

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

Jesus Wants to Save Christians

by

Rob Bell and Don Golden

1. Rob Bell and Don Golden highlight a pattern at the heart of salvation history that plays out in four key places in the Bible: Egypt, Sinai, Jerusalem, and Babylon. These four parts represent a cycle in which first, Christians have cried out to God (Egypt); then God has answered and delivered them, decreeing a new era of life (Sinai); followed by entering a time of blessedness, prosperity, and ultimately decline (Jerusalem); and finally experiencing a period of decline likened to exile (Babylon). How does this framework help you understand the spiritual journey taken by individuals as well as by churches? Do you recognize it as something you've seen before? How does it help us read and understand Jesus's story, and how do the priorities of

Jesus inform our understanding of what it means to follow him today?

2. “Egypt,” being “the superpower of its day” (p. 13), “is what happens when sin becomes structured and embedded in society” (p. 18). What, if anything, might be considered a modern-day Egypt? Where is the church’s place in it?
3. At Sinai, God speaks. “Before God speaks directly to the people, God tells Moses to remind them of the exodus [out of Egypt]. ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you out myself.’ It’s all grace. It’s all a gift” (p.21). Is there a contemporary equivalent to this kind of deliverance? What is the relationship between the gift of grace and the conditions in receiving it?
4. In Jerusalem Solomon set up his throne and began his reign of power, prosperity, and righteousness. However, Solomon’s story takes a tragic turn. What implications does this tragic story carry for Christians living in today’s world generally, and in the United States specifically? Is it applicable only on a national level? Or can a church community also follow Solomon’s path?
5. The final piece is Babylon, exile. The authors give a few definitions for what a person’s life in exile might look like: “when you forget your story”; “when you fail to convert your blessings into blessings for others”; or “when you find yourself a stranger to the purposes of God” (p. 38). How might these versions of “exile” show

themselves in the church today? Do any of the definitions apply to you personally or to your faith community? What concrete steps can a community take to “return from exile”?

6. Citing the prophet Isaiah, the authors write about a new plan, or new hope, that intervenes to stop the vicious cycle. What is the church’s role in executing God’s new plan? How do you see yourself as part of that effort?
7. Chapter 5 seems a strong indictment of American prosperity and its implications for the church. Do you think prosperity is a problem? Does it pose an issue for us spiritually? What burden, if any, does this disproportion of the world’s wealth and resources impose on the American church?
8. In Chapter 6 the authors assert that Christians are to assume the role of “the Eucharist” in the community of faith. “That’s how the Eucharist works. For someone to receive, someone has to give” (p.148). Had you understood the Eucharist in this way prior to reading this? Does this suggest that God’s saving work is more communal than individually oriented? How can your faith community be a Eucharist for others?
9. Does the experience of Christians today parallel the journey of the ancient Israelites? What is the “Egypt” from which their cries arise? What might be the modern equivalent to “Sinai” where God presents promises? What is the “Jerusalem” to which God calls Christians? How might it come to pass that the believing commu-

nity might find itself in a new “Babylon,” in exile (pp. 171–173)? Have you seen examples of these in your own life or faith community? If so, share an experience. What cries does God hear today?

10. When the authors assert that Jesus wants to save Christians from a narrow view of the gospel (pp. 178–179), what is Jesus saving Christians to? What would a church that is “saved” look like (pp. 179–180)? Or, do you even think Christians and the church need to be saved?
11. How has *Jesus Wants to Save Christians* affected your understanding of the church’s place in society? Has it changed your idea of individual responsibility and faithfulness in the context of a faith community? Are there any actionable steps that can be taken from this book and put into practice in your spiritual journey and/or the journey of your church?