

**Uncomfortable: The Awkward and Essential
Challenge of Christian Community
Week 4: Counterculture Comfort**

TALK IT OVER

BIG IDEA OF THE MESSAGE:

God has given us a comfort that is greater than anything the culture, other religions, or our own preferences and desires can provide. When we experience the uncomfortable, we can trust in God's promises of what is to come.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Revelation 19:6-9

PRAYER TIPS

There are no right or wrong ways to pray, but using patterns for prayer can help keep us focused or from praying about the same thing over and over. Here's one to try:

P—Praise. *Marvel in how great and wonderful God is.*

R—Report. *Talk to God about what's going on in your life—both the good and bad.*

A—Ask. *Tell God your prayer requests.*

Y—Yield. *Spend time handing over your life and circumstances to the will of God.*

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Day 1: Revelation 19:6-9

Day 2: Matthew 22:1-14

Day 3: Ephesians 5:22-33

Day 4: John 14:1-3

Day 5: 1 Corinthians 12:27

Day 6: Revelation 21:2

Day 7: Isaiah 61:10

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What was the most festive wedding and reception that you've ever attended?

Start thinking. Ask some questions to get your group thinking.

- Read Revelation 19:6-9. Chapters 17-18 talk about a prostitute/harlot who is the enemy of the church. Skim chapters 17-18. How does the enemy of the church compare to the "bride of Christ" in Revelation 19?

Start sharing. Choose some questions to create openness.

- What is the story of God and His people? Using the different "acts" of the story on the following page, talk about the overarching story of Scripture. What events can you think of that happen in each act? Where are we in the story today? How does our story end?
- How can pondering God's promises offer us comfort?
- How is it easy to gravitate toward a comfortable Christian life? What examples have you seen of people trying to make Christianity comfortable?
- When is comfortable not a good thing?
- How can we as a church embrace discomfort for the sake of one another and the Kingdom?

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

God, You have been working since we fell into sin to bring us back to You. Your love for us is truly amazing. As we think of the grand story of Your love for Your people, help us be moved to respond. As we look forward with anticipation and hope to the day when together, we will be with You forever, move us to look past the discomfort of life and to embrace life together with Your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Embrace discomfort. Following Jesus is an invitation into discomfort for the sake of others. When you face something that seems uncomfortable—a relationship, a situation, an invitation—consider how it might be a blessing for others if you pushed through the discomfort and seek God's encouragement as you lean in.

THE BIBLICAL DRAMA

It's easy to get caught up in all the individual stories and events in the Bible that we lose sight of the bigger story that's unfolding in its pages. Throughout its pages, the stories of individuals—from Noah to Paul, Ruth to Timothy—are all part of a larger story that we, too, are a part of. It's the grand story of God's work of saving and restoring His creation.

In the second century BC, the dramatist Terence began writing plays in five distinct "acts" for performance in Roman theatres. Ever since, the Western tradition of dramatic storytelling has come to acknowledge this five-act structure as particularly suited to the careful unfolding of a long and important story. The five acts are generally organized this way:

(1) The first act gives us essential background information, introduces the important characters, and establishes the stable situation that will be disrupted by the events about to unfold. (2) The first action begins, usually with the introduction of a significant conflict. The middle of the play (3) is where the main action of the drama takes place. Here the initial conflict intensifies and grows ever more complicated until (4) the climax, or the point of highest tension, after which that conflict *must* be resolved, one way or another. After the climax comes (5) the resolution, in which the implications of the climactic act are worked out for all the characters of the drama, and stability is restored.

The general scope of Terence's structure can help us sort out the grand story of God, though it's easier to put it into six acts instead of Terence's five. In a nutshell, the big story of Scripture looks something like this:

Act 1 God Establishes His Kingdom: Creation

Act 2 Rebellion in the Kingdom: Fall

Act 3 The King Chooses Israel: Redemption Initiated

Scene 1: A People for the King

Scene 2: A Land for His People

Interlude - *A Kingdom Story Waiting for an Ending: The Time Between the Testaments*

Act 4 The Coming of the King: Redemption Accomplished

Act 5 Spreading the News of the King: The Mission of the Church

Scene 1: From Jerusalem to Rome

Scene 2: And into All the World

Act 6 The Return of the King: Redemption Completed