



SESSION 2



IS THERE A GOD
AND CAN I
**REALLY KNOW
HIM?**



WELCOME BACK TO STORM SHELTER!

Since this is only week two, there may be new faces in your group. Make sure to meet everyone. It's a way to begin enjoying the company God put you with on this journey. This session is going to help us think about a crucial question that can leave people feeling exposed and vulnerable until they have an answer.

One of the members of Jesus' small group (Peter) said in John 6:68-69, "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.**"

This time we're looking at the foundation of our shelter and thinking about the existence of God and whether or not we can know Him. Right in the question it's easy to trip up, and Peter's comment above can help us. When we use the word *know* in English we group two distinct kinds of knowledge under one word that most other languages distinguish. I can say "I know you" and "I know baseball" yet those are two different kinds of knowing. The first is relational; the second factual. In Spanish, for instance, *know* is either *saber* or *conocer*. I cannot say I *saber* a person because the open-ended and intimate nature of personal relationships is always conveyed by the term *conocer*. In the verse above, Peter wasn't saying "We know a lot of stuff about you Jesus. That's why we're staying around." He was saying "We *conocer* (know) you, Jesus, and there's no one else like you."

Let's discover together how knowing Jesus can provide you with a shelter in life. He has given us His Word as a blueprint of that shelter. Let's help one another during these weeks to make sure we've got our shelter clearly in mind and ready for life.





OPEN UP WITH PRAYER

Thank you God for bringing us together again. Show us how we can know you and your Word in a deeper way. Help us through Your Holy Spirit to know how to remain faithful when storms come in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen

- 1 Let's continue to get to know each other: What is the worst weather storm you ever experienced? You're welcome to pass if you haven't got one.
- 2 What are some of the differences between facing a menacing storm alone and facing it together with others? Which do you prefer? Why?
- 3 **WHO'S WITH US ON THIS JOURNEY?** As you begin, take time again if necessary to pass around a copy of the Small Group Roster on page 134 or a sheet of paper. Have everyone write down their contact information. Ask someone to make copies, type it up and email it or take a picture and text it.
- 4 **PRAYER PARTNERS:** Pair up with someone in your group. (We suggest that men partner with men and women with women.) This person will be your *spiritual partner* for the rest of this study. He or she doesn't have to be your best friend, but will simply encourage you to complete the goals you set for yourself during this study. Following through on a resolution is tough when you're on your own, but we've found it makes all the difference to have a partner cheering us on. (See Spiritual Partner Check-in on page 117)

5

It's not too late to invite others to participate in this small group. Each of us has a sphere of influence that we need to pray for and keep in mind as we pursue our own Storm Shelter. In one way or another they are on this path with us. Take a look at the *Circles of Life* diagram below and write the names of two or three people you know who need to know Christ. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to share with each of them.

The diagram consists of five overlapping circles arranged in a cross pattern. Each circle is outlined with a dashed blue line and contains a title, a subtitle in parentheses, and three horizontal lines for writing. The circles are labeled as follows:

- FAMILY** (IMMEDIATE OR EXTENDED)
- FAMILIAR** (NEIGHBORS, KIDS, SPORTS TEAMS, SCHOOL, AND SO FORTH)
- FRIENDS**
- FUN** (GYM, HOBBIES, HANGOUTS)
- FIRM** (WORK)

6

ORGANIZING OUR GROUP (Optional): Once again reflect on and review your values together. If new people have joined you for this session, review the *Small Group Agreement* on page 114. Also review the rotation of host homes so everyone is on the same page. Leaders should remember to refer to the FAQs in the Appendix for additional information. As you are inviting new people to the group, you might consider sub-grouping (*refer to Leader Lifter 2*) so each person gets a chance to share. Just make sure each person is still receiving a copy of the prayer request for the entire group.



Small Groups

TAKE IT IN

APPROXIMATELY 12 MINUTES

WATCH DVD SESSION 2

Watch the DVD teaching for this session now. We have provided a *Notes* space below. There you can record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the *Talk It Over* section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

NOTES:



This part of each session is about more than figuring out the main points of the teaching. Some of us may come away with very different applications from Pastor Cal's observations. Sharing them may help all of us because our underlying objective is to grow together during these weeks. So, let's talk it over...

7 What is *your* initial reaction from what you just heard from Pastor Cal? What stood out for you?

8 In this whole idea of facing storms in life, why is it important to have things nailed down ahead of time rather than waiting until the storm is on us?

Pastor Cal referred to Jesus' parable in Luke 6:8 in which He used different kinds of soil to represent different lives. Let's look again at that passage and add another brief application Jesus gave as the closing of His Sermon on the Mount.

Luke 8:11-13 (NIV2011)

¹¹ "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV2011)

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

- 9 In discussing Luke 8:13, how did Pastor Cal explain the nature and significance of *testing*?
- 10 With the story of two men, each building a storm shelter in Matthew 7:24-27, what differences do you see in the construction, in the weather that came, and in the outcome? How does this underscore what Pastor Cal is telling us about the necessity of shelter construction?
- 11 What kinds of strategies have you heard the world offer for handling the unexplainable difficulties in life? Share about a person who surprised you by their faith in God during a very difficult storm in life.



These sessions are designed to pull us a little out of our comfort zones. As we stated last week, you might experience a deeper sense of God’s love and involvement in your life. You might also take new risks of personal disclosure with others in your group. This is an invitation, not pressure. Never feel forced to share what you’re not ready to share. We can say from experience that even a little risk can benefit us greatly.

12 Pastor Cal offered four “nails” to connect and maintain our faith in God before, during, and after the storms come. Let’s talk about what we can do to hit the nails on the head:

a. Seek Him constantly! Describe your personal relationship or intimacy with God. What can you do to go deeper? (Examples: daily reading of His Word, consistent praying, listening for God’s nudges throughout the day) *(See the Study Notes below if needed)*

b. Worship Him continuously. How does worship actually work out in someone’s life as we’re surrounded by the demands and opportunities that each of us face each day? Psalm 100:4 gives us some direction. Each day we can thank God and praise Him. Make a list of five to ten things to tell God you’re grateful for today. *(See the Study Notes below if needed)*

c. Serve Him confidently. (1 Corinthians 15:58) Although we can’t stop storms from coming, we can serve others and God along the way. Have you ever felt blessed while serving others? Explain. How might your commitment to serving grow before the next storm rolls in? *(See the Study Notes below if needed)*

d. Trust Him completely. Pastor Cal used the well-known verses Proverbs 3:5-6 to underscore this point. Discuss what you might have done in a past storm instead of trusting God. Declare together your trust in God now by reading the personalized verse below:

“I will trust in the Lord with all my heart and not lean on my own understanding. In all my ways, I will acknowledge Him and He will direct my path.” *(See the Study Notes below if needed)*

13 As a starting point, think for a moment about the four nails that Pastor Cal described: constant seeking, continuous worship, confident service, and complete trust. Number these in order of priority in your life right now. Or perhaps you feel like they haven't even been in the priority category...and that's okay. Now, if you're comfortable, share that with the group.

COME BEFORE GOD:

Don't get overwhelmed. Simply ask God what nail you need to pound. Get quiet for just one minute, close your eyes, and clear your mind. In your mind ask God, "What immediate step should I take to know you better?" Write down any thoughts, impressions, pictures or feelings you might have. If you want to share what you received with the group, feel free but there's no obligation.

PRAY TOGETHER:

God, thank you that you have given us awareness of yourself in the light that we can trust even in the darkness and storms. Guide us to take steps toward following you more each day. We know that you are our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



NOTE: Some of the group members may have personal prayer requests they want to share. Allow everyone to answer this question: "How can we pray for you this week?" Ask someone in the group to pass their study guide around to write prayer requests on their *Prayer and Praise Report* on page 124. Ask that person to make copies, type it up and email it or take a picture and text it to the group.

STUDY NOTES

a. Seek Him constantly!

See Hebrews 11:6. It takes faith to continue to seek Him and follow Him when you can't reconcile His presence and His promises with what is happening in your life.

b. Worship Him continuously.

See Psalm 100:4-5. If you'll train your heart to worship Him while the sun is shining, you'll be much more inclined to praise Him through the storm.

c. Serve Him confidently.

See 1 Corinthians 15:58. Just keep on serving God in the midst of the storm and He will pour out His blessings.

d. Trust Him completely.

See Proverbs 3:5-6. Either way, disappointment will come to your life, but only one alternative guarantees you eternal hope and reward.



MOVE IT FORWARD

This week, take what you learned and spend some time putting it into practice. Choose one or more of the following activities to further your spiritual growth and even connect to others in your group. Don't feel you have to complete all of these. Decide what you can commit to and go for it. Consider sharing your experiences as you "Move It Forward" the next time you meet with the group.

... **Pray for each other this week.**

You can use the *Prayer and Praise Report* gathered earlier in this meeting to support your group in prayer. Pray for others in the group to know God in a deeper way.

... **Reflect On It.** Commit to daily connection with God. See suggestions on how to do that each day in the "Reflect On It" section. Again, if you find yourself a little bogged down in personal study, take a look at the S.O.A.P. section in the Appendix for a plan to help you explore God's Word on your own.

... **Change your mind.** Memorizing Scripture helps to redirect our mind to God's plan. Take time to give this important practice a try.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

... **Take personal notes at the weekend service.**

Be ready to share your thoughts the next time you gather with your group.

REFLECT ON IT

Day 1.

Scripture:

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Observation: What are some effective and not-so-effective ways that people seek God?

Application: In what ways are you actively seeking God this week?

Prayer:

Day 2.

Scripture:

Psalms 100:4-5

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. ⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Observation: Brainstorm what might be some “gates” and some “courts” in your life.

Application: As you make praise your default position in life, what are some of the primary expressions you want to use to express your appreciation and gratitude for God’s faithfulness?

Prayer:

Day 3.

Scripture:

1 Corinthians 15:58

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Observation: In one sense, many people discover that we are hard-wired to serve and that “service is its own reward.” But in another, serving actually draws us toward the One we serve and the ones we serve with. How have you found these principles to be true in your life?

Application: What specific service opportunities have you chosen to pursue this day?

Prayer:

Throughout the Storm Shelter study we will be surveying all God has to say to us regarding the shelter He provides in every storm. Each day, read the selected verses and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Listen to God and record your personal applications, thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 4.

Scripture:

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Observation: What are some ways a person might track the amount of heart they are investing in trusting God?

Application: In what specific ways are you trusting the Lord today?

Prayer:

Day 5.

Scripture:

John 6:68-69

⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Observation: Review the material on "knowing" in the introduction to this session. How does this quote from Peter express the sentiments on your heart?

Application: In what ways do you long to know God better and more intimately? What do you think that's going to take?

Prayer:

Day 6.

Summary:

What "nails" are you pounding in this week?

Use the following space to summarize any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at during your *Reflect On It* time this week.