

All Things New — Group Discussion Questions

Discuss any or all of the questions below with your group. Choose some questions ahead of time, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them:

Session 1: The Hope of Renewal

1. Hebrews 6:19: *This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.*
It is essential for you to have an unbreakable, unquenchable hope as the anchor of your soul. If your life has this anchor, how does it affect the way you react to hardships? If you are missing this anchor and feel adrift, can you name when you first lost the hope and confident anticipation that goodness was coming?
2. How you envision your future impacts your current experience more than anything else. If you knew God was going to restore your life and everything you love any day—not in a vague heaven but right here on this earth—what would that do for you?
3. Matthew 19:28–29: *Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.*
The word "renewal" comes from the Greek word *palingenesia*. It is derived from two root words: *palin*, meaning "again," and *genesia*, meaning "beginning." How does seeing the New Earth as "Eden restored" expand your anticipation of what awaits us?
4. The Greek word *apocatastasis* can be defined as "to put something back into its original condition; to restore something to its created glory." How does this help your understanding of the way God plans to restore everything ... including you?
5. **For too long, Christians have misunderstood their destiny. We have thought we would leave the earth we love and go to an ethereal "heaven" somewhere as the earth was destroyed. Was this your view? If so, how did it make you feel?**
6. Revelation 19:9: *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."*
What are you most looking forward to at the actual Wedding Feast of the Lamb? Who would you love to sit by? What would you say as you raise your glass and offer a toast?
7. **In this first session, what stood out to you as the most surprising or new revelation about heaven, the New Earth, or the coming restoration? How would embracing this view change the way you face each day?**

Session 2: Creation Made New

1. In the video, I share the story of raising my three boys and how hard it was as one by one they grew up and left for college. What does this story provoke in your heart about seasons of letting go or loss?
2. Having hope is the sign of a heart fully alive. But there is a difference between casual, precious, and ultimate hopes. Briefly share one of your hopes from each category with the group.
3. 1 Peter 3:15: *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ...*
Hebrews 6:19: *This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.*
When was the last time anyone asked you about the reason for the hope you have? How can we make the renewal of all things the ultimate anchor of hope for our soul?
4. It's hard to fathom, but we will all ultimately say good-bye to everyone we love and everything we hold dear. And, yes, each of us will die one day as well. Yet we grasp at every possible means to avoid the inevitable. What kingdom counterfeits and distractions do you give your hopes to rather than face this truth?
5. *Nothing is lost.* That's one of the most powerful promises the world has ever heard. Take a moment and let that sink in. What is the most difficult aspect of that statement to believe? How is God revealing to you that this is true?
6. Romans 8:19–20: *That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.*
Take a moment to describe what you imagine the world will be like on the morning of its recreation when it is no longer "subjected to frustration . . . by the will of the one who subjected it." Now envision one of your favorite places—perhaps from childhood or family vacations—and share what it may be like on the day it is transformed.
7. Isaiah 11:6–7: *In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow.*
What does the thought of a restored animal kingdom stir in your heart? Does the thought of communicating with them sound too surreal? Why?

Session 3: Your Story Told Rightly

1. Romans 8:21: *the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.*
Why do you think creation is waiting on its restoration until our restoration occurs?
2. Imagine seeing friends and family who, in the New Earth, finally have everlasting joy. They are whole, alive, and everything you knew they were always meant to be. What will that be like? Now consider how your own internal restoration will transform you at the renewal of all things. What you will be most excited to finally be free of or healed from?
3. Revelation 21:3–4: *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*
Which promise or phrase from this passage most captures your heart? Why?
4. Which stories are you most looking forward to hearing in person at the Wedding Feast? Stories from Creation? The battle of David and Goliath? Jesus walking on water? Or perhaps stories from your family tree that happened long before you were born? Along with naming the stories, share why those particular ones hold such meaning.
5. In the video, you learned the significance of every story being told rightly. What facts or situations from your life are you eager to have shared and interpreted in all their completeness and trueness?
6. Matthew 19:27–29: *Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" ²⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.*
What do you think it will look like for those who made sacrifices for Jesus to receive—in addition to eternal life—everything restored a hundred times over? Try to describe this as tangibly and practically as possible.
7. When Jesus is crowned King, we will finally see him as he is. Jesus will be vindicated. His story will be told rightly. What about this moment are you most anticipating? Why?

Session 4: What We'll Do in the New Earth

1. Have you noticed how all great stories and epic movies follow the same storyline? All is good in the kingdom, evil enters into the story, a rescuer comes, and a great battle ensues where evil is overthrown and the kingdom is restored to its glory. What are several books or movies where you see these themes at play? How are they borrowing their power from our story?
2. Revelation 19:1–2: *After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting, "Praise the Lord! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. ²His judgments are true and just. He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. He has avenged the murder of his servants."*
You have a heart for redemption and for justice to be rightly served. Think about a specific evil that has plagued members of your family, friends, or community over time. What evil are you most looking forward to finally being vanquished?
3. Revelation 20:10: *Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*
What will it be like when the familiar temptations and struggles you've faced are no longer issues—not due to your successful resistance, but because the enemy no longer exists?
4. In the video, I ask you to imagine a scene where there are huge treasure chests. Some hold things from your former life that were stolen by the enemy—such as your joy or cherished memories. Other chests contain rewards for your service and perseverance. What do you hope will be in your treasure chests?
5. Have you considered how God, from the beginning, has filled this earth with hidden treasures—like music, science, and literature—so you might have the joy of discovering them with him? What talents and gifts has God given you to pursue? How might those interested be even more fully realized in the New Earth?
6. Revelation 5:9–10: *And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth."*
We will reign one day as restored human beings on a restored earth. What do you sense that may involve or look like?
7. What are you looking forward to learning in the kingdom? Perhaps mastering a new language or an instrument? Or maybe surfing or sculpting? How about learning history from the very people who lived it? Let your imagination run wild here.

Session 5: The Power of Our Hope

1. How often do you find yourself praying for the return of Jesus? If this hasn't been a regular part of your prayers, do you sense the practice might help shepherd your hopes for what is to come?

2. Matthew 24:42: *"So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming.*

Luke 12:35–36: *"Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks.*

Luke 19:12: *He said, "A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return.*

Given the emphasis of these passages, why do you think believers tend to focus on heaven more than the return of Jesus?

3. Matthew 24:45–51: *"A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. ⁴⁶If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. ⁴⁸But what if the servant is evil and thinks, 'My master won't be back for a while,' ⁴⁹and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? ⁵⁰The master will return unannounced and unexpected, ⁵¹and he will cut the servant to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

What is the forbidden attitude in this parable? Is this attitude something you struggle with? Explain.

4. When it comes to death, we often grieve as if we'll never see our loved ones again. How would this change if we viewed their absence as temporary rather than permanent—knowing we'll be reunited with everyone we love who died in Christ?

5. Romans 8:18–21: *Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.*

In these current hard times, is your "joyful anticipation" deepening? What might you do for this to increase?

6. We need to fill our hearts with brilliant pictures and hopeful expectations of the coming kingdom. Imagine you have a magazine in front of you now. What pictures would you want to cut out and place in your journal as reminders of what is to come? Be specific.

7. As we come to the end of this study, where have your views of heaven, earth, and the restoration of everything you love changed the most? Has there been a corresponding increase of hope with this new insight? Explain.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Thank you for your willingness to lead your group through *All Things New: Heaven, Earth, and the Restoration of Everything You Love*. The rewards of leading are different from the rewards of participating, and we hope you find your own walk with Jesus deepened by this experience. This leader's guide will give you some tips on how to prepare for your time together and facilitate a meaningful experience for your group members.

What Does It Take to Lead This Study?

Get together and watch God show up. Seriously, that's the basics of how a small group works. Gather several people together who have a hunger for God, want to learn more about what is in store for them at "the renewal of all things" (Matthew 19:28), and are willing to be open and honest with God and themselves. The Lord will honor this every time and show up in the group. You don't have to be a pastor, priest, theologian, or counselor to lead a group through this study. Just invite people to watch the video together and talk about it. All you need is a willing heart, a little courage, and God will do the rest. Really.

How This Study Works

This series is presented in five video sessions, with each session approximately fifteen minutes in length. Each week, you'll watch the video and discuss the session.

A Few Tips for Leading a Group

Be honest. Remember that your honesty will set the tone for your time together. Be willing to answer questions personally, as this will set the pace for the length of your group members' responses and will make others more comfortable in sharing.

Stick to the schedule. Strive to begin and end at the same time each week. The people in your group are busy, and if they can trust you to be a good steward of their time, they will be more willing to come back each week. Of course, you'll want to be open to the work God is doing in the group as members process these teachings about heaven and the New Earth. During such times, you may want to linger in prayer or discussion. Remember the clock serves *you*; your group doesn't serve the clock. But work to respect the group's time, especially when it comes to limiting the discussion times.

Don't be afraid of silence or emotion. Welcome awkward moments. The material presented during this study will likely challenge the group members to reconsider some of their long-held beliefs about the restoration of the earth. The idea that *nothing is ever truly lost* may evoke some emotions in them as they think back on their hardships and the losses they have experienced. Don't be afraid to ease into the material with the group.

Don't dominate the conversation. Even though you are the leader, you are also a member of this small group. So don't steamroll over others in an attempt to lead—and don't let anyone else in the group do so either.

Prepare for your meeting. Watch the video for the meeting ahead of time. Though it may feel a bit like cheating because you'll know what's coming, you'll be better prepared for what the session might stir in the hearts of your group members. Also review the material in this guide and be sure to spend time in prayer. In fact, the *most important* thing you can do is simply pray ahead of time each week:

Lord Jesus, come and rule this time. Let your Spirit fill this place. Bring your kingdom here. Take us right to the things we really need to talk about and rescue us from every distraction. Show us the heart of the Father. Meet each person here. Give us your grace and love for one another. In your name I pray.

Insight for Discussion

Note that each group will have its own personality and dynamics. Typically, people will hold back the first week or two until they feel the group is “safe.” Then they will begin to share. Again, don't let it throw you if your group seems a bit awkward at first. Of course, some people *never* want to talk, so you'll need to coax them out as time goes on. But let it go the first week.

If the group members are in any way open to talking about their lives as it relates to this material, you will *not* have enough time for every question suggested in this study guide. That's okay! Pick the questions ahead of time that you know you want to cover, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them.

You set the tone for the group. Your honesty and vulnerability during discussion times will tell them what they can share. How *long* you talk will give them an example of how long they should. So give some thought to what stories or insights from your own work in the study guide you want to highlight.

WARNING: The greatest temptation for most small group leaders is to add to the video teaching with a little “teaching session” of their own. This is unhelpful for three reasons:

1. The discussion time will be the richest time during your meeting. The video sessions have been intention-ally kept short so you can have plenty of time for discussion. If you add to the teaching, you sacrifice this precious time.
2. You don't want your group members to be *teaching, lecturing, or correcting* one another. Every person is at a different place in his or her spiritual journey. If you use a lecturing or correcting tone, the group will feel like they have the freedom to teach one another. That can be disastrous for group dynamics.

3. The participants will have read the corresponding chapters in *All Things New*, done the preparation work in this guide, and watched the video teaching. They don't need more content! They want a chance to talk and process their own lives in light of all they have taken in.

A Strong Close

Some of the best learning times will take place after the group time as God brings new insights to the participants during the week. Encourage group members to write down any questions they have as they go through *All Things New* and do the preparation work. Make sure they know you are available for them as they explore what God has to say about the restoration of the earth, as many of the concepts might be new or challenging to them. Finally, make sure you close your time by praying together. Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study.

Thank you again for taking the time to lead your group. May God reward your efforts and dedication and make your time together in *All Things New* fruitful for his kingdom.