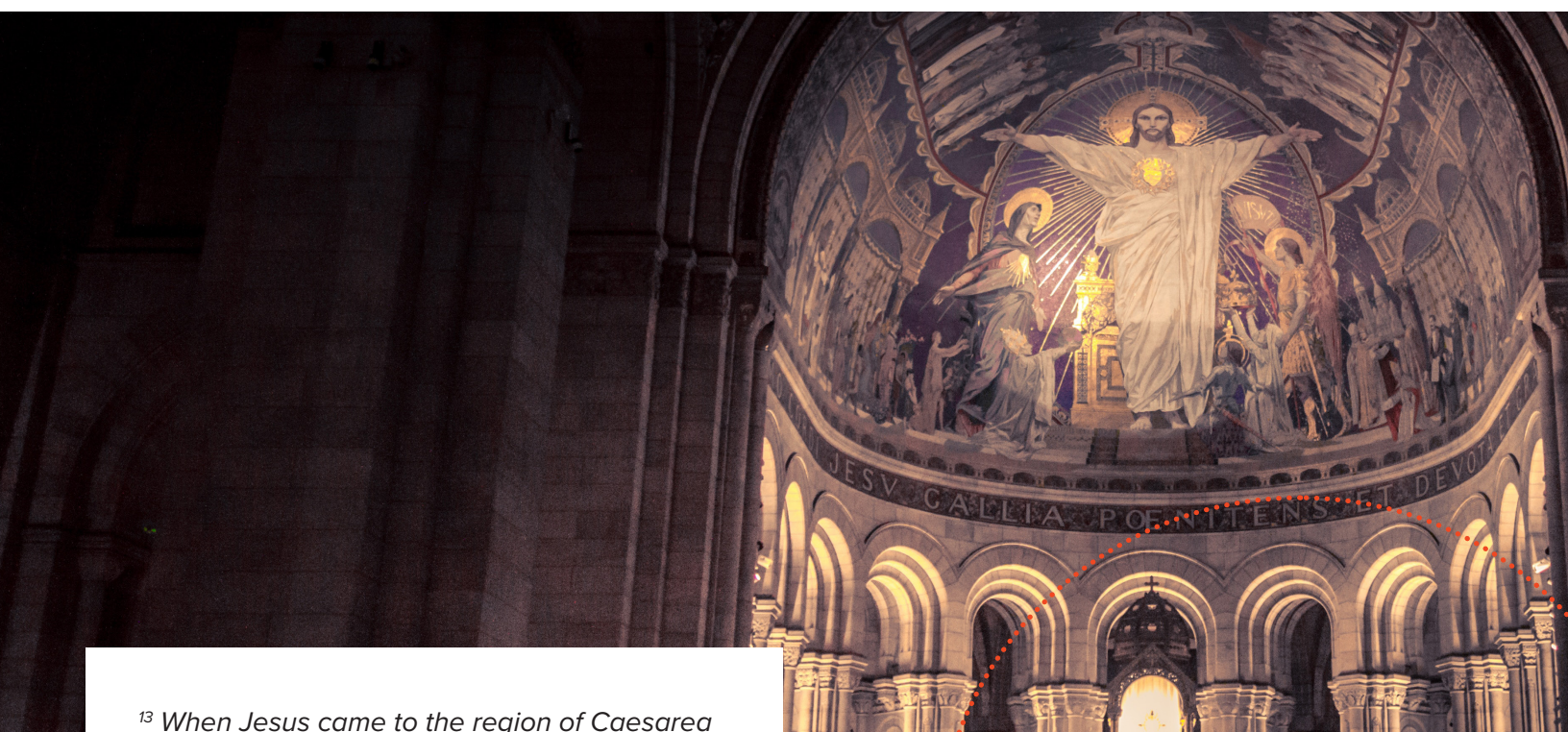
THE DVD

Use the Notes space provided below to record key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the Hear God's Story section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.



Hear

GOD'S STORY



¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

The video teaching ended with the point that Jesus is the epicenter of the church today as He has been through the centuries. In what ways is this obviously true to you and in what ways does it sometimes seem not so true?



Twice in Matthew and nowhere else in the Gospels does Jesus use the term church (here and in 18:17). What does Jesus tell us about the Church in this passage? Find at least five facts or characteristics.

Jon described the setting in which his church functions. How would you describe in a sentence or two the cultural setting (immediate and larger) of your church?

Based on Jon's explanation, what is convergence and how does it fit with Jesus' description of the church?

What are some of the ways in which your church demonstrates the characteristics Jon pointed to as the consistent, repeated, effective traits of the Church through the ages?

Study

NOTES

Who do people say the Son of Man is? Jesus frequently used the term “Son of Man” to identify Himself, stating what was obvious (He was human) to point to what wasn’t so obvious (He was the Son of God). So when He talks about “my church,” He’s declaring volumes about His purpose and ownership.

This was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. There’s an important theological principle that we don’t ever discover or respond to God purely on our own; we need His help or we are forever clueless.

On this rock I will build my church. A large part of historic Christianity has tried to maintain that Jesus was referring to Peter (whose name means rock) when He used the term rock as talk about the foundation of His church. If so, this would be tongue-in-cheek on Jesus’ part, remembering how consistently un-rocklike Peter actually was. See Matthew 7:24-25 for Jesus using rock a different way. And check 1 Peter 2:6 for an example of the apostle himself using the idea of a foundation rock in yet another way.

The gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Consider this as a picture of a victorious church rather than a church on the defensive. The static part of this verse is gates; the active part of this verse is the church on the march, moving to take territory guarded by the gates of hell.

Jon said, “Our story could boil down to one word, convergence. The core of our church change has been unfolding between prompting and planning, the high value of Spiritual gifts, Spiritual disciplines, personal brokenness, and the unusual proximity of God’s palpable presence. All of these feel remarkably new yet are the classic characteristics of the living Church through the centuries.”





Create

A NEW STORY

God wants you to be part of His kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change—to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By starting with small, simple choices, we begin to change our direction. The Holy Spirit helps us along the way—giving us gifts to serve the body, offering us insights into scripture, and challenging us to love not only those around us but those far from God.

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

What are some examples you can see in which the Church of Jesus Christ is not acting like a church that will prevail against the gates of hell?

What can the church do to get the world's attention?

How would you describe your own response to what Jon said about the church and convergence? What questions or comments did his teaching raise for you?

Where do you see signs of hope in the church throughout the world?

Take a look at the Circles of Life diagram on the next page and write the names of two or three people you know who need to know Christ. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to share with each of them. Perhaps they would be open to joining the group? Share your lists with the group so you can all be praying for the people you've identified.

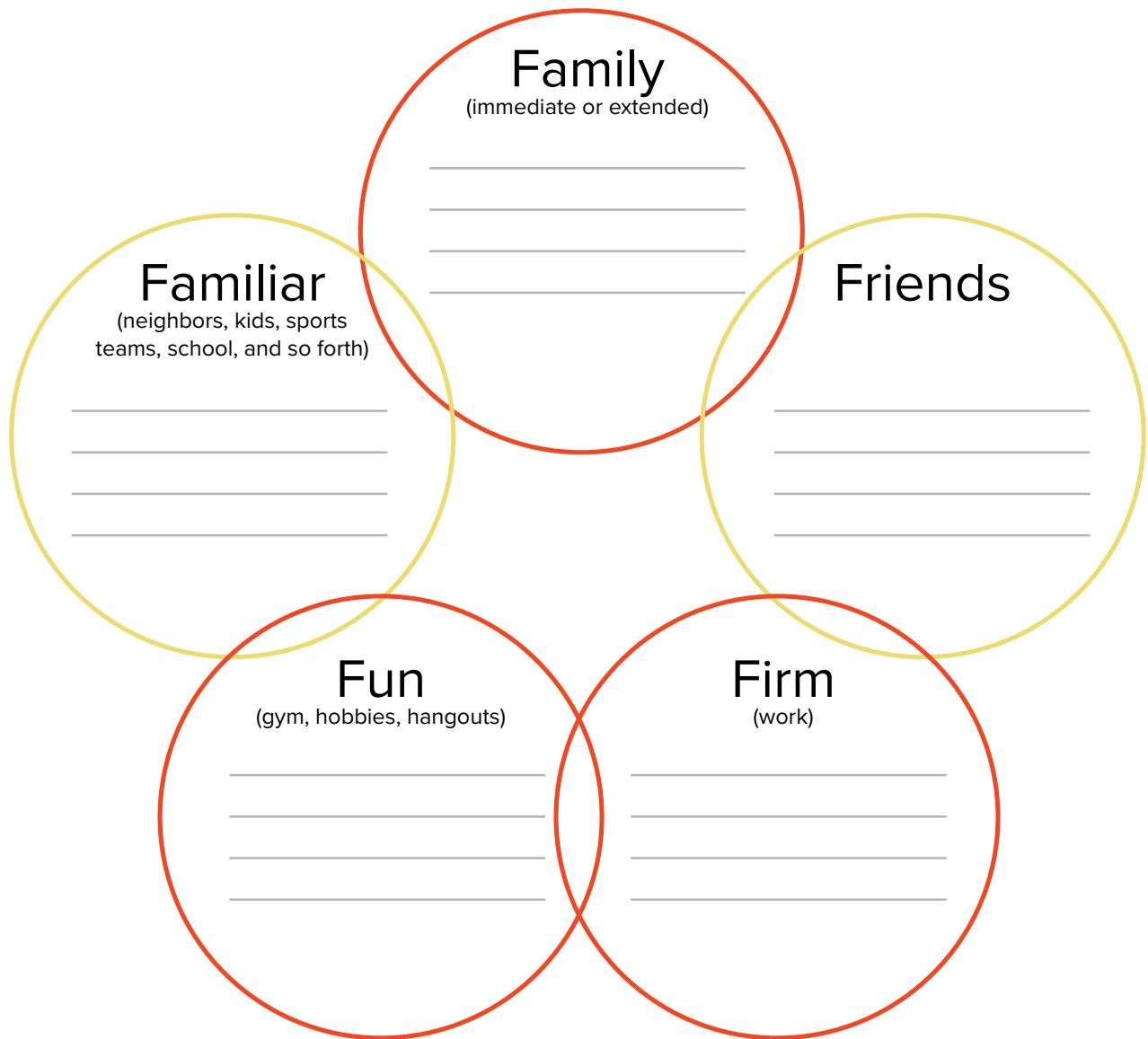
Also consider someone—in this group or outside it—that you can begin going deeper with in an intentional way. This might be your mom or dad, a cousin, an aunt or uncle, a roommate, a college buddy, or a neighbor. Choose someone who might be open to “doing life” with you at a deeper level and pray about that opportunity.

This week how will you interact with the Bible? Can you commit to spending time in daily prayer or study of God's Word (use the Daily Devotions section to guide you)? Tell the group how you plan to follow Jesus this week, and then, at your next meeting, talk about your progress and challenges.

Stack your hands just as a sports team does in the huddle and commit to taking a risk and going deeper in your group and in your relationships with each other.

Ask, “How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don't force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 133.

Circles of Life



Additional

STUDY

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21.

Paul has just spent the better part of three chapters telling the church in Ephesus (and us) about everything that we have in Christ. He's about to shift into the practical section (chapters 4-6) in which he lays out all the implications and actions required of us if the first three chapters are true. But he makes his transition with this prayer.

We tend to read this passage as individuals when it was primarily targeted toward a group. Read the passage again, using the term "you all" to capture the plural nature of this prayer.

What do these verses tell you about the Church?

Which of these characteristics do you find most lacking in church? Which are lacking in your life?

If you prayed this prayer for your church, how would you envision God answering it?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-17.

The apostle Peter was offering to a whole group of churches his proven words of encouragement and truth. He didn't paint a rosy picture, but one full of hope. He was preparing believers in the ages to come by removing any false ideas that

What do faithful
followers of Jesus
Christ look like and act
like during this time
in history?

following Jesus is the easy, comfortable, pain and
danger-free life.

**Jon mentioned in his teaching that current
events are combining to create difficulties for
Christians. How does this passage challenge us
to expect rather than to avoid hardship?**

**How does shame come up for Christians in our
current cultural mindset?**

**What benefits for us and for the world could
there be because “it is time for judgment to
begin at the household of God”?**

Daily Devotionals

1

John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

RESPOND:

What difference does it make to us that Jesus has overcome the world?

2

Matthew 16:18

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

RESPOND:

How are you seeing your own church as an overcoming community?

3

Hebrews 10:25

"Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

RESPOND:

When was the last time you deliberately set out to encourage someone else in your church? How easily do you find yourself giving up on spending time with other believers?



4

Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

RESPOND:

How many of these life-practices for Christians can you work on and develop alone? What does your answer tell you about the nature of the Church?

5

Matthew 21:42-44

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."

RESPOND:

What is Jesus saying about Himself in this passage? It is the heart of what we will be learning in our next session.

6

Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.

CONVERGENCE

Why Jesus needs to be more than our Lord and Savior for the church to thrive in a post-Christian world

JON THOMPSON

Convergence is when three unexpected things come together. Spiritual gifts, spiritual disciplines, and unusual works of the Spirit (revival) converge to form the authentic Christian life. What we will explore in this study is how Jesus modeled these three factors in convergence. Jesus Christ is not just Savior and Lord but also our Model, and that truth changes everything for you personally, your church, and the area God has placed you!



Jon Thompson serves as the Preaching and Vision Pastor at C4 Church in Toronto, Ontario where he has been on staff for more than 20 years. C4 is a regional church with a community of over 2,500 people who gather in multiple locations across the Durham region. Under Jon's leadership, C4 is characterized by dynamic Biblical teaching, vibrant community groups, compelling media, and powerful times in worship. Jon has a Masters of Theological Studies from Tyndale Seminary, Toronto and a Doctorate of Missiology from Fuller Seminary, California. Jon is husband to his wife Joanna and father to three kids - Hannah, Emma, and Noah.



ISBN 978-1-7322325-3-2



9 781732 232532 >