

Small Group Guide: Welcome Home - Homecoming

Sermon Series: Welcome Home

Text: Revelation 21-22

Speaker: Pastor Milissa

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open your hearts to what God wants to teach you today.

Icebreaker Question

What is one of your favorite stories (book, movie, or personal experience) and why does it resonate with you?

[This connects to Milissa's opening about how stories bring people together and help us make sense of the world.]

Sermon Summary

This week we concluded the "Welcome Home" series by looking at the final chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21-22. Pastor Milissa reflected on the ultimate destination of God's story: a new heaven and new earth where God dwells fully with His people. We explored how this future reality gives us hope in present suffering and direction for how to live now as Spirit-filled people who bring pockets of heaven to earth.

Key Takeaways

1. We live in the "already but not yet" - Jesus has already come, died, and risen, but has not yet returned to complete His work.
 2. Heaven comes down to earth - God's plan is not to whisk us away but to renew all of creation.
 3. The new heaven and earth will be multicultural - Every nation, tribe, and tongue will bring their redeemed cultural treasures before Jesus.
 4. We have a role now - As Spirit-filled people, we participate in God's work here and now while we wait for Jesus to return.
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Story

1. How did the Lord of the Rings illustration help you understand the biblical narrative? What stood out to you about Sam's question: "I wonder what sort of tale we've fallen into?"
2. Review the "Welcome Home" series journey (Garden of Eden → Tabernacle/Temple → Jesus → Church → New Heaven/Earth). Which part of this story is newest or most meaningful to you?
3. What surprised you about the description of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21-22? What are you most looking forward to?

Going Deeper

4. Pastor Milissa said, "It's not *if* we're going to experience pain and sorrow... it's when." How does knowing the end of the story help us navigate present suffering?
5. The sermon emphasized that heaven comes down to earth, not the other way around. How does this change your understanding of what God is doing in the world?
6. Revelation 21:3 says God will dwell with us and "wipe every tear from their eyes." What tears in your life or our community are you longing for God to wipe away?

Personal Reflection

7. Pastor Milissa shared her "come to Jesus moment" in the bar when the lights came on. Have you had a moment when the Holy Spirit exposed what was hidden in darkness in your life? What happened?
 8. The sermon described our current vocation as bringing "pockets of heaven" to earth. Where in your life (work, family, neighborhood) is God calling you to participate in making things right?
 9. Thunder Bay was used as an example of what the new heaven and earth might look like - no locked doors, no crime, no unsafe neighborhoods. What specific brokenness in our community breaks your heart? How might you participate in God's healing work there?
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Hope in Suffering

If you're going through a difficult time, spend time each day reading Revelation 21:1-5. Write down how knowing the end of the story gives you hope.

Option 2: Bring Heaven to Earth

Identify one specific way you can bring "a pocket of heaven" to your workplace, neighborhood, or family this week. (Examples: reconcile a relationship, serve someone in need, speak truth with love, create beauty or order where there's chaos)

Option 3: Pray for Thunder Bay

Using the vision from the sermon, pray specifically for one area of brokenness in our community. Ask God how you might participate in His healing work there.

Option 4: Share Your Story

If you haven't been baptized but have put your faith in Jesus, take the step to sign up for the upcoming baptism. If you've already been baptized, share your story with someone this week.

Reflection Questions for the Week

- What "tale have I fallen into"? Am I living according to God's story or my own?
- Where do I need the Holy Spirit's comfort, guidance, wisdom, or assurance this week?
- How can I be a "heaven and earth overlap" in my daily life?

Prayer Prompts

Praise: Thank God that He is making all things new and that we know how the story ends.

Confession: Ask the Holy Spirit to expose anything in your life that belongs to the "old story" of destruction rather than God's story of life.

Intercession: Pray for Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario to become one of the best places to live in Canada for all people.

Personal: Ask the Holy Spirit to write God's story on your heart and empower you to choose Him moment by moment.

Closing

End your time by praying the Lord's Prayer together, paying special attention to the phrase: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Looking Ahead

If your group includes people who haven't been baptized, encourage them to sign up for the upcoming baptism at the end of June. Consider attending together as a group to support them.

Additional Resources

- Re-read Revelation 21-22 slowly this week, noting what stands out to you
- Consider reading or watching *The Lord of the Rings* with fresh eyes, looking for themes of perseverance, hope, and the battle between good and evil
- Journal about your own "come to Jesus" moment or the moment you fell into God's story