Discussion Guide 4, Week 1: Access Denied

Throughout the Bible, gates, doors, and entryways are used to illustrate access into God's presence, the path to relationship with God through Jesus, and the way the Spirit protects our hearts and minds. This week, we will explore why access to God was denied and how Jesus provided the only way back to God.

1. God created humanity to live in close relationship with Him. In Eden, Adam and Eve experienced God's presence without the separation caused by sin. But when they rebelled against God, sin changed that relationship. In Genesis **3:23a–24**, we read: *The Lord God banished [Adam and Eve] from the Garden of Eden… After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Question: What does the guarded entrance to the Garden of Eden teach us about the effect sin has on humanity's relationship with God?
Answer: We learn that sin has blocked our access to God, and we are no longer able to be in relationship with Him.

2. In **Psalm 100:4**, we read: *Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving; enter his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.* And **Revelation 22:14–15** tells us: *Blessed are those who wash their robes in the blood of Christ by believing and trusting in Him—the righteous who do His commandments, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.*

Question: According to these verses, how do we access the open gates to God's kingdom?
Answer: By believing and trusting in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have open access to God.

3. In **Revelation 3:20**, we read: "*Look*! *I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me.*" And **Proverbs 8:33–35** reads: *Hear my teaching and be wise. Do not turn away from it. Happy is the man who listens to me, watching every day at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For he who finds me finds life and gets favor from the Lord.*

Question: According to these verses, what is Jesus telling us about Himself, and how is He asking us to respond?
Answer: Jesus is calling on all of us to open the doors of our hearts and be in relationship with Him. Then, if we actively watch and wait for Him, He will lead us back to God.

4. In **Psalm 118:20** we read: *Open to me the gates of what is right and good. I will go through them and give thanks to the Lord. This the gate of the Lord. Those who are right with God will pass through it* and **2 Peter 1:11b** reads: *You will be given the full right to enter the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Question: According to these verses, who is given access through "the gate of the Lord" and how do we obtain the "full right" to enter God's eternal kingdom?
Answer: Those who believe and trust in God's eternal Son, Jesus, to be the one and only Savior of humankind and the only way back to God.

Let's Talk About It:
- Why did God block Adam and Eve's access to the Tree of Life after they disobeyed Him? How was He showing them mercy?
- Why did God make Jesus the only gateway back to Him? Does this give you relief or concern?
- How does this week's lesson help you understand who is permitted into God's presence and why?

Challenge: Spend the remainder of today's meeting praying for each other, your friends, family, and community.

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Discussion Guide 4, Week 2: Two Paths

Last week, we talked about why access to God was denied and how Jesus provided the only way back to God. This week, we will explore how the Bible describes only two paths available to humanity: the path that leads to life and the path that leads to eternal separation from God.

1. In **John 14:6** Jesus tells said: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me" and "I tell you this: Everyone who hears my message should believe in the Father who sent me. If they believe in me, they will have life forever with God. God will not say that they are guilty. They are no longer under the power of death. Instead, they have life with God"*. **John 5:24**

Question: According to these verses, who is "the way" and what is promised to those who believe in who God sent?
Answer: Jesus is the only way and those who put their faith and trust in Jesus are no longer separated from God because of their sin.

2. In **Matthew 7:13-14**, we learn that there are two roads in life: Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it, but small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Question: According to these verses, what are the two paths?
Answer: There is the narrow path that leads to God and eternal life with Him, and then there is the wide path that leads to destruction and eternal separation from God.

3.In **Proverbs 14:12**, we read: *There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death and destruction*, **Proverbs 3:6** says, if we seek God in all that we do and then He will show us the way forward and **Psalm 119:105** says: *Your word is like a lamp that guides my steps, a light that shows the path I should take.*

Question: According to these verses, how are we to know which path to take?
Answer: By seeking God through prayer and reading His Word, He promises to guide us back to Him.

4.**Deuteronomy 4:29** reads: *In all of your troubles, you may finally decide that you want to worship only the Lord. And if you turn back to him and obey him completely, he will again be your God.*

Question: What role do we play in being reconnected to God (or what decisions do we need to make)?
Answer: By turning back to the Lord, following His will, and only worshipping Him.

Let's Talk About It:
According to the Bible, where does the narrow road lead?
Why is it narrow and how do we find it?
How could a person think the path to destruction is the right path?
What are key take aways for you today?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be the way, the truth, and the life. Help us to trust in Him and choose the path that leads to You. Guide our hearts and minds through Your Word and give us wisdom and strength to follow Your ways instead of our own. When we wander from You, remind us of Your love and help us turn back to You. May we honor You in all that we say and do. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Challenge: Invite new people to your youth group this week.

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Faith and Purpose Clubs Leaders Discussion Guide 4: The Way Back to God

Discussion Guide 4, Week 3: Guarding the Gates of Our Hearts and Minds

Over the past few weeks, we have learned how the Bible often uses imagery of gates, doors, and entryways to illustrate access into God's presence, protection, and how Jesus provides the only way back to God. This week, we will also discuss the importance of cooperating with God's Spirit in guarding the access points to our hearts and minds.

1. In **Proverbs 4:23** we read: *Guard your heart more than anything else, because the source of your life flows from it and then we read: Listen closely to my words. Never stop thinking about them. Above all, be careful what you think because your thoughts control your life. Keep your eyes on the path and look straight ahead* (verses from Proverbs 4:20-26).

Question: How do these verses help us to guard our hearts and minds?
Answer: By reading, thinking about, and trusting God's Words in the Bible.

2. **1 John 2:16** tells us: *For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world and Psalm 101:3a reads: I won't look at anything that is evil and call it good.*

Question: How can the things we choose to watch and look at influence what we want, think, and do?
Answer: What we look at can shape our thoughts and desires. These verses remind us to be careful about what we choose to look at and to recognize that not everything we see is good for us.

3. **Romans 12:2** tells us: *Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.* And **Philippians 4:8** says: *From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise.*

Questions: According to these verses, how can we guard our thoughts?
Answer: Allow God to completely change our hearts and minds and focus on what is true, holy, pure, and worthy of praise because these things reflect the good news of God.

2.In **Hebrews 3:15**, we are told: *Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion* and **Ezekiel 36: 26** says: *I will give you a new heart—I will give you new and right desires—and put a new spirit within you. I will take out your stony hearts of sin and give you new hearts of love.*

Question: What does it mean to have a hardened heart, and what does God promise to those who follow Him?
Answer: A hardened heart resists God's truth and refuses to follow Him. God promises to replace a stubborn heart with one that is open and responsive to Him. He also promises to give His people the Holy Spirit, who helps us understand God's truth and make choices that honor Him.

Let's Talk About It:

- How can what we watch, look at, or listen to influence our thoughts and actions?
- If your heart and mind are like gates, what should you allow in, and what should you keep out?
- How does focusing on what is true, pure, good, and worthy of praise help us grow closer to God?
- How has this week's lesson encouraged you to listen to God and follow His plan for your life?

Challenge: Invite 3-4 new people to the **INSPIRE** meeting next week.

Remember to prepare for next week's INSPIRE meeting.

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Faith and Purpose Clubs Leaders Discussion Guide 4: The Way Back to God

Discussion Guide 4, Week 4: INSPIRE Week

Read the following to your group:

Welcome to our Faith & Purpose Club! We are so glad you are here! We meet each week to talk about God, explore the Bible, and discuss real-life topics that matter. Although we are a student-led Christian group, everyone is welcome. This is a safe, supportive place to build friendships, learn about faith, and feel connected.

For the last few weeks, we have been discussing how gates, doors, and entryways are often used in the Bible to illustrate access into God's presence, the path to relationship with God through Jesus, and the way the Spirit protects our hearts and minds. This week, we will hear faith stories and the gospel invitation.

The **core verse** that frames today's meeting is **John 10:9** reads: *I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will be able to come in and go out. They will find everything they need.*

A student leader shares their faith story NOW

Prayer and invitation:

We will now take a minute to talk to God through prayer. In the quiet of your heart and mind, I invite anyone here who wants to begin a relationship with God through faith in Jesus, to agree in your heart and mind with what I am saying because God hears our private thoughts. I will pray out loud and I invite you to pray this in your head:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come to You with an open heart, recognizing that living life my own way has separated me from You. Thank You for loving me and showing me that Jesus is the way back to You. I choose to place my faith and trust in Him as my Savior, trusting Him to guide and protect me. Help me turn away from my own desires and follow Your truth. Teach me to surrender my life to You, trusting that Your ways are better than my own. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In Jesus' Name, I pray, Amen.

If you have turned your heart and mind to Jesus today, please know that He sees and welcomes you.

Pass out Response Cards NOW (download from the yclprograms.org or YCL phone app)

Challenge: Remember to invite visitors to next week's group meeting and to tell them about your youth group/church.

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