

BLESSED, BROKEN, GIVEN.

Week One

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for this time with these friends. Help us to use our time to connect with you and one another. Use this gathering to help us grow in friendship and faith. Amen.

Talk It Over

During this series, we will be looking at the ways God moves in the common and the ordinary. This idea of God doing extraordinary things with what is ordinary is highlighted in the ways Jesus blessed, broke, and gave bread. In fact, Jesus' ability to bring life out of ordinary bread is a simple metaphor for what God wants to do in our lives. As we move through this series we will be looking at the words blessed, broken, and given in greater depths and seeing what these words mean for us today.

- Bread is so common and ordinary we find it in almost every culture. What are your favorite types of bread?
- This week we looked at the word blessed. Culturally, what are some common applications or understandings of the word blessed?

Here is this week's big idea: Living blessed is all about who I am, whose I am, and where I am going.

- Often times it seems as if we confuse ideas of American success with what it means to be blessed. What are some possible pitfalls and challenges that might come from misunderstanding blessed with ideas of success?
- Tell us about a time you were able to experience the reality that blessing is so much more than circumstances.

Read Genesis 1:26-28 (Voice)

The Hebrew word blessed is *Barakah*. It means an inheritance, a tangible benefit or gift given, something is bestowed on you. A key idea to this definition is that something must be given to you — a blessing has to be given. And as we saw in our verse, this is what God did for us at creation. God blessed humanity. From the beginning of our story, we are blessed. This is our origin story.

- What good might come from seeing God's heart for humanity from the start?
- While our origin story is positive, what challenges might come from a negative or even neutral origin story?

This week we looked at the story of Jacob. Jacob is the grandson of Abraham who is referred to as the father of our faith. Jacob's story is full of challenges — some are his fault and some happened to him. A major issue he brought upon himself was choosing to scheme and take his older brother's inheritance or blessing. This would be seen as a major offense in this ancient patriarchal society. The passages we are about to read takes place after Jacob has taken his brother's blessing and is fleeing his home for his own protection.

Read Genesis 28:13-15 (Voice) and Genesis 28:18-19 (Voice)

(Content continued on the next page.)

Even after Jacob believes he is too far gone due to his deceit and failure, God grabs him and retells him his story. As he is fleeing, God tells Jacob who he is — a person blessed by God.

- Tell us about a time you failed but still found yourself being able to remember who God says you are.
- In what ways do you think we make things worse by allowing our failure to define us? Feel free to share from your own experience here or from what you observed in someone else's life.

Read Genesis 35:9-12 (NLT)

After two decades of life and various struggles, Jacob is given a new name by God. God actively looks to redefine Jacob's life. While not denying or sugar-coating what occurred or had taken place and not providing a quick escape from the natural consequences of his choices, Jacob sees that God's plans for his family are unfolding and God's promises are coming true. Jacob's past was real, but it didn't define his future.

- Have you ever seen God's goodness come through even after a terrible struggle?
- In what ways have you seen your self rise above your past?
- In what ways are you still trapped believing your past defines your future?

Read 1 John 3:1-2 (Voice)

Core to the message of the Gospel, or the Good News message of Jesus, is us coming to terms with how loved we are by God. Coming to terms with God's love for us helps us to embrace the idea that we are blessed and that living blessed is about who I am, whose I am, and where I am going.

- How are you doing this season with believing that you are loved by God?
- What makes it hard for you to believe you are loved by God? Is it your actions? Old narratives? Name what is holding you back from embracing this truth.
- What sorts of things help you lean into this the truth that you are blessed by God and he desires to remind you who you are, whose you are, and where you are going? What habits, ideas, and steps might help you or do help you live out the big ideas we covered today?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for the ways you look to bless us — despite our past or the ways we fall short. Help us to say 'yes' to your blessing and love. Empower and equip us to live from a place of knowing who we are, whose we are, and where we are going. May your name for us and your story of us define us. Amen.

Group Logistics [A Reminder for New Groups]

Are there are details or questions we need to cover for next week? Are we meeting at the same time and place? Who is owning snacks? Are there childcare questions to cover?

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressured to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.