

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: In Christ Alone by Keith & Kristyn Getty

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand

Icebreaker

What was the highlight of your summer?

Text for Discussion: 2 Corinthians 4:6-8, Matthew 7:24-29, Ephesians 4:1

Turn in your Bibles and read the passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Jay and Katherine Wolf are survivors and storytellers, advocates and evangelists. In 2008, at the age of 26, Katherine nearly died from a catastrophic brainstem stroke. Her survival and recovery, not to mention that of her marriage and family, have been nothing short of miraculous.

When God swept Jay and Katherine into an unexpected journey full of pain and grief, He also led them to joy and a new hope, which brought them purpose. Their route had its unique twists and turns, but all of us will be detoured and brought low from the life we've expected for ourselves. This common ground is a good place for us to discover the uncommon hope they encountered.

Like silt resting at the bottom of a clear glass of water, our doubts and fears resurface with the jostling/tumbling of tragedy. What we always assumed we knew – about life, God, relationships, our identity and hope – faces a stronger challenge than ever before. Some simply run and hide, trying to convince themselves it's not as bad as it seems. Others grit their teeth and force themselves to 'be okay'. Or we try to stoically wait until the dust settles, hoping time alone will heal our wounds. The Wolfs took a different path with Christ, looking straight into their brokenness.

Healing is a process – not an instantaneous experience where hardship ends, and we resume our prior lives. Instead, healing tends to be subtle, halting, misshapen, and inconsistent. We often find ourselves retracing the same steps of recovery each day. If we rest our hope in regaining normalcy, despair can set in. Most of us have misunderstood the 'healing' we think we need. We grow angry or depressed that it's taking too long to recover or rebuild our lives. In Katherine's case, she wanted her body and its functionality restored, but God's goal was to rebuild hope, redefine healing, give her new purpose, and establish her identity fully in him.

The beauty of the gospel is that it redefines everything, not just healing. Love is redefined through Christ's tragic suffering and death. Love is sacrificial or self-giving that seeks what is best for the one we love. We also redefine glory, power, honor, and status when we see God humbly coming to earth, serving, and sacrificing for the sake of ungrateful people. One way the Gospel heals us is by offering God's true perspective on life and helping us to thrive "when all around gives way."

"However, over the past seven years of this saga, I have learned to do many things well – to wait well, suffer well, cope well, persevere well, and even to lose well."

"We trust Him and all He is doing – in all that we understand and, more importantly, in all that we do not. I believe we are all here for purposes beyond ourselves and beyond our comprehension. We were born to know and manifest the God who heals our souls and calls us into the kind of life that doesn't end with death."

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What do you usually lean on when something unexpected happens and your foundation gets rocked?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) What initially strikes you about the Wolf's story?
 - The Wolfs said "our story is your story". Do you agree?
 - How do you relate to their story?
- 2) Has there been a moment in your life when a line was drawn and everything after it was different (positively or negatively)?
 - Jay initially was angry towards God because he felt God had broken their "deal". What are some "deals" (consciously or unconsciously) you may have made with God or expectations you might be placing on Him?
 - Read through Rom 8: 31-39. These verses "torqued Jay's insides" as the battle raged between belief in Christ and God's goodness and the tragedy of their experience. How has your experience of the fragility of life affected your approach to its joys and pains?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** What do you usually lean on when something unexpected happens and your foundation gets rocked?
 - Read through Matt 7:24-29. Jay and Katherine, on their wedding day, were encouraged to pursue a foundation for their marriage and future, which was Christ and Christian community. What would you identify as your foundation?
 - Describe a time when your foundation has been tested.
- 4) The Wolfs heard a, "call to give thanks, not at the end, but in the midst" of trial. What benefits might come from giving thanks before experiencing the ending we hoped for (1 Thes 5:18, Phil 4:6-8)?
 - Can you describe an experience where God has given you glimpses of hope in the midst of brokenness and suffering?
- 5) How can we as a community, support one another through the many twists and turns our lives take?
 - What can we learn from this discussion as we look forward to these next several months together?
 - How can we tangibly move forward in ways to better know and care for one another?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Pray that we would anchor our faith in God our Rock (Deut 32:4) and not in our fickle hearts or circumstances.
- Pray for healing in our lives and that we remain thankful even in the midst of suffering. (Phil 4:6-8)
- Pray together for your hopes of your Community Group. Pray that God would give you the grace and the ability to pursue those hopes together in a profound and meaningful way.