



# The Story of Restoration

## Summary and Goal

God's plan for redeeming that which has been marred by sin didn't end at the empty tomb, nor does it culminate with the miraculous rescuing of souls out of every tribe, tongue, and nation (as jaw-droppingly wonderful as that is). God is directing history to a specific and glorious end in which sin and its effects will be undone, nullified, extinguished; and all of God's redeemed creation will exist in perfect harmony and union with the Triune God.

### **Main Passages**

John 1:10-13; Revelation 21:1-4

### **Session Outline**

1. The Extent of Jesus' Work (John 1:13; Revelation 21:1-2)
2. God's Dwelling with Man (John 1:10a, 11a; Revelation 21:3)
3. Sins Effects Banished (Revelation 21:4)

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### **Theological Theme**

The incarnation, sinless life, and sacrificial death of God the Son is the only hope that sinners have to cling to. His work extends to the end of the age and beyond. It results in complete reconciliation between people and God. Furthermore, it allows the people of God to enjoy an everlasting existence free from the effects of sin's curse.

### **Christ Connection**

Jesus is our Savior and Rescuer. Not only did he earn for Christians righteousness through a perfectly obedient life and pay the penalty for sin through a perfectly obedient death, but He has secured a future characterized by complete reconciliation with God.

### **Missional Application**

Christians are called to tell others about how Jesus Christ has come to save and rescue sinners and call people to repent of sin and believe in the good news.

# Historical Context of John

## Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30-31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God's people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

## Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve ("the disciple Jesus loved," 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24-25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of "the disciple Jesus loved" with Peter in 13:23-24; 18:15-16; 20:2-9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3-4; 8:14-25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1-4).

## Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John's lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas's confession of Jesus as "my Lord and my God" in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter's martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1,14,18; 10:30; 20:28).

## Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John's Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

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## Session Plan

# The Story of Restoration

### Introduction

- ❓ Do you think internal values or external rewards are more effective motivational factors in people's lives?
- ❓ What should motivate Christians to serve Christ?

We live in a world filled with suffering, pain, conflict, and disease. The Bible promises it will not always be this way. Creation itself will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth. Every tear will be wiped away, grief and sickness and pain and conflict and even death will be defeated once and for all. Owen Strachan wrote, "We may sense our inadequacy and feel that our future is uncertain, but the Word of God assures us that the Lord is leading history to its rightful conclusion in Christ. He is in charge. He will keep his word. His promises will not fail."<sup>2</sup>




### 1. The Extent of Jesus' Work (John 1:13; Revelation 21:1-2)

Jesus' finished work on the cross is the essence of the Christian faith. Without it, Christians have no reason to hope, rejoice, or obey. With it, Christians should be the most hopeful, joyful, and sacrificial people on the face of the planet. After all, who could contain the joy produced by a true reception of the incredible promises of God's word to His children? Who would be more hopeful in the face of such brokenness than those who have read the end of the story found in Revelation 21?

- ❓ What is the promise in John 1:12? How is God able to justify someone and declare them not guilty when they are, in fact, guilty of sin?
- ❓ What does Jesus' work on the cross have to do with His second coming and the promises that we read about in Revelation 21 (new heaven and new earth, effects of sin erased)?
- ❓ Application: Have you examined yourself to be assured that you are saved (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10)? If so, and you have assurance that you are a Christian, how does it make you feel to know that you are kept by God's power?



## 2. God's Dwelling with Man (John 1:10a, 11a; Revelation 21:3)

For the stained sinner, the idea of being in the presence of the one true and most holy God is nightmarish, as it should be. But those that have been born again have been made clean by the blood of Christ. A person who truly understands the gospel will realize that there is no longer anything to fear in God's presence. To the contrary, true believers will recognize that God's presence is their home. The restless longing for home and the unexplained sadness is done away with in God's presence because God is the source and aim of those deep yearnings for a true place of rest. That's why Jesus said, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).



-  Why is the incarnation so significant to the Christian faith?
-  What does Revelation 21:3 say? Is the promise of God dwelling among us a big deal? Why or why not?
-  Application: Does the idea of being in the presence of God give you a sense of relief or dread? Why?

## 3. The Effects of Sin Banished (Revelation 21:4)

The fourth verse in Revelation describes something that we can try to imagine: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." Jesus' work on the cross not only made a way for us to dwell again with our Creator, but it also defeated and did away with the curse of sin. It is true that we still toil in a sin-infected world, but it is passing away, and those who are in Christ look toward a home that is free from these horrors.

-  What is heaven like according to this verse? What ideas have you picked up about heaven (biblical or not)?
-  Application: Is there any idea about heaven that you have that is inaccurate or unbiblical? Does it have a negative effect on your walk with Christ now?

## Conclusion

-  What is your understanding of the work of Jesus? Why did he come and what does it have to do with you?
-  Do you have a deep longing to know and dwell with God? How is it possible that we might dwell with God? Do you look forward with joy and expectation toward eternity in heaven? Why or why not?

### For Further Discussion

What sorts of feelings does the nature of Christ's work cause in you? Do you feel worried, repentant? Sad? Angry? Why?



## Expanded Session Content

# The Story of Restoration

### Introduction

- ❓ Do you think internal values or external rewards are more effective motivational factors in people's lives?
- ❓ What should motivate Christians to serve Christ?

Christians are motivated people because their existence is saturated with meaning. Every conversation, every household chore, every family meal is meaningful because Christians are living for a God who is active in their lives and accomplishing his eternal purposes through them.

We may not always be aware of it, but we all have longings for deeper meaning. In one way or another, every person will spend time today seeking meaning and fulfillment. This meaning is what motivates them to do what they do. Money, power, possessions, and sex (among many other things) serve as motivating factors for many people, even Christians. Yet God has called believers to be moved, motivated, and transformed by something completely different.

### Session Summary


We live in a world filled with suffering, pain, conflict, and disease. The Bible promises it will not always be this way. Creation itself will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth. Every tear will be wiped away, grief and sickness and pain and conflict and even death will be defeated once and for all. Owen Strachan wrote, "We may sense our inadequacy and feel that our future is uncertain, but the Word of God assures us that the Lord is leading history to its rightful conclusion in Christ. He is in charge. He will keep his word. His promises will not fail."<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Extent of Jesus' Work (John 1:13; Revelation 21:1-2)

Jesus' finished work on the cross is the essence of the Christian faith. Without it, Christians have no reason to hope, rejoice, or obey. With it, Christians should be the most hopeful, joyful, and sacrificial people on the face of the planet. After all, who could contain the joy produced by a true

reception of the incredible promises of God's word to His children? Who would be more hopeful in the face of such brokenness than those who have read the end of the story found in Revelation 21?


However, many Christians struggle to see the connection between what John wrote in the first chapter of his gospel and what is written at the end of Revelation. The astounding promises and description found in Revelation 21, however, can't be properly taken hold of unless one first gets his or her arms around John 1.

 What is the promise in John 1:12?


As you study Scripture, it can be helpful to remember this acronym: SPECKA. It is a simple grid of questions that a student of the Bible can ask as he reads in order to think more carefully about how it applies today. The questions are:

- Is there a **Sin** to avoid?
- Is there a **Promise** to believe?
- Is there a good/bad **Example** to learn from?
- Is there a **Command** to obey?
- Is there **Knowledge** to gain?
- How does this **Apply** to my life today?

The Word of God promises in John 1:12 that those who receive Jesus and believe in His name will be given the right to become children of God. Here, John is referring to the moment when God saves someone and adopts them to be a part of His family. In this moment they are justified, which means they are declared righteous and not guilty of sin.

 How is God able to justify someone and declare them not guilty when they are, in fact, guilty of sin?

Romans 3:26 says, "God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus." God is able to both justify (declare righteous) sinners while remaining just (righteous) because the punishment for the sinner's sin was dealt with. The sin-debt on those He declared not guilty was paid off. Colossians 2:14 says, "He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross."

 What does Jesus' work on the cross have to do with His second coming and the promises that we read about in Revelation 21 (new heaven and new earth, effects of sin erased)?

First of all, Jesus' work on the cross extends to all creation for all of time. This means that Jesus defeated sin and its curses on the cross, and although they still linger in this world as God the Father completes His work of saving souls, there will come a time when the curse will be put away for good. It sounds like a fairy tale to us because we have only known the curse. We were born in sin and we are confronted with the bitter effects of sin at every turn. Our years are punctuated by funerals, sicknesses, and broken relationships. We experience sadness when all around seems to be well. Our souls long for a true home. An existence without these bitter herbs hardly makes sense to us. Yet, it is what God intends and has planned for His own.

Secondly, those who have been justified by God and adopted into His family will be kept by God until the end. They will persevere in the faith unto death no matter what storm or floods arise and beat against them. No trial will ever be able to move them from the rock to which their faith has been anchored. This is true because they are kept by the power of God for salvation. Not one of them will ever be snatched from the power of God's grip. In fact, the Scriptures say that God's children are engraved on the palms of His hands and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity. (Isaiah 49:16; Revelation 17:8)



Application: Have you examined yourself to be assured that you are saved (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10)? If so, and you have assurance that you are a Christian, how does it make you feel to know that you are kept by God's power?

## 2. God's Dwelling with Man (John 1:10a, 11a; Revelation 21:3)


One of John's primary objectives in chapter 1 of his gospel is to emphasize and affirm the fact that Jesus actually dwelt among us, that He really came in the flesh. He wrote, "He was in the world," (10a), "he came to his own," (11a), and "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (14a)



Why is the incarnation so significant to the Christian faith?


There is no gospel without the incarnation. If Jesus didn't take on flesh, then He didn't obey the law in our place as a man and He didn't suffer the penalty of sin in our place as a man. But there is another reason Jesus' coming to dwell among His creation is important. In Genesis 1 we read that God and man dwelled together in peace and harmony. That, of course, is lost in Genesis 3 with the entrance of the cancer of sin into the human heart. We don't see that kind of relationship between God and man again until Revelation 21. From Genesis 3 until the book of Revelation is the story of God's redemption of His creation in order to

recover what was lost in Genesis 3. When Jesus came on the scene, His appearance was both a reminder of Genesis 1 and a foreshadowing of Revelation 21.

 What does Revelation 21:3 say? Is the promise of God dwelling among us a big deal? Why or why not?


Christians receive the promise that “God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and will be their God” (Revelation 21:4) perhaps with mixed feelings. This ought to be one of the most comforting, joyous promises in all of Scripture, but some believers aren’t sure how to take it. Here is the problem—if a person doesn’t have a proper view of God and the gospel, the prospect of being in God’s presence could be unsettling or terrifying. Ligon Duncan wrote, “Hell is eternity in the presence of God without a mediator. Heaven is eternity in the presence of God, with a mediator.”<sup>2</sup>

For the stained sinner, the idea of being in the presence of the one true and most holy God is nightmarish, as it should be. But those that have been born again have been made clean by the blood of Christ. A person who truly understands the gospel will realize that there is no longer anything to fear in God’s presence. To the contrary, true believers will recognize that God’s presence is their home. The restless longing for home and the unexplained sadness is done away with in God’s presence because God is the source and aim of those deep yearnings for a true place of rest. That’s why Jesus said, “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).

 Application: Does the idea of being in the presence of God give you a sense of relief or dread? Why?

### 3. The Effects of Sin Banished (Revelation 21:4)

The fourth verse in Revelation describes something that we can try to imagine: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.” Jesus’ work on the cross not only made a way for us to dwell again with our Creator, but it also defeated and did away with the curse of sin. It is true that we still toil in a sin-infected world, but it is passing away, and those who are in Christ look toward a home that is free from these horrors.

 What is heaven like according to this verse? What ideas have you picked up about heaven (biblical or not)?



If we are going to keep heaven in view to help us walk by faith, in the Spirit, and with the Lord now, we should have an accurate vision. Revelation 21:4 describes a place and existence that is free from sin and its effects. Holiness will characterize heaven (Jude 1:24; 1 John 3:2). We will be holy as God is holy. Holiness means set apart from the mundane, especially that which is sinful. The Bible says that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1). We will be completely free from and separated from sin and our sin nature in heaven.

Our bodies will also be different. Death will be a distant memory. 2 Corinthians 5:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:4 indicate that our physical bodies become something different. This is often referred to a “glorified body.” People often think in terms of superhero-type powers when they think of what sort of bodies we will have in heaven. After all, Jesus was able to appear out of thin air after His resurrection. Will we be able to do the same? Maybe. But that’s not the main thing. The wonder and glory of our physical bodies in heaven is that they will be untouched by sin. All of the ways that our bodies betray us now will no longer plague us in heaven. Our bodies won’t wear out, they won’t become diseased, they won’t die.

A Christian’s time in heaven will have no end. It will be an eternal existence. That’s impossible for us to fully comprehend, and it may even scare some of us. But remember, all of the things that make us want to roll the clock forward here on earth won’t exist in heaven. It may be helpful to think about the hours or days in your life when you wish time would stop because it was so wonderful. That’s what heaven will be like every moment. There won’t be any ticking clock that we wish would speed up. Our hearts will be so full of joy, love, and peace that time will be irrelevant.

One of the curses of sin is our constant effort to hide sin from those around us. We cut ourselves off from those closest to us because of the darkness that we still battle against. In heaven, when all that darkness is banished, we will be fully known by fellow children of God and by God himself. It’s true that we are fully known by God here and now, but the intimacy and immediacy of that relationship in heaven will be without compare. Similarly, our fellowship with other believers in heaven will be much greater than what experience now.



Application: Is there any idea about heaven that you have that is inaccurate or unbiblical? Does it have a negative effect on your walk with Christ now?

## Conclusion

The gospel of Jesus Christ has to do with today, tomorrow, and all eternity. Jesus' shed blood on the cross gives Christians the relief of forgiven sins today and the joy of an eternity with God forever.

- ❓ What is your understanding of the work of Jesus? Why did he come and what does it have to do with you?
- ❓ What sorts of feelings does the nature of Christ's work cause in you? Do you feel worried, repentant? Sad? Angry? Why?
- ❓ Do you have a deep longing to know and dwell with God? How is it possible that we might dwell with God? Do you look forward with joy and expectation toward eternity in heaven? Why or why not?

## Prayer of Response

*Pray with thanksgiving for what Christ has done to make it possible for Christians to dwell with God and experience a sin-free existence. Ask the Lord to give you the ability to live with eternity in mind, knowing that Christians are not yet home.*

## Additional Resources

- *When Christ Comes* by Max Lucado
- *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn
- *All Things New* by John Eldredge

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- Father, Forgive Them

### Main Passages

- Luke 23:34 (Matthew 18:21-35)

### Session Outline

1. Forgiving an Impossible Debt (Matthew 18:21-27)
2. Forgetting Desperation Leads to Ingratitude (Matthew 18:28-30)
3. Forgiveness Modeled Leads to Forgiveness Offered (Matt 18:31-35; Luke 23:34)

### Memorize

*<sup>3</sup> Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God.*

- Revelation 21:3-4

### Daily Readings

- Monday - Revelation 21:5-8
- Tuesday - Revelation 21:9-27
- Wednesday - Revelation 22:1-5
- Thursday - Revelation 22:6-21
- Friday - 1 Peter 5:10
- Saturday - Hebrews 9:28

## Extended Commentary

### John 1:10-13

1:10-11. Immediately after describing the announcement, John tells us about apathy toward the message of regeneration. The world (*kosmos*) is another of John's theme words; he used it seventy-seven times. With the device of repetition, John taught incarnation, creation, and rejection all in one verse (v. 10). Depravity and blindness thwarted God's efforts to reach out to his own creation—and still do.

In verse 11, the first appearance of the word *own* appears in the neuter gender and the second is masculine. What significance could such a distinction have for interpretation? One possibility is that Jesus came to earth, the place he had created, and the second tells us that the people who lived there turned him away. He was not welcomed or accepted.

1:12-13. Early in his book, John established the heart of the gospel, still two chapters away from the famous John 3:16. From the announcement of regeneration followed by apathy the apostle introduces the acceptance of regeneration.

Like most things in life, there is a right way and a wrong way to respond to God. The right way (and the only meaningful way) is to believe the gospel, receive the Savior and accept new birth as a result. The wrong way somehow links a relationship to God with human qualities such as physical birth, self-determination, or the choice of another person. In John's theological vocabulary, *believed* and *received* are synonymous when it comes to the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

### Revelation 21:1-4

21:1-2. After the solemn judgment scene at the great white throne, the scene of the New Jerusalem provided welcome relief for John. The bowls of God's judgment in Revelation 16 had demolished the old earth. At the beginning of the final judgment, "earth and sky fled from his presence" (20:11). What would happen now that the first heaven and the first earth had passed away? John saw a new heaven and a new earth. Whether he meant a transformation of the old elements of the universe and a renovation or whether this is a brand new universe is not clear. What he saw, however, transcends anything that could exist in the universe as we now understand it (for example, life on earth without a sun, v. 23).

The first of seven enemies for God's people that will exist no longer is the sea (for the others, see v. 4 and 22:3,5). Commentators differ in their understanding of what the absence of the sea implies. However, the first great monster had come out of the sea (13:1), and the surging oceans had been a suitable metaphor for the wicked of Isaiah's day: "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud" (Isa. 57:20).

John's panoramic focus quickly narrows to the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. She is obviously the counterpart to the wicked prostitute Babylon. If Babylon was Dame Civilization in her final embodiment as a wicked city, then New Jerusalem is "God's People" in her eternal flowering as a holy city. The symbols John uses to picture the eternal state exceed our ability to understand them.

By beginning his description that she is coming down out of heaven, John conveys that the final home of the redeemed is earth itself for eternity. God created humanity to dwell on the earth, and his plan is for a new earth to be their place forever. In fact, one striking note about this vision of the New Jerusalem is the reappearance of the Tree of Life—one of the main items found in Eden, the first home of mankind (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 22:2).

In Revelation 19:7, John had heard from a heavenly multitude praising God about the wedding of the Lamb and the preparation of the bride. Now, at last, when he sees the city he compares her to a bride beautifully dressed. A human bride is her most splendid only on her wedding day. Here is a bride whose radiance will never fade. The description of the bride's attire begins in verse 11, emphasizing that she exists for her husband, the Lamb-Bridegroom.

21:3-4. For the third and final time John hears a loud voice from the throne (16:17; 19:5). The word for dwelling is traditionally translated "tabernacle" or "tent." When the Israelites had lived in the wilderness after the Exodus, God's presence was evident through the tent (Exod. 40:34). Part of the reward for Israel's obedience to God was, "I will put my dwelling place [tabernacle] among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people" (Lev. 26:11-12). Israel's disobedience, of course, led finally to the destruction of the temple.

The permanent remedy began when God became enfleshed in Jesus: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). A form of the same verb translated "made his dwelling" in John 1:14 is now

used by the heavenly voice: he will live with them. Here, then, is the final eternal fulfillment of Leviticus 26.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God is a divine promise often made, particularly in context of the new covenant (Jer. 31:33; 32:38; Ezek. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16). In eternity, it will find full completion in its most glorious sense. One striking note here is that the word translated “people,” while often singular in Revelation (for example, 18:4), here is plural, literally “peoples.” This points to the great ethnic diversity of those in heaven.

The great multitude who came out of the Great Tribulation received the pledge of many blessings including the final removal of any cause for tears (7:15-17). Now this promise extends to every citizen-saint of the New Jerusalem. The picture of God himself gently taking a handkerchief and wiping away all tears is overwhelming. It pictures the removal of four more enemies:

death—destroyed and sent to the fiery lake (20:14; 1 Cor. 15:26)

mourning—caused by death and sin, but also ironically the eternal experience of those who loved the prostitute (18:8)

crying—one result of the prostitute’s cruelty to the saints (18:24)

pain—the first penalty inflicted on mankind at the Fall is finally lifted at last (Gen. 3:16)

All these belonged to the old order of things where sin and death were present. The last thought could also be translated, “The former things are gone.” No greater statement of the end of one kind of existence and the beginning of a new one can be found in Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

## References

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3. Gangel, Kenneth O., and Max Anders. *John*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000.
4. Easley, Kendell H. *Revelation*. Edited by Max E. Anders. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998.

## Author Bio

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Owen Strachan is Associate Professor of Christian Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. He is also Senior Fellow for the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW).

### **Ligon Duncan (Fear Not!)**

Ligon Duncan is the Chancellor and CEO of the Reformed Theological Seminary System where he is also John E. Richards Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology. Prior to his appointment he was Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi.

### **Kenneth Gangel (John)**

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-2009): A prolific author and an experienced leader has been influential in the field of Christian education for over forty years. He's written numerous articles and over 50 books, while pastoring, teaching, raising a family and leading schools. His impact reaches around the world through students, co-authored books, and working with leaders of churches and schools.

### **Max Anders (John, Revelation)**

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling 30 Days to Understanding the Bible, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at [www.maxanders.com](http://www.maxanders.com) to help people grow spiritually.

### **Kendell Easley (Revelation)**

Kendell H. Easley is chairman of the New Testament Department at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Germantown, Tennessee. He is author of User Friendly Greek and Revelation in the Holman New Testament Commentary.

### **Max Lucado (When Christ Comes)**

Since entering the ministry in 1978, Max Lucado has served churches in Miami, Florida; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and San Antonio, Texas. He currently serves as Teaching Minister of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio. He is America's bestselling inspirational author with more than 140 million books in print.

### **Randy Alcorn (Heaven)**

Randy Alcorn is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching biblical truth and drawing attention to the needy and how to help them. Alcorn is the author of over 40 books, including Heaven; Money, Possessions and Eternity; Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments; and The Treasure Principle. His novels include Deadline; Dominion; Deception; and Safely Home. Alcorn resides in Oregon with his wife, Nanci.

### **John Eldredge (All Things New)**

John Eldredge is a bestselling author, a counselor, and a teacher. He is also president of Ransomed Heart, a ministry devoted to helping people discover the heart of God, recover their own hearts in God's love, and learn to live in God's kingdom. John and his wife, Stasi, live near Colorado Springs, Colorado.