

MY NEXT STEP STUDY GUIDE

The My Next Step study guide presents the material from the book in a format that can be used as a small group, study group or cell group curriculum, or as a study guide for discipleship groups.

HOW TO USE THE STUDY

The study for one lesson or chapter of My Next Step normally lasts between one half and one hour. How long the

study lasts depends on how much discussion is generated by the introduction and application questions.

Preparation

Before the group meets, all of the participants should read the chapter of My Next Step that they will be discussing during the study. However, this shouldn't be a prerequisite to being able to participate in the study.

Big Idea

The Big Idea is an extremely concise summary of the chapter's main idea.

Start the study by simply reading the Big Idea out loud. This serves to establish the topic for the rest of the conversation or study.

Discussion

There are one or two questions that help to start to think about how the study's topic relates to our practical life.

The goal of this portion of the study is to generate discussion and conversation around the topic.

Chapter Summary

The Chapter Summary contains a brief explanation of the material that is taught in the chapter. In this part of the study,

you can read this outloud, alternating readers with each new paragraph.

This serves to provide an overview of the topic to everyone who is participating in the study, both those who read the chapter beforehand and those who didn't read.

Application

The study concludes with an application question. This question should be read out loud and everyone should share their different answers to the question. In this section of the study, we want to focus our attention in how to apply the chapter's main idea to our lives in practical ways.

Study 5

LIVING AS FAMILY

Big Idea

Many times it is neither common nor easy for Christians to live together in true community. God says that being his child means to live life in community, as family, with his other children.

Discussion

- What does it mean to live in community with other Christians?
- Can you describe a time in your life when you lived in community with other Christians?

Chapter Summary

The last essential habit in the life of a Christ-follower that we will look at is the habit of living as family with God's other children. It is sharing life in authentic community with other people that are also God's children.

Many times we enter into a relationship with God, but not with his family. We are children of God, but we don't live like brothers and sisters with God's other children. We receive forgiveness, but our relationship with God is defined by our relationship between him and us, and not as much by our relationship with his family.

The reason that it is so important to live in community with the other children of God, is because living in community with God's other children protects us in our relationship with God.

There is a relationship between being in community with other children of God, and living a life that is faithful to God.

Maybe you have seen or experienced this in your life, when you are by yourself, not living in community with other children of God, you start to drift away from God.

Living in authentic community with God's other children means much more than only seeing each other occasionally in a formal meeting. Of course, Sunday's meeting is an incredibly important part of the believers' community, but being part of this community means much more than just attending this meeting.

BEING GOD'S CHILD MEANS BEING PART OF HIS FAMILY

God says and demonstrates repeatedly in his Word that when someone decides to be his child, he becomes part of his family. He or she becomes a member of the community of all the other children of God.

*1Peter 2 10 Once you were not a people, but now
you are the people of God; {...}*

*1Corinthians 12 27 Now you are the body of
Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

A shared life

In the Bible, we encounter a description of the community and bond that the spiritual family of Jesus' first followers

shared. The description is of a life shared with other children of God. By seeing how they lived as a family, we can learn how we, today, should live as the family of God.

Acts 2 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. (44) All the believers were together and had everything in common. (45) Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (46) Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (47) praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What should the family of God be like?

The first characteristic of God's family is that it is a united family. It isn't just a group of people, rather, it is a family. Its unity is expressed in companionship and a deep, brotherly love.

Another characteristic of God's family should be mutual care for each other. This should be the place where no one has need, and everyone shares the need that anyone has.

God's family has as its principal goal that of bringing glory to God. In other words, the family of God exists not so much to be united and take care of each other, but to make God look big, strong and good in the eyes of every person who observes this family.

How we should live as God's family?

A big part of the family life of God's family is the church's regular meetings. These are moments when everyone, or almost everyone, comes together in a single place to celebrate a worship service to God.

In order to live as God's family, we have to spend time together outside of the church's big meetings. You can't be best friends with every person that goes to your church, but you should spend time regularly with some of them. Even though our social life shouldn't be limited to just spending time with other sons and daughters of God, a large part of the christian life is spending time with other Christ followers.

What happens when we do live as God's family?

If we live in the community that God desires for his children, others will see this and value it, because it is not normal for people from different families, races and cultures to join together as family. We will enjoy favor among outsiders

because we literally are transformed together into Christ's body, and together are his representation to the world.

The product of living as family with other children of God, is that this family attracts other people that want to be part of God's family.

Also, living in community with other christians is the essential ingredient to being able to live the christian life and to not leave the faith, not fall into sin, make wise decisions and find encouragement in difficult moments.

Application

- Do you regularly attend your church's weekend meetings?
- Do you spend time in community with other Christians during the week?
- What is your next step to live in deeper community with others who are also God's children?