

JOURNEY TO THE MAGIC KINGDOM

GETTING THE HELL OUT OF JUNCTION CITY

DOWNSIDE  UP
 GOD IS BETTER THAN YOU THOUGHT

STUDY
GUIDE

UPFRONT: Letting the Way Find Us

The children had a dream of a whole new world: a place called the Magic Kingdom. It was their idea of paradise. And then, one day, their father came to announce the good news: they were headed to the Magic Kingdom!

- 1.** *So what made them take the good news so badly?*
How had their dreams changed since they'd put their hopes in Junction City?

The children were willing to give up on their dream of the Magic Kingdom and settle for Junction City, so the Father intervened. He knew that the only way to keep the dream alive was to compel his children to “get in the van.”

- 2.** *Looking back on it years later, how did the family's time in the van create the most lasting memories of the trip?*
In the end, how might the father's judgment of “get in the van” be revealed as grace?

As God's children, we dream of a whole new world: a place called heaven. It's our idea of paradise. And then Jesus, speaking on behalf of the Father, came to announce the good news: the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

- 3.** *What makes people take the good news so badly?*
How do our dreams change when we put our hopes in this Junction City of a world?

We've all been willing to settle for Junction City, so the Father intervened. He knew that the only way to keep the dream alive was to compel us, His children, to “get in the van.” In other words, to “take up a cross.”

- 4.** *Looking back on our lives, how is it that life's greatest trials so often create the most lasting memories?*
In the end, how might the Father's judgment of “take up a cross” be revealed as grace?

UPTAKE: Letting the Truth Know Us

Throughout the Bible, the children of God find themselves at many different “junctions” along the way. At these points the Father shows up telling them it’s time to move on. Often, they’re confused. Often, they start to complain. And so the Father implores them to “get in the van!”

What are some examples of “get in the van” moments from the Bible?

1. *Which children chose to get in and which didn’t?*

What becomes of those who refuse to “get in the van”? Are they forever abandoned and forsaken?

Noah and his family were the only ones from that generation who chose to “get in the boat.” Even though everyone else got lost in that Junction City of a world, they were never forsaken (1 Peter 3:18-20). This is also true of those who refused to “get in the van” in Sodom and for the wayward nation of Israel (Ezekiel 16:53-63). It was true for Jonah (Jonah 2:1-10). It was true for David (Psalm 139:7-8). And it will be true for you.

When in your life have you felt God telling you to “get in the van”? How did you respond?

2. *Where do you find yourself now on that journey?*

How have you encountered the Kingdom of Heaven along the way?

This meaning of this life – our “Journey to the Magic Kingdom” – can be found well before we reach our destination. The meaning (the Way, the Truth, and the Life) is present all along the journey, in the van.

How might the kids’ experience of the Magic Kingdom have changed if they’d never stopped in Junction City and then endured the cross-country trip in the van?

3.

How could we come to know “the good” apart from evil? In other words, how could we acquire an appetite for heaven without first tasting hell?

UPEND: Letting the Life Recreate Us

The Garden of Eden has often been viewed as a type of paradise. A heaven on earth. A Magic Kingdom. And so, here in the van, we've been looking back to lament what we thought was lost. But what if the Garden of Eden wasn't a paradise lost? What if Eden wasn't the Magic Kingdom, but just the first junction along the way?

1. *What are some of the indicators from the story in Genesis that would suggest that the Garden of Eden was not paradise?*

From what evidence can you deduce that things were not yet "very good" in the garden?

The film suggests that, just like Adam and Eve, we are still living in the sixth day of creation – that everything is not yet very good. It's the idea that we are living on the edge of an eternal seventh day – that we are still being made in the image of God.

2. *Do you believe that this view can be supported through Scripture? Why or why not?*
Do you believe that this view can be supported through science? Why or why not?

The creation story is often told like this: A long, long time ago, at the end of this amazing week, everything was good, including Adam and Eve. But Eve and that first Adam made a bad choice and doomed themselves to a horrible end. So God sent Jesus, the answer to the mess we made.

3. *If indeed we are still living in the sixth day of creation, how might the creation story be rendered differently?*

How might it change the way we view ourselves?
How might it change the way we view God?

The deepest story in creation is that God is making you in His image, and He will not fail. Even if he has to stay in Junction City to save you from yourself. Even if it takes the entire van ride to the Magic Kingdom. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). And Jesus is the van. The more we journey in Him (Acts 17:18), the more we'll learn to trust the heart of our Father. It's in the van – through Christ – that we come to believe that God really is better than we thought.

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