

Developed by *Desiring God*

 **JOHN PIPER**
SMALL GROUP SERIES

God Is the Gospel^u

Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself

A Study Guide to the DVD featuring

John Piper

GOD IS THE GOSPEL

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THE GOSPEL

*Meditations on God's Love
as the Gift of Himself*

STUDY GUIDE DEVELOPED BY DESIRING GOD

God Is the Gospel Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY GUIDE

TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS TO embrace the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. This good news is the heart of Christianity. But what do we mean by “the gospel”? And why is the gospel “good news”? Too few Christians stop to reflect on these crucial questions.

Those who do seek to answer these questions might say something like this: “Being saved from hell makes the gospel good news. Freedom from a guilty conscience makes the gospel good news. Forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life make the gospel good news.” And all of these are indeed good gifts of the gospel. Without forgiveness we would be forced to bear our own sins. Without justification we would be forced to provide our own righteousness. Without eternal life we would suffer eternal death. But these blessings simply raise the question again: Why are *these* gospel blessings “good”?

Thankfully, we do not have to speculate on the ultimate good of the gospel. The Bible is clear: the gospel is good news because it brings us to God (1 Peter 3:18). Or, to say it another way, God is the gospel.

Introduction to This Study Guide

If the gospel does not lead us to God as our all-sufficient and everlasting treasure, then, whatever else the gospel may be, it is not good news. Sadly, many people have believed in a truncated version of the gospel that leads them to enjoy God's gifts without being satisfied in the Giver. And if we have embraced the gospel for its many gifts without delighting in God himself in and above all of these gifts, have we genuinely embraced the gospel?

The aim of this study guide is to explore the ultimate good of the good news. The central question that we will seek to answer is this: What do we mean when we say, "God is the gospel"? Our prayer is that this study guide and DVD would be used by God to awaken thousands to the truth that the highest, best, final, and decisive good of the gospel, without which no other gifts would be good, is the glory of God in the face of Christ for our everlasting enjoyment.

This study guide is designed to be used in an eight-session,¹ guided group study that focuses on the *God Is the Gospel* DVD Set.² After an introductory lesson, each subsequent lesson examines one thirty-minute session³ from the *God Is the Gospel* DVD Set. You, the learner, are encouraged to prepare for the viewing of each DVD session by reading and reflecting upon Scripture, by considering key quotations, and by asking yourself penetrating questions. Your preparatory work for each lesson is marked with the heading "Before You Watch the DVD, Study and Prepare" in Lessons 2-7.

The workload is conveniently divided into five daily (and manageable) assignments. There is also a section suggesting further study. This work is to be completed individually before the group convenes to view the DVD and discuss the material.

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Throughout this study guide, paragraphs printed in a shaded box (like this one) are excerpts from a book written by John Piper or excerpts taken from the *Desiring God* web site. They are included to supplement the study questions and to summarize key or provocative points.

The second section in Lessons 2-7, entitled “Further Up and Further In,” is designed for the learner who wants to explore the concepts and ideas introduced in the lesson in greater detail. This section is not required but will deepen your understanding of the material. This section requires that you read two or three chapters from the book *God Is the Gospel* by John Piper (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005) and answer questions drawn from this material. This book is available for free online at www.desiringGod.org in the Online Books section of the Resource Library. You are also welcome to purchase a copy of the book from Desiring God.

The third section in Lessons 2-7, entitled “While You Watch the DVD, Take Notes,” is to be completed as the DVD is playing. This section includes fill-in-the-blanks and leaves space for note-taking. You are encouraged to engage with the DVD by filling in the appropriate blanks and writing down other notes that will aid you in the group discussion.

The fourth section in each normal lesson is “After You Watch the DVD, Discuss What You’ve Learned.” Three discussion questions are provided to guide and focus the conversation. You may record, in the spaces provided, notes that will help you contribute to the conversation. Or you may use this space to record things from the discussion that you want to remember.

The fifth and final section is an application section: “After You Discuss, Make Application.” You will be challenged to record a

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“take-away point” and to engage in a certain activity that is a fitting response to the content presented in the lesson.

Group leaders will want to find the Leader’s Guide, included at the end of this study guide, immediately.

Life transformation will only occur by the grace of God. Therefore, we highly encourage you to seek the Lord in prayer throughout the learning process. Pray that God would open your eyes to see wonderful things in his Word. Pray that he would grant you the insight and concentration you need in order to get the most from this resource. Pray that God would cause you not merely to understand the truth but also to rejoice in it. And pray that the discussion in your group would be mutually encouraging and edifying. We’ve included objectives at the beginning of each lesson. These objectives won’t be realized without the gracious work of God through prayer.

NOTES

1. While this study guide is ideally suited for an eight-session study, it is possible to complete it in six sessions. The Leader’s Guide at the end of this study guide contains a note on one way to complete this study in six weeks. The six-session option may be well-suited for groups that are already familiar with each other or that only have six weeks to complete the study.
2. Although this resource is designed to be used in a group setting, it can also be used by the independent learner. Such learners would have to decide for themselves how to use this resource in the most beneficial way. We would suggest doing everything but the group discussion, if possible.
3. Thirty minutes is only an approximation. Some sessions are longer; others are shorter.

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO *GOD IS THE GOSPEL*

LESSON OBJECTIVES

It is our prayer that after you have finished this lesson . . .

- › You will be challenged to reflect upon how you and others in your group view the goodness of the gospel.
- › Your curiosity would be roused, and questions would begin to come to mind.
- › You will be eager to learn more about how you can learn to keep God central when you celebrate the gospel.

ABOUT YOURSELF

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) Tell the group something about yourself that they probably don't already know.
- 3) Describe your first encounter with the gospel. What was your understanding of the good news?

