

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

From Garden to Garden: New Creation 1 Revelation 21:1-7 & 22:1-6

The Story We Live in: God With Us & No More Tears As we arrive at Act 7—*New Creation: The Garden City*—the overarching story of Scripture reaches its grand destination: not an escape from earth or total destruction, but the wedding of heaven and earth where God's dwelling place is among people. How we understand this story shapes everything—our choices, money, time, politics, and relationships. As Alasdair MacIntyre noted, *"I cannot answer the question 'What ought I to do?' unless I first answer 'Of which story am I a part?'"* and Seth Godin challenges us: *"What story am I telling the world? What story am I telling myself?"* Contrary to worldly empires that rule through domination, or views that treat creation and people as disposable, our God is not a distant observer. As Nicholas Wolterstorff wrote, *"God is not only the God of the sufferers but the God who suffers."* In Jesus, God enters our pain and promises that death, mourning, and tears will not get the last word. God is making all things new!

- What story—cultural success, self-reliance, empire/control, or God's renewing Kingdom—do your daily choices and priorities reflect most naturally?
- How does knowing that God suffers *with* us and promises to wipe away every tear bring comfort or fresh perspective to your current struggles?
- Where in your life or community are you tempted to view circumstances or people as disposable rather than as subjects of God's restoring love?

What is Absent & Present in the Garden City In the New Creation, God is making *all things new*—not making new things. God does not discard us or his world like trash; God loves into restoration what was previously broken or dead. John's vision in Revelation 21–22 reveals what is **absent**: chaos, empire domination, death, sickness, closed gates, and the curse. People from every tribe, nation, and language are welcomed through gates that never shut. What is **present** is even greater: God's direct presence (no temple is needed because the whole world rests in God), God's *doxa* (the tangible weight of God's glory), redeemed creation, and the river of the water of life with the tree of life whose leaves bring healing to the nations. Transformed fully by grace, we will see God face-to-face and live, bearing His name upon us.

- How does the truth that God restores and redeems creation (rather than discarding it) change the way you view your daily work and care for the world?

- The New Creation features open gates welcoming people from every nation and language. How can you practice that spirit of radical hospitality this week?
- When you picture the river and tree of life bringing healing to the nations, where in your immediate relationships or neighborhood do you long for that healing?

Trees of Life; Living Resurrection Now Easter is not just good news for our future; it tells us what is possible right now. As a church family, we are called to be a *tree of life for the healing of our community and world*. In every project, conversation, or ministry, we can ask: *Does this bring healing, or does it add to divisiveness?* While hardship and physical exhaustion are inevitable—like running a grueling hill in a race—knowing that suffering is temporary enables us to "suffer well" with hope, community, and love. When people look at our daily lives—our tone of voice, how we argue, how we share, and how we love—they ought to see the character of Jesus reflected in us. We are invited to live out the light and love of the New Creation today.

- In what practical ways can you or your live it group act as a "tree of life" bringing healing to your workplace, school, or neighborhood this week?
 - How does facing difficult seasons alongside community and rooted in God's ultimate hope help you "suffer well" without giving in to despair?
 - What is one specific interaction this week where you can consciously choose words, tone, or acts that help others see Jesus in you?
- **Practice: Embodying The New Creation Today**

To live as citizens of the New Creation is to allow God's future of healing, hope, and restoration to shape our present lives. Put this into practice through these three rhythms this week:

1. **The Pocket Promise (Grounding in the Story):** Write down Revelation 21:4 or 21:5 (*"I am making everything new!"*) on a small card or set it as your phone background. When you experience frustration, grief, or anxiety this week, pause, take a deep breath, and pray: *"Lord Jesus, I trust that You are at work making all things new."*
2. **Tree of Life Hospitality (Bringing Healing):** Identify one relationship, neighbor, or situation where friction or divisiveness exists. Intentionally perform an act of healing—offer a genuine word of encouragement, share a cup of coffee, or extend unexpected grace without seeking to control the outcome.
3. **Suffer Well in Community (Sharing the Load):** Reach out to a trusted friend or fellow believer to share a heavy burden or struggle you are currently carrying. Rather than enduring hardship in isolated silence, practice "suffering well" together in hope, prayer, and mutual support.

Will you live the new creation story in your relationships and world today—letting Jesus' light, love, and healing flow through your everyday life?

