



# Tend the Garden

*A 10-Week Exploration  
from Eden to Revelation*

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**A simple, immersive small group  
experience that fits real life.**

Explore Scripture and take part in  
hands-on Earthcare Activities that  
connect you to God, neighbors,  
and your slice of the Earth.

*Tend is an initiative of Plant With Purpose, a Christian 501(c)(3)  
nonprofit creating a world where people and planet thrive. Together  
we can restore ecosystems, reduce poverty, and bring hope to farming  
families around the world. Learn more at [plantwithpurpose.org](http://plantwithpurpose.org).*



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***Welcome to Tend.** Tend is a simple way to grow as a disciple, live your faith, and invite your neighbors to join you in restoring God's Earth—right where you live.*

## **Tend is made for people like you ...**

... busy yet mindful people who want to live out what it means to be part of God's creation and care for it too.

Tend enriches your life through meaningful community—without adding more to your plate.

Some weeks, your group will enjoy a simple meal together and discuss Scripture.

On alternating weeks, you'll welcome friends and neighbors to join you in hands-on Earthcare Activities—simple practices grounded in Scripture that connect you to God's Earth, such as gardening, hiking, or cleaning up a shared space.

This is discipleship that fits real life. Low prep. No pressure. Just honest conversation, shared purpose, and practices that connect you to God, your neighbors, and the Earth.

## **Why Caring for the Earth Matters**

In the beginning, God created a beautiful Garden, formed humans from its soil, breathed on us, and said "Tend this." It's not that God needed humans to pick weeds and trim the hedges. God formed humans to co-sustain all of creation in harmony, partnering with our Creator to extend Eden into every corner of the Earth.

Sin fractured our relationship to God and creation. But God began restoring relationships, most fully in the resurrection of Jesus, promising New Creation where heaven and Earth meet again.

**Caring for the Earth isn't just a trendy add-on to our faith,** it's part of how we follow Jesus now. When we live out what it means to be part of creation, we participate in God's work of healing relationships. Every act of caring for the Earth—whether planting a garden, reducing waste, or protecting wildlife—becomes a reflection of God's heart and points toward the promised future: a world made whole.

## Tend Leader Guide

### 10 Weeks of Tend

**WEEK 1** WELCOME, VISION, & PLANNING

**WEEK 2** EARTHCARE ACTIVITY

**WEEK 3** DINNER & DISCUSSION: THE GARDEN OF EDEN

**WEEK 4** EARTHCARE ACTIVITY

**WEEK 5** DINNER & DISCUSSION: THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

**WEEK 6** EARTHCARE ACTIVITY

**WEEK 7** DINNER & DISCUSSION: THE GARDEN OF RESURRECTION

**WEEK 8** EARTHCARE ACTIVITY

**WEEK 9** DINNER & DISCUSSION: THE GARDEN OF NEW CREATION

**WEEK 10** GROUP CELEBRATION!

## How It Works

*Leading a group can feel like a leap, especially if you've never even been a part of Tend before. This guide walks you through every step of the journey. All you need is a willingness to gather people and try something simple, meaningful, and shared.*

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## Weekly Gatherings

Each week, your group alternates between Dinner & Discussion nights and Earthcare Activities. This 10-week experience can work for all ages and stages of life. It's kid friendly—and works just as well for adults.

## Dinner & Discussion

Share a meal, read Scripture, reflect on questions, and pray.

During these evenings as a core group, you'll trace the biblical arc from Eden to Jesus to Revelation through four garden moments:

- **The Garden of Eden** – Made From the Soil for Harmonious Relationships
- **The Garden of Gethsemane** – Staying Rooted in Love Through Suffering
- **The Garden of Resurrection** – Encountering Jesus in the Garden
- **The Garden of New Creation** – Where Heaven and Earth Are Made New

## Earthcare Activities

Earthcare Activities are designed to be attractive and easy for any friends or neighbors to join. They're perfect for building relationships between neighbors, creating moments of authentic connection, and living out what it means to be part of creation—and care for it too.

Check out the Activity Guides for:

- **Sacred Hike:** Host a guided walk designed to connect people to God's Earth.
- **Meetup Cleanup:** Pick up trash together in a park, vacant lot, or on a river bank.
- **Farmhand Friends:** Partner with a local grower to tend the soil.
- **Thrifty Swap:** Clear out and refresh wardrobes in a fun way.
- **Compost Challenge:** Collect food scraps from neighbors to make compost.
- **Feed the Birds:** Invite neighbors to make and refill natural bird feeders.

During your first Dinner & Discussion, you'll help your group plan and prepare for the activity. Check out the Activities Overview for simple tips, then just follow the steps in your Week 1 guide.

## 4 Steps to Starting Your Group

### 1 Don't go it alone. Find a co-leader!

Leading doesn't have to be all on you! Invite one or two co-leaders to help lead. Look for a co-leader who brings a different strength than you have. If you're an introvert, find someone who's more of an extrovert. If you're a task-oriented planner, look for someone more people-oriented.

It's also important to find co-leaders who will commit to attending the whole 10 weeks.



### LEADER TIP

**Make it fun.** Choose an Earthcare Activity your group will enjoy. You'll do it four times in 10 weeks, with each week building on the previous one.

## 2 Choose Your Earthcare Activity

Select an Earthcare Activity, keeping in mind you'll do it four times throughout the entire 10-week experience. Practicing one activity consistently allows your group to track progress (such as miles hiked or gallons of food scraps composted!), build momentum, and create a sense of rhythm.

Consider what feels doable and enjoyable for your group, what fits with your community, and what your neighbors are already doing. It's going to be much easier to connect with neighbors if you meet them on their literal turf. We've given you suggested Activity Guides, or create a custom Earthcare Activity that fits your group's needs.

## 3 Find the Right Day and Time

Start by choosing a preliminary day and time that works for you and your co-leader(s). Consider a schedule for your Dinner & Discussion nights and another schedule for your Earthcare Activity.

Keep in mind, this schedule isn't set in stone. Once your group forms, it's normal to revisit the timing together and adjust based on everyone's availability. For now, aim to choose times that make sense for you, your co-leader(s), and the type of activity you've chosen, since some activities may work better during daylight hours or on specific days of the week.

## 4 Recruit Your Core Group

Now that you have your dates set, begin recruiting a core group of 4-12 adults who will commit to both the Dinner & Discussion gatherings as well as the Earthcare Activities. The ideal Tend group size is 20-30 people total, when you count the core group plus the the neighbors that join your Earthcare Activity.

Your core group can be adults only, youth, families, or a mixed group. Making it intergenerational is a great opportunity for people of all ages and stages to grow together and learn from each other.

If you need help finding people to join your core group, consider asking to use your church's regular communication channels (i.e., announcements, small group signups, bulletins, etc).

As you invite people, give them your start date and let them know what they're signing up for. You might say:



### LEADER TIP

**Make it easy.** When inviting other individuals or households to join your Dinner & Discussion core group, it'll be easier for people to say yes when they can see the rhythm clearly from the start.



# Tips for Dinner & Discussion Nights

## Share Meals

Food is more than fuel—it's a sacred opportunity to slow down, savor connection, and share gratitude.

But hospitality doesn't need to be extravagant. The goal is to facilitate connection, not to impress anyone or create excessive work. Use the Hospitality Signup to keep things simple and help your core group share the load.

## Need meal ideas?

- **Burrito Bowls:** People bring rice, beans, guacamole, lettuce, salsa, chips, and other toppings.
- **Pasta Bar:** People bring various sauces, proteins, and vegetables, while you provide the pasta.
- **Soup Sample:** Ask a few people to each bring a pot of soup to share.
- **Grill Out:** Sometimes it's nice to stay out of the kitchen. Ask people to bring different things to grill.

## Host Creatively

Meet in a single home or different ones each week. You can even go picnic style at a park or public space. Whoever is hosting shouldn't worry about making their home pristine. Practice hospitality that's lightweight and low maintenance, so it fits naturally into everyone's life.

## Read Scripture Aloud

Encourage people to get in the habit of bringing a Bible with them to Dinner & Discussion nights. When it comes time to read the Scripture passage for the night, ask for volunteer readers and give them a speaking role, such as narrator, Eve, or Jesus. If you're feeling up to it, you might even invite your readers to act it out!

Don't worry if people have different Bible translations. Hearing from multiple people and translations brings the Word of God to life in new ways and will help your group engage at a deeper level.

## Ask the Wondering Questions

As a group leader, your role is not to teach, or help your group understand something. Your role is to facilitate discussion that helps people feel like their contributions matter. In this setting, they will be more able to hear from God, and experience their own aha moments.



# Weekly Hospitality Signup Sheet

## Food

Food is sacramental. But it needn't be complicated or extravagant. Potlucks or communal dishes (stew or chili, tacos, potato bars, etc.) are a great way for everyone to contribute a different item.

For example:

- **Burrito Bowls:** People bring rice, beans, guacamole, lettuce, salsa, chips, and other toppings.
- **Pasta Bar:** People bring various sauces, proteins, and vegetables, while you provide the pasta.
- **Soup Sample:** Ask a few people to each bring a pot of soup to share.
- **Grill Out:** Sometimes it's nice to stay out of the kitchen. Ask people to bring different things to grill.

## Hosting

If you host, don't worry about making your home pristine! We practice hospitality that's lightweight and low maintenance—so it fits naturally into everyone's lives.

## Weekly Signup Sheet

For every Dinner & Discussion, decide who will host, what meal you'll build together, and who can bring which ingredients.











WEEK 1



# Welcome & Vision

*Kick off your 10-week experience!  
Use this time to cast vision for your  
core group, prepare hearts and  
minds to grow, plan together, and  
build excitement around inviting  
neighbors to join in hands-on  
Earthcare Activities.*

# Week 1:

## Welcome & Vision

1. INTRODUCTIONS
2. GATHER OVER FOOD
3. VISION CASTING
4. A MEDITATION ON GENESIS 2
5. WONDERING QUESTIONS
6. INTRODUCE EARTHCARE ACTIVITY
7. 3 STEPS TO PLAN AND PREPARE FOR THE EARTHCARE ACTIVITY
8. GROUP CALENDAR AND COMMITMENT
9. CLOSING AND PRAYER



### 20-MINUTE LEADER PREP

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:5–25 (NIV)

**Transformation:** From “I should do something about caring for creation” to “I am part of creation”

**What You’ll Need:**

- Group Calendar (see Activity Guide)
- Volunteer Roles sheet (see Activity Guide)
- Hospitality Signup sheet (see Appendix)

## Introductions

Not everyone will know each other. Use your mealtime for introductions.

Read sections like the one below out loud, word for word or paraphrased—it’s up to you!

*Tell us your name, your favorite outdoor activity, and something you love about your neighborhood.*

## Gather Over Food

Share a simple meal or snacks that connect people in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

See “Tips for Dinner & Discussion Nights” in the Tend Leader Guide for meal ideas!

Offer a simple prayer before you eat.

*Lord, we thank You for the gift of this food, for each person gathered here, for this place, and for Your presence among us. May our time together honor You and draw us closer to one another. Amen.*

## Vision Casting

As the meal wraps up, share the intention of Tend.

*This group experience offers a simple way for us to live our faith alongside our friends and neighbors. Every other week, we'll read and reflect on God's Word, focusing on four garden moments in Scripture.*

- **The Garden of Eden**, where we were made out of soil to be in relationship
- **The Garden of Gethsemane**, where Jesus shows us how to stay rooted in love through suffering
- **The Garden of Resurrection**, where we encounter Christ who lives
- **The Garden of New Creation**, where heaven and Earth are made new—and we are invited to participate in God's restoration

*The garden is more than just a backdrop in the Bible. It's a sacred place where people encounter the mission of God. In this 10-week experience, we'll explore what Scripture says about how we are made to walk with God, tend the Earth, and be in partnership with one another.*

*During our Dinner & Discussion weeks, we'll learn from Scripture, each other, and the Spirit who is already at work in our lives. There's no pressure to have the right answers. Just come ready to wonder, listen, and share.*

*The other weeks are when we get our hands dirty (in a good way!) through a fun Earthcare Activity, a simple practice rooted in Scripture, revealing our identity and purpose as God's creation. This helps us welcome friends and neighbors, build deeper relationships, and live out what it means to be creation—and care for it too.*

*The purpose of all this is to help us see ourselves as part of the creation God created.*

## A Meditation on Genesis 2

Invite the group to close their eyes as you read the meditation based on **Genesis 2:5–25 (NIV)**.

*Genesis 2 describes how, in the beginning, God formed humanity from the dust of the ground.*

*We are not separate from creation, we are creation—we are soil and breath.*

*God planted a garden and placed us there to tend and keep it. In that place, people, the Earth, and God were one. There was work, but it was joyful, purposeful, and shared. There was relationship: with God, with one another, with the Earth. There was trust, and there was rest.*

*Since then, humanity has been through a lot. But even after thousands of years of sin, brokenness, and exile, the memory of the garden remains in each of us. A longing for harmony, for healing, for home.*

*Through Jesus, the Gardener, the story continues. He is making all things new. And He invites us to participate.*

*We are not waiting passively for restoration. We are seeds, germinating in this season. Preparing the soil. Learning to grow in love, justice, and peace—until the day all of creation is restored.*

## Wondering Question

Break people into small groups of two or three. Have people turn to the person next to them, introduce themselves, and then briefly respond to this question:

*Humans were formed from the soil. What do you think that says about us? What does that say about who God is?*

Bring the groups back together and ask a few people to share what they talked about in their group.

*We were formed from the soil for relationships—to be in harmony with God, with ourselves, with one another, and with the Earth.*

*Over the next 10 weeks, we'll have the chance to learn more about these relationships and to even join Jesus in restoring them.*



### QUESTIONS TIP

When presenting Wondering Questions, repeat them as needed, letting them simmer.

## Introduce the Earthcare Activity

*Doing a hands-on Earthcare Activity gives us the chance to live out what it means to be part of creation and care for it too—and invite our neighbors to join us. It's designed to help us connect to God's Earth and grow in our relationships.*

*We've chosen an activity that will be fun and doable for our group: "[name of Earthcare Activity]". Over our 10 weeks together, we'll do this activity four times. That repetition helps us build a rhythm that connects us with God, each other, and all of creation.*

*Each of us has a role to play. We'll work together to gather supplies, set up, clean up, and more [adapt to your specific activity and circumstances]. Most importantly, we'll have fun while making memories and deepening relationships.*

Provide space for people to ask questions.

Then follow the three steps to plan and prepare as a group.

## 3 Steps to Plan & Prepare for the Earthcare Activity

### 1 Delegate Responsibilities

Then use the Volunteer Roles list in your chosen Activity Guide to make sure all responsibilities are covered.

### 2 Equip the Group to Invite Neighbors

Ask each household to think of five or six of their neighbors and/or friends who they could invite. Encourage them by reading aloud the “Who is my neighbor?” section below.

Ask each household to share:

- **Who** they’ll invite to your Earthcare Activity
- **When** they’ll make the invitations
- **How** they’ll follow up with neighbors

Share the short script from the Activity Guide for your chosen Earthcare Activity.

### 3 Use the Group Calendar

Review the Group Calendar included with your Activity Guide to plan and keep track of what’s happening from week to week. It also provides helpful, activity-specific reminders.

## Who is my neighbor?

*Neighbors aren’t just the people who live next door.*

*They’re the people we already share life with ... the ones we wave to in the driveway, chat with at the gym, text about school pick-up, cheer with at our kid’s games, or bump into at the coffee shop. Look especially for people who don’t identify as Christians or who aren’t already part of a church family.*

*We may find God has already given us “people of peace” (Luke 10)—people in our lives who show curiosity and who we genuinely enjoy. They may not live on our blocks, but they’re already connected to our lives.*

*Let’s take a moment and each think of three neighbors that we can invite to our Earthcare Activity. The goal isn’t to force spiritual conversations or church attendance. These gatherings are meant to create intentional moments where we work together to do something good for our neighborhood and the Earth. These are natural opportunities to build trust and relationships.*

*Let’s take a couple of minutes to share with the person next to you the names of the neighbors you’d like to invite. Then, take a moment to pray for these neighbors by name.*



#### LEADER TIP

**Be open.** Inviting friends and neighbors shouldn’t feel like “cold calling.” It’s simply extending a genuine invitation to take part in something good for the neighborhood, together.

## Group Calendar & Commitment

Review the next 9 weeks and pass around the Hospitality Signup sheet. Then discuss next week's Earthcare Activity.

- Agree on the time and details.
- Review the Volunteer Roles people signed up for earlier.
- Encourage them to invite neighbors to join the Earthcare Activity.

Also take a moment to start a group chat.

## Closing & Prayer

As you begin to wrap up, ask each person:

| *What's one thing you hope to receive or offer during this experience?*

Allow a few people to respond. Then close with a blessing.

| *Creator God, who formed us from the ground and breathed life into our lungs, help us remember who we are and what we're here for. Bless this group with curiosity, courage, and compassion. Let our conversations be honest and kind. Let our imaginations be stirred by Your Word. May we grow together as seeds of Your New Creation. May we tend the soil of this life with care, knowing You walk among us. Amen.*

## Notes and Reflections

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### LEADER TIP

Read this section aloud to encourage your core group!

WEEK 3



# The Garden of Eden

*Made From the Soil  
for Harmonious  
Relationships*

# Week 3:

## The Garden of Eden

### 1. GATHER OVER FOOD

### 2. RECAP & INTENTION SETTING

### 3. READ GENESIS 3:1–9 ALOUD

### 4. IMMERSIVE RETELLING

### 5. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN THE STORY

- *What do you notice about how the serpent approached the woman?*
- *Imagine you're in the garden with Eve trying to help her resist the forbidden fruit. What do you say to her?*
- *How do you imagine God's voice sounding when asking, "Where are you?"*

### 6. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN OUR LIVES

- *When was the last time you experienced harmony between people, Earth and God?*
- *Where do you see our broken relationship with creation today?*
- *Where do you sense God asking, "Where are you?"*
- *What would grow in an Eden garden on our block, and what would people be doing together?*

### 7. WRAP-UP

### 8. GROUP CALENDAR AND PLANNING

### 9. CLOSING



## 20-MINUTE LEADER PREP

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1–9 (NIV)

**Key Question:** How do we live out our original purpose: to be connected and in harmonious relationship with God, others, and the Earth?

**Transformation:** From “It’s easier to hide when things are broken” to “God still seeks me out to restore connection”

### What You’ll Need:

- Optional: An apple or bowl of fruit
- Paper and crayons for everyone to draw (if outside, offer sidewalk chalk!)
- Background worship music

## Gather Over Food

Share this gratitude question for people to discuss while eating:

*During last week's Earthcare Activity, what made you feel close to God, another person, or even the outdoors?*

*When in the last week did you feel close to God, another person, or the rest of creation?*

Say this simple prayer before you eat:

*God, You created all things—and You created us to be in harmony with You, each other, and the Earth. We thank You for each person here tonight, for this place, for this food, and for Your presence among us. Amen.*

## Recap & Intention Setting

As the meal wraps up, share this week's topic.

*Tonight, we're reading a Bible story about the beginning of everything—about the relationships we were made for and how God pursues us when those relationships are fractured.*

*Before we read, here's a question: What do you think the Earth was like before anything was broken?*

Let a few people respond.

*We'll read Genesis 3, which shows us a garden where heaven and Earth meet and where people, the Earth, and God were in harmonious relationship before sin entered the picture.*

### SCRIPTURE

## Read Genesis 3:1–9 Aloud

You can assign people to read different roles, go around reading two verses at a time, or ask a few people to take turns reading the entire passage.



### LEADER TIP

**Optional:** Before reading the passage, pass around an apple or bowl of fruit for people to hold and touch.

## Genesis 3:1–9 (NIV)

**Narrator** — 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman,

**Serpent** — “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

**Narrator** — 2 The woman said to the serpent,

**Woman** — “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

**Serpent** — 4 “You will not certainly die,”

**Narrator** — the serpent said to the woman.

**Serpent** — 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

**Narrator** — 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man,

**God** — “Where are you?”

## SCRIPTURE

### Immersive Retelling

*In the beginning, everything was connected.*

*God formed us and placed us in a garden where heaven and Earth met. There was an abundance of food and safe boundaries placed for our good.*

*Then a voice entered the garden, crafty and questioning: “Did God really say...?”*

*The fruit looked good, promised wisdom, and seemed within reach. So the first humans took it and ate.*

*But when their eyes opened, shame rushed in. They hid themselves, even as the Lord called out, “Where are you?”*

*Their sin led to fractured relationships. They were exiled from the garden. Disconnected from the Earth, each other, God—and even themselves.*

*Still, deep inside us, we remember Eden. We ache to be reconnected and found by our God who still seeks us out to restore relationship with us.*

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In the Story

- *What do you notice about how the serpent approached the woman?*
- *Imagine you’re in the garden with Eve, trying to help her resist the forbidden fruit. What do you say to her?*
- *[Kids’ Favorite!] How do you imagine God’s voice sounding when asking, “Where are you?”*



#### QUESTIONS TIP

When presenting Wondering Questions, choose just one or two questions and repeat them as needed, letting them simmer.

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In Our Lives

Give everyone paper and crayons (or sidewalk chalk if outdoors). Invite them to draw their response to one of the following questions. Set a timer for five minutes.

- *When was the last time you experienced harmony between people, Earth and God?*
- *Where do you see our broken relationship with creation today?*
- *Where do you sense God asking, “Where are you?”*
- *[Kids’ Favorite!] What would grow in an Eden garden on our block, and what would people be doing together?*

Then break people into groups of two or three, giving them five minutes to share their pictures and pray for each other.

## Wrap Up

As you wrap up, ask people to think about what they can take away into the next week.

*What each of you has drawn is beautiful! Because of Jesus, gatherings like these—and Earthcare Activities like the one we are engaging in—are now some of the ways God brings harmony back to these broken relationships.*

## Group Calendar & Planning

Review next week's Earthcare Activity. Ensure each person knows what to bring, how to help, and where to meet.

Also remind the group who signed up to help with hospitality for your next Dinner & Discussion.

## Closing

*God, thank you, for forming us for relationships with each other, You and the rest of creation. Forgive us for the ways we contribute to brokenness of these relationships. Thank you for pursuing us and working with us to cultivate Eden once again.*

## Notes and Reflections

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WEEK 5



# The Garden of Gethsemane

*Staying Rooted in Love  
Through Suffering*

# Week 5:

## The Garden of Gethsemane

1. GATHER OVER FOOD
2. RECAP & INTENTION SETTING
3. READ MARK 14:32–42 ALOUD
4. IMMERSIVE RETELLING
5. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN THE STORY
  - *What is it about a garden that helps Jesus to pray?*
  - *What is it about creation that helps us to connect with God, especially in crisis?*
  - *Imagine you're in the garden of Gethsemane. What is it about a garden that helps Jesus to pray?*
  - *What does He say?*
  - *What do you say to Him?*
6. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN OUR LIVES
  - *Time to write, draw, share, and pray.*
7. WRAP-UP
8. GROUP CALENDAR AND PLANNING
9. CLOSING



### 20-MINUTE LEADER PREP

**Scripture:** Mark 14:32–42 (NIV)

**Key Question:** What do I do with suffering?

**Transformation:** From “Suffering isolates me” to “In suffering, I am rooted in love with Christ, others, and all of creation”

**What You’ll Need:**

- Optional: A small twig for each person
- Paper and crayons for everyone to draw
- Background worship music

## Gather Over Food

Offer this simple prayer before you eat:

*God, we thank You for all the ways You've helped us endure challenges this week. Now as we turn to this food, we ask You to bless it. Thank You for each person here tonight, for this place, for this food, and for Your presence among us. Amen.*

Share this gratitude question for people to discuss while eating:

*Think of something hard this past week—maybe something challenging about our Earthcare Activity or in your life. What helped you get through it?*

## Recap & Intention Setting

As the meal wraps up, share this week's topic.

*Last week we visited the Garden of Eden. God created us and placed us in the Garden as a critical part of creation. And though sin has taken us out of the Garden, God hasn't abandoned creation. He continues to nurture and sustain it, most significantly when He sent his Son Jesus to Earth, to redeem and eventually restore us and all of creation. In tonight's discussion, we join Jesus and the disciples in a very different Garden, the Garden of Gethsemene—a place of deep emotional struggle. Before we read, here's a question:*

*When we're hurting, what are some unhelpful or unhealthy ways we try to cope?*

Let a few people respond.

*Let's hear what Jesus did when He was deep in pain.*

### SCRIPTURE

## Read Mark 14:32–42 Aloud

You can assign people to read different roles, go around reading two verses at a time, or ask a few people to take turns reading the entire passage.



### LEADER TIP

**Optional:** Before reading the passage, hand out small twigs for people to hold during the reading. Alternatively, invite people to sit quietly with their eyes closed as they listen.

## Mark 14:32–42 (NIV)

**Narrator** ————— 32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples,

**Jesus** ————— “Sit here while I pray.”

**Narrator** ————— 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

**Jesus** ————— 34 “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch.”

**Narrator** ————— 35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

**Jesus** ————— 36 “Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

**Narrator** ————— 37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.

**Jesus** ————— “Simon,”

**Narrator** ————— he said to Peter,

**Jesus** ————— “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

**Narrator** ————— 39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41 Returning the third time, he said to them,

**Jesus** ————— “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

## SCRIPTURE

### Immersive Retelling

*Jesus did not come into the world to avoid suffering. He came as a stranger. A refugee. The suffering one. He entered into pain so none of us would have to face it alone.*

*He lived close to creation, teaching with stories about seeds and sheep, calming storms, healing bodies, and sharing meals with the hurting. He showed that the kingdom of heaven had come near.*

*And as His cross drew near, Jesus didn't run. Instead, He walked into a garden.*

*This garden was no Eden. It was a place where Jesus would encounter suffering, attack, and betrayal. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He stayed present to His sorrow. His friends. The Earth beneath Him. The Creator God.*

*There, grounded in love, He opened His hands to violence and death. He endured because something greater—a better future—was ahead.*

*The Bible calls that future the New Creation. It's the restored reality God is bringing into the world through Jesus. It's where people, the Earth, and the Creator are reconciled in wholeness and love.*

*So, with that New Creation set before Him, Jesus walked up a hill and hung on a tree. He did it with love to redeem the ones who had betrayed Him.*

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In the Story

Invite everyone to set down their twig and pick up something to write with:

*Let's take a moment to pray with our imaginations. Imagine you're in the garden of Gethsemane. What is it about a garden that helps Jesus to pray? What is it about creation that helps us to connect with God, especially in crisis?*

*Take a moment to write or draw your response. Now you look around and see the disciples are asleep. Jesus is praying, and you approach Him, and kneel beside Him. He turns to look at you, puts His hand on your shoulder and speaks.*

*What does He say? [Give them a minute or two to write it down] Now, you are welcome to respond. What do you say to Him?*

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In Our Lives

Give everyone three or four minutes of silence to write or draw.

*In Romans 8:22–23 (NIV), Paul says, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”*

*Just as we groan, creation groans too. Take a minute to write or draw a place that is your garden of Gethsemane, a place that you can go in creation that reminds you that you’re not alone in suffering or pain?*

Give everyone about a minute more to write or draw.

*Paul continues in Romans 8:26 (NIV), “We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.” Let’s pray.*

*Jesus, in the garden You prayed for us. And today, through Your Spirit, You still pray for us. Thank You, Holy Spirit, that our suffering doesn’t isolate us, but connects us to the world and to Jesus. Thank You that You sit with us in our pain and carry our wordless prayers in love. Help us trust that even in our suffering, You are bringing New Creation to life.*

Break into groups of two or three. Take five minutes to share something from their paper, if they’re comfortable doing so. Then pray for each other.

## Wrap Up

As you wrap up, ask people to think about what they can take away into the next week.

*This week, when we face something hard, where can we go in creation to help us pray with Jesus?*

Invite a few people to share, or break into twos and threes to allow each person a chance to share.

## Group Calendar & Planning

Review next week’s Earthcare Activity. Ensure each person knows what to bring, how to help, and where to meet. Remind the group who signed up to help with hospitality for your next Dinner & Discussion.

## Closing & Prayer

*Jesus, thank you that you did not run from suffering. Thank you for staying rooted in love with God, your friends, and with the world you came to heal. And thank you for the way you meet us in ordinary corners of creation, inviting us to do the same. Amen.*

WEEK 7



# The Garden of Resurrection

*Encountering Jesus in the Garden*

# Week 7:

## The Garden of Resurrection

1. GATHER OVER FOOD
2. RECAP & INTENTION SETTING
3. READ JOHN 20:1–17 ALOUD
4. IMMERSIVE RETELLING
5. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN THE STORY
  - *What made it hard for Mary to recognize Jesus?*
  - *What changed when she realized who He was?*
  - *What difference did it make that Jesus had a physical body and that He wasn't a ghost or apparition?*
  - *If you saw Jesus in a garden, what would you ask Him or do with Him?*
6. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN OUR LIVES
  - *When and where have you experienced a moment in which Jesus felt near?*
  - *What makes it hard to see Jesus in your daily life?*
  - *If Jesus came walking through your neighborhood garden or kitchen today, what do you think He would say or do?*
  - *Where do you think Jesus might be with you this week?*
  - *What shows you that He's near?*
7. WRAP-UP
8. GROUP CALENDAR AND PLANNING
9. CLOSING



### 20-MINUTE LEADER PREP

**Scripture:** John 20:1–17 (NIV)

**Key Question:** How can we encounter Jesus today?

**Transformation:** From “I struggle to sense Jesus’ presence” to “I can discover and share Jesus’ love in every corner of the Earth”

#### What You’ll Need:

- Optional: A fragrant flower or aromatic herb—or get creative with sliced onions, fresh orange peels, or perfume
- Paper and crayons for everyone to draw (if outside, offer sidewalk chalk!)
- Background worship music

## Gather Over Food

Before eating, offer a simple prayer:

*God, we thank You that Jesus is here with us, offering love and relationship to each of us. We ask You to bless this food. Thank You for each person here tonight, for this place, for this food, and for Your presence among us. Amen.*

Share this gratitude question for people to discuss while eating:

*What was something that made you feel special this past week, like someone saw you or cared for you, or you felt God close by?*

## Recap & Intention Setting

As the meal wraps up, share this week's topic.

*Last time, we sat with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He endured suffering by staying present in love. From there, Jesus walked up a hill and was crucified. All hope seemed lost for his followers as his lifeless body was laid in a borrowed garden tomb.*

*Tonight, we are going to visit this garden, and watch it transform into the garden of resurrection. Before we read, here's a question: When people talk about sensing Jesus' presence, what do they usually mean?*

Let a few people respond.

*Let's listen closely to how one of Jesus' closest followers met Him in a garden, when all hope seemed lost.*

### SCRIPTURE

## Read John 20:1–17 Aloud

You can assign people to read different roles. For a fun, insightful twist, ask people to act it out.

Encourage the group to listen for the shift: the moment Mary realizes who is with her.



### LEADER TIP

**Optional:** During the reading, pass around a fragrant flower or aromatic herb.

## John 20:1–17 (NIV)

**Narrator** — Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said,

**Mary Magdalene** — “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

**Narrator** — 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her,

**Angels** — “Woman, why are you crying?”

**Mary Magdalene** — “They have taken my Lord away, and I don’t know where they have put him.”

**Narrator** — 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her,

**Jesus** — “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

**Narrator** — Thinking he was the gardener, she said,

**Jesus** — “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

**Narrator** — 16 Jesus said to her,



## SCRIPTURE

### Immersive Retelling

*Mary came to the garden carrying the grief that began in Eden, the grief of being cut off from God, from one another, and from creation itself.*

*In the first garden, God called to a hiding humanity, “Where are you?”*

*But in this garden, in the cool of the day, the Gardener calls Mary’s name and finds her. And in that moment, this garden of death becomes a new Eden, and Mary is like a new Eve.*

*Not hiding, but found.*

*Not ashamed, but beloved.*

*Not exiled, but sent, carrying the seed of New Creation to extend Eden into every corner of the Earth.*

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In the Story

- *What made it hard for Mary to recognize Jesus?*
- *What changed when she realized who He was?*
- *What difference did it make that Jesus had a physical body and that He wasn’t a ghost or apparition?*
- *[Kids’ Favorite!] If you saw Jesus in a garden, what would you ask Him or do with Him?*



#### QUESTIONS TIP

When presenting Wondering Questions, choose just one or two questions and repeat them as needed, letting them simmer.

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In Our Lives

Share just one or two questions with the group. Give people one minute to doodle or write out their responses. Then break them up into groups of two or three to share and pray for one another for about five minutes.

- *When and where have you experienced a moment in which Jesus felt near?*
- *What makes it hard to see Jesus in your daily life?*
- *If Jesus came walking through your neighborhood garden or kitchen today, what do you think He would say or do?*
- *[Kids’ Favorite!] Where do you think Jesus might be with you this week? What shows you that He’s near?*

## Wrap Up

As you wrap up, ask people to think about what they can take away into the next week.

*We can experience the love of Jesus in any corner of the world because, like Mary, we carry it with us wherever we go. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “When you believed, you were marked in [Christ] with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” And 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “If anyone is in Christ, the New Creation has come.”*

*The Holy Spirit is like a seed of New Creation, planted in us by God to germinate and grow. No matter where we go, we carry the love of Jesus into every corner of the Earth.*

## Group Calendar & Planning

Review next week’s Earthcare Activity. Ensure each person knows what to bring, how to help, and where to meet.

Remind the group who signed up to help with hospitality for your next Dinner & Discussion.

## Closing

*Let’s pray. Jesus, open our eyes to see You. Thank You that the old has gone and the new is here. Like Mary, send us to be carriers of Your Good News, filled with hope, and brimming over with the promise of New Creation.*

## Notes and Reflections

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WEEK 9



# The Garden of New Creation

*Where Heaven and Earth  
Are Made New*

# Week 9: The Garden of New Creation

1. GATHER OVER FOOD
2. RECAP & INTENTION SETTING
3. READ REVELATION 21:1–5 & REVELATION 22:1–5 ALOUD
4. IMMERSIVE RETELLING
5. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN THE STORY
  - *If you lived in this Garden of New Creation, what would your favorite place be?*
  - *What would you like to be doing?*
  - *What would it be like to live where there's no more pain or curse?*
  - *What might you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in the New Creation?*
  - *What role do you think people play in this future?*
6. WONDERING QUESTIONS: IN OUR LIVES
  - *Why shouldn't we just wait around for this garden of New Creation?*
  - *What does caring for the Earth show others about the heart of God?*
  - *How have we experienced Jesus' renewing love over the past eight weeks, especially through our Earthcare Activity?*
  - *What's one kind thing we could do this week to help make our neighborhood more like the Garden of New Creation?*
7. WRAP-UP
8. GROUP CALENDAR AND PLANNING
9. CLOSING



## 20-MINUTE LEADER PREP

**Scripture:** Revelation 21:1–5 (NIV) and 22:1–5 (NIV)

**Key Question:** How can I participate in restoring creation and sharing Jesus' abundant love?

**Transformation:** From “Creation is groaning and I don't know what to do” to “We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to cultivate a foretaste of heaven on Earth”

### What You'll Need:

- Optional: A small bowl of seeds—or a bowl of water
- A smooth stone for each person
- Markers or paint pens for writing on stones

## Gather Over Food

Offer a simple prayer before you eat:

*God, you made all creation—all people and the Earth—and each of us has a part in cultivating and tending it. Now as we prepare to eat this food, we ask You to bless it. As we eat this food, we thank you for calling many people to partner with you in bringing it from the ground and onto our plates. Thank You for each person here tonight, for this place, for this food, and for Your presence among us. Amen.*

Share this gratitude question for people to discuss while eating:

*What's something that happened this week that made you feel happy or hopeful?*

## Recap & Intention Setting

As the meal wraps up, share this week's topic.

*Over the last few weeks, we've walked through gardens—Eden, Gethsemane, and the resurrection garden—remembering where we come from, how we endure through difficulty, and how Jesus still meets us.*

*Tonight, we enter the garden at the very end of the Bible—the garden that's still to come. It might seem far off and in the distant future. But the Garden of New Creation is one that Jesus invites us to begin tending here and now.*

*Before we read, here's a question: What do you think it will be like when Jesus returns?*

Let a few people respond.

*Revelation gives us a picture of Jesus coming back to renew and restore a very real, very physical Earth. Let's hear that vision together.*

### SCRIPTURE

## Read Revelation 21:1–5 and Revelation 22:1–5 Aloud

You can assign people to read different roles, go around reading two verses at a time, or ask a few people to take turns reading the entire passage.



### LEADER TIP

**Optional:** During the reading, pass around a bowl of seeds to represent the hope of New Creation that hasn't yet fully germinated.

## Revelation 21:1–5 (NIV)

**Narrator** — Then I saw “a new heaven and a new Earth,” for the first heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

**Loud Voice** — “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. 4 He 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.”

**Narrator** — 5 He who was seated on the throne said,

**The One on the Throne** — “I am making everything new!”

**Narrator** — Then he said,

**The One on the Throne** — “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

## Revelation 22:1–5 (NIV)

**Narrator** — Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

## SCRIPTURE

### Immersive Retelling

*At the end of the Bible, we return to the garden.*

*But this time, it's in the heart of a city, where heaven and Earth become one.*

*The Earth isn't discarded and left behind. Remember Jesus' resurrection? He didn't leave His body behind. He had the same body—and yet was new!*

*It's the same with creation. Through Jesus, creation is restored and made new. It's healed! It's no longer a place of sorrow and death. Instead, it has a river flowing right from the throne of God, and the tree of life feeds and heals the world.*

*This is the restored reality God is bringing through Jesus—a reality where people, the Earth, and God are reconciled in wholeness and love.*

*New Creation began when Jesus rose from the dead.*

*And one day, it will be fulfilled when He returns to make all things new.*

*As we shared last time, the Holy Spirit is in us, like a seed that's been planted, preparing us for the garden Jesus will bring in time.*

*We're not yet in our final home. We're germinating as seeds of New Creation, sent to join God's mission to restore all creation.*

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In the Story

- *[Kids' Favorite!] If you lived in this Garden of New Creation, what would your favorite place be? What would you like to be doing?*
- *What would it be like to live where there's no more pain or curse?*
- *What might you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in the New Creation?*
- *What role do you think people play in this future?*

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

### In Our Lives

Choose just one or two questions. Give people one minute to doodle or write out their responses. Then break them up into groups of two or three to share and pray for one another.

- *Many people think the Earth is doomed, and any efforts to care for it are futile. Why shouldn't we just wait around for this garden of New Creation?*



#### QUESTIONS TIP

When presenting Wondering Questions, choose just one or two questions and repeat them as needed, letting them simmer.

- *What does caring for the Earth show others about the heart of God?*
- *How have we experienced Jesus' renewing love over the past eight weeks, especially through our Earthcare Activity?*
- *[Kids' Favorite!] What's one kind thing we could do this week to help make our neighborhood more like the Garden of New Creation?*

## Covenant Moment

*Tonight we're reaching the close of our journey over the past couple of months.*

*Through this group, God has reminded us that we are each part of creation, formed to be in relationship with God, our neighbors, and the Earth. We now have a chance to respond by living out this truth.*

Give each person a rock and place markers around the room.

*You each have a rock. I'll give you three minutes. Spend some time reflecting on how God has changed you in the last couple of months through our Dinner & Discussion nights as well as our Earthcare Activities together.*

*On one side of the rock, write a word that describes how you see yourself or God differently now.*

*On the other side of the rock, write one word that describes how you want to act differently going forward.*

*Then, we'll have a chance to share our words, stack our rocks, and take a picture together.*

After about three minutes, ask people to share the words they wrote down. Then stack the stones and take a picture. Share the photo with the group as a reminder of their commitment.

## Let's Remember

End the Covenant Moment by reading 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) out loud together:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

## Closing

*Jesus, thank you that you are returning soon to restore all things. Thank you that we don't have to wait until then because you have filled us with the Holy Spirit, sent on your behalf to restore relationships—with ourselves, our neighbors, our Earth, and our God. Fill us afresh, and may every breath of fresh air remind us that we were made from the soil to partner with you in extending Eden to the rest of creation. Amen.*