

BELOVED DISCIPLE

THE LIFE & MINISTRY OF JOHN

JULIE WOODRUFF
with Cheris Gaston and Cynthia Hopkins

Published by LifeWay Press®. © 2002
All rights reserved

ISBN 9780633018535 • Item 001879323

Dewey Decimal Classification Number: 225.92

Subject Headings: JOHN, APOSTLE \ BIBLE.N.T. JOHN—STUDY \ DISCIPLESHP TRAINING—
WOMEN

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Scripture quotations identified KJV are from the King James Version. Scripture quotations identified NASB are from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, © Copyright The Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

To order additional copies of this resource, write to LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0113; fax 615.251.5933; phone toll free 800.458.2772; email customerservice@lifeway.com; order online at www.lifeway.com; or visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you.

Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing, LifeWay Church Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0152

INTRODUCTION

Beloved Disciple is an in-depth study of the life of John the apostle and his relationship with the One who loved him. The goal of our study is to get to know John's heart as Christ's beloved disciple and to let him lead us deeper into the depths of Christ's inexhaustible love. As we travel this journey with the beloved disciple, we will grow, as John did, in our desire to follow our Master and to love Him with all our being.

This guide has been prepared to equip you to plan and lead a study of *Beloved Disciple* for groups in your church or community. You will find administrative guidance, help for planning and promoting the study, and step-by-step instructions for conducting the group-study sessions.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This in-depth course was designed to be completed over 11 weeks through a combination of daily, individual study and weekly group sessions.

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

Each participant needs a copy of *Beloved Disciple* member book, which contains reading assignments and activities designed to reinforce and apply learning. The member book is divided into an introduction and 10 weeks of content. Every week's material contains 5 daily lessons, each requiring about 45 minutes to complete. Participants complete the daily reading and the learning activities at home in preparation for the weekly group sessions.

GROUP SESSIONS

Participants meet once each week for a two-hour group session that guides them to discuss and apply what they have learned during their daily, individual study. *Beloved Disciple* offers two options for conducting a group study. Choose the format that will best meet the needs of your group and that will best suit your skills as a facilitator.

PLAN A

This format, best suited for groups with a large attendance, utilizes both large- and small-group learning experiences. The small-group portion of this session encourages accountability and allows members to benefit from the insights of other participants as they process the material they have studied during the week. The small groups also help build relationships as participants share prayer concerns and pray together. In the large-group time each week, members can watch the downloadable videos in which Beth Moore enhances the material in the member book.

For members to receive the greatest possible benefit from Plan A, schedule a 2-hour group session each week. Following this procedure ensures that members receive the blessings of intimate experiences with God through daily study, support and fellowship through small-group discussions, and inspiration through the digital video downloads. The session-leadership suggestions labeled *Plan A* in this guide reflect the following schedule, although times shown here are arbitrary examples.

- 9:00 Large group—welcome, worship, and prayer (15 min.)
- 9:15 Small groups (45 min.)
 - Prayer (5 min.)
 - Discussion of Principal Questions (20 min.)
 - Discussion of Personal Discussion Questions (20 min.)
- 10:00 Break and return to large group (5 min.)
- 10:05 Large group (55 min.)
 - Digital video download (50 min.)
 - Closing assignment and prayer (5 min.)
- 11:00 Dismiss

This schedule is ideal for a weekday or a weeknight study.

Some elements of this format may be adjusted to your preferences or needs. For example, you may prefer to add time for a longer break between the small- and large-group periods. Feel free to adjust the schedule, but we encourage you not to omit any one of the three key ingredients of this learning model:

1. Individual study of the member book at home
2. Small-group discussion of the Principal Questions

and the Personal Discussion Questions in each week's material in the member book

3. Large-group viewing of the videos

Here is an overview of the procedures for each segment of the session for groups using Plan A.

- Large group—welcome, worship, and prayer (15 min.). The large-group leader is responsible for convening the group and conducting this portion of the session. You may wish to plan special music or select an appropriate hymn or praise song for the group to sing. End this segment with prayer for the day's learning experience.
- Small-group discussion (45 min.). If the number of participants is small, remain in one group for this segment. If you enroll more than 12 people, however, plan for a small group for every 10 to 12 people and enlist a small-group facilitator for each group. These facilitators are responsible for taking prayer requests, having a prayer time (5 min.), and guiding participants to discuss the Principal Questions (20 min.) and Personal Discussion Questions (20 min.) in each week's material in the member book.
- Return to large group (5 min.). This transitional time allows time for a brief break. Provide light refreshments if desired.
- Show digital video download (50 min.). A video presentation by Beth Moore is provided as an online download for each week's group session. The large-group leader should play the appropriate download at this time (available for rent or purchase at www.LifeWay.com/BelovedDisciple). Participants complete the corresponding response sheet at the end of each week's material in their member books as they view the video.
- Closing assignment and prayer (5 min.). The large-group leader encourages participants to complete the next week's daily assignments and closes with a prayer of praise or thanksgiving.

PLAN B

In this approach, instead of having large- and small-group learning periods, participants remain together for the entire group session. Instead of focusing on the Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions, the session plans provide a variety of activities that engage members in the content of the week's study. Designed primarily for

smaller groups, this format allows more interaction and provides the leader more detailed suggestions for involving members in learning.

Of course, you may choose to follow Plan A and select certain ideas or activities from Plan B. Always pray and follow the Holy Spirit's leadership to determine the procedures that are best for your group.

Plan B follows these procedures.

- Small-group discussion (55 min.). The group leader is responsible for taking prayer requests, having a prayer time (5 min.), and guiding participants through the procedures listed under *Plan B* in each session of this guide (50 min.).
- Digital video downloads (50 min.). A video presentation by Beth Moore is provided as an online download at www.LifeWay.com/BelovedDisciple for each week's group session. The group leader should play the appropriate video at this time. Participants complete the corresponding video response sheet at the end of each week's material in their member books as they view the video.
- Closing assignment and prayer (5 min.). The group leader encourages participants to complete the next week's daily assignments and closes with a prayer of praise or thanksgiving.

The session-leadership suggestions labeled *Plan B* in this guide reflect the following schedule, although times shown here are arbitrary examples.

- 9:00 Group session—welcome, prayer, and discussion (55 min.)
- 9:55 Break (10 min.)
- 10:05 Group session continues (55 min.)
 - Digital video download (50 min.)
 - Closing assignment and prayer (5 min.)
- 11:00 Dismiss

Optional formats. A format of an introductory session plus 2 hours per week for 10 weeks is ideal for *Beloved Disciple*; however, you may need another option to fit your group's situation. Many groups study these materials with an alternative schedule. The problem with studying on a schedule other than one unit per week is that members do not get into the regular habit of daily Bible study.

If you adopt an alternative plan, please take steps to encourage members to study the Bible daily. If your group can meet for only one hour per week, consider viewing the video one week and conducting the group study the next. To maintain the continuity of daily study, encourage members to complete the daily work in the

member book during the first week. Then encourage them to review the work daily during the second week. Ask them to write down their answers to the Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions each day during their review.

Some groups meet once a month. If your group meets on some schedule other than weekly or biweekly, consider using an aid to encourage daily Bible study. One such resource is called *Day by Day in God's Kingdom: A Discipleship Journal*. It is a discipleship journal built around six Christian disciplines. It allows disciples to record their spiritual journeys as they study courses such as *Beloved Disciple*. Ask your members to complete the work in *Beloved Disciple* during the first week of the month and to review the material the week before the group meets.

RESOURCES


These resources are available for leaders and participants.

- *Beloved Disciple* (member book) provides an introduction and 10 weeks of daily, biblical studies on the life of John. The book also includes response sheets for the digital video downloads, available for purchase or rent at www.LifeWay.com/BelovedDisciple. Each participant needs a copy of the member book. Order item 005809114.
- *Beloved Disciple Leader Guide* (the guide you are now reading) offers step-by-step directions for facilitating 11 group sessions, using *Beloved Disciple* and the downloadable online videos.
- *Beloved Disciple Digital Video Downloads* (available for rent or purchase at www.LifeWay.com/BelovedDisciple) features 10 lectures in which Beth Moore teaches material related to the content of the book. These segments were filmed on location in Greece.
- *Beloved Disciple Digital Audio Collection* includes the audio portions of Beth Moore's digital video downloads, available for purchase at www.LifeWay.com/BelovedDisciple. Although these audio downloads were designed for individual study, a leader may wish to use them for personal review and inspiration. Order item 005809119.

FACILITATING DISCUSSION

You will find many applications in this study. Beth Moore applies many of the course's concepts in her digital video downloads. In addition, the member book encourages participants to apply what they are learning as they complete their daily assignments.

One purpose of the small-group discussion period each week is to enable members to make meaningful application to their daily lives. Small-group facilitators will guide discussions of each week's Principal Questions, listed at the beginning of each week's material in the member book, as well as the Personal Discussion Questions. Small-group facilitators can use the following guidelines to make these discussion times effective in challenging participants spiritually and in promoting life change.

- Arrange the chairs in the meeting room in a circle or a semicircle so that participants can see one another. Seating should not physically exclude anyone.
- Greet members as they arrive. Start the meeting on time. Allow 5 minutes for prayer requests; then pray or ask a participant to pray. Make notes when requests are shared. Assure members that you are concerned not only about their spiritual growth but also about their personal lives. Encourage them to pray for one another during the week. If someone is experiencing difficult circumstances, write a note or call between sessions to say that you are praying.
- Spend 20 minutes discussing the week's Principal Questions (listed at the beginning of the week's material in the member book) and 20 minutes discussing Personal Discussion Questions (designated by the symbol  in the member book). Emphasize that only participants who wish to respond should do so; no one is required to share responses. Do not force the discussion questions on members. Adapt and change them as necessary. Be flexible if members wish to spend more time on one group of questions or if they raise specific issues. Be sensitive to members' particular needs as the discussion progresses. Remember that your job is not to teach the material but to encourage and lead participants in sharing their insights about the work they have done during the week and in applying the content to their spiritual journeys.
- Be personally involved without relinquishing leadership. A facilitator's role is that of a fellow disciple who shares the same struggles the other participants have

in their spiritual lives. You need to be emotionally vulnerable and willing to share your own feelings and responses. However, recognize that someone must lead the group and direct the discussion at all times. Be flexible, but do not allow the discussion to veer off on a tangent. Keep the focus on the week's content and its application.

- Try to create a relaxed atmosphere that will help every member feel a sense of belonging. Use first names. Do not rush the discussion.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit's leadership; then allow Him freedom to direct the session as He wills. His movement may be evident in tears of joy or conviction, emotional or spiritual brokenness, or the thrill of a newfound insight. Be sensitive to signs of God's work in a person's life and follow up by asking the person to share. Giving participants the opportunity to testify to what God is doing is very important. Often, the testimony may help another person with a similar issue. Follow the Holy Spirit's leadership as God works in these discussion times.
- Be sure that you do not talk too much as facilitator. Do not be afraid of periods of silence.
- Be an encourager. Show a caring, loving spirit. Communicate acceptance and concern, especially if your group includes non-Christians. Create an atmosphere that communicates, "I accept you as you are." Accepting participants does not necessarily mean that you agree with their values or choices. You can love a person without agreeing with her. If a participant shares something that makes her feel vulnerable or ashamed, say something like: "I know your sharing took a lot of courage. I admire you for being willing to share it."
- Be ready to address special needs that members may reveal. If someone is unsaved, follow the Holy Spirit's leadership to know the right time to talk with the person privately to lead her to Christ. If a participant reveals emotional pain or family problems, assure her of the group's concern and support and pause briefly to pray with the person. Then offer to meet with her later to help her find additional help if needed.
- Set boundaries. Do not permit a group member to act in a verbally abusive way toward another member. Do not force group members to do or say anything they are not willing to do or say. Try gently nudging a group member to a point of discovery and growth instead of pushing her to a conclusion for which she is not ready.
- Be enthusiastic!

- End the discussion period on time. You will face a challenge each week in bringing the discussion to an end. At the first session emphasize the need to conclude on time each week. A few minutes before time to end the discussion period, help the person speaking reach a point of closure. Ask if anyone has anything to add. Allow response; then at some point end the discussion. If someone is not finished, affirm the importance of what the person is saying. Offer to continue the discussion next week and ask that member to introduce the topic at the beginning of the next meeting. Or you may need to spend time privately with the person if the topic does not relate to the entire group. Be sure you have tied loose ends. Did you put someone on hold during the discussion? Did you get back to the person? Was someone's sharing interrupted as you moved to focus on someone else's response? Did you reach closure with the original speaker? Finally, remind group members to pray for one another during the week.

PLANNING STEPS

The following steps are suggested to assist a group leader in organizing a study of *Beloved Disciple*.

1. Enlist the support of your pastor. His endorsement will encourage women to deepen their spiritual lives. Perhaps he will agree to announce from the pulpit this discipleship opportunity.
2. Talk with the likely participants to determine the level of interest in this type of in-depth study. Ask whether the study should be offered during the day, in the evening, or both. When scheduling the study, be sensitive to the needs of women who work outside the home.
3. Schedule 11 weeks on the church calendar that will allow the greatest participation. Fall and spring studies usually result in more participation than summer sessions do. However, summertime may afford some persons with seasonal careers—such as schoolteachers—an opportunity to attend.
4. Offer child care if possible. This will increase your attendance and ensure greater weekly participation.
5. Allow two hours for each weekly session. This time period will provide ample opportunities for both weekly activities: discussion of participants' home study and viewing of the week's digital video download.
6. After estimating the number of participants, order *Beloved Disciple* Bible study books for each group

member four to six weeks in advance. To order copies of this resource, phone toll free 800.458.2772; email customerservice@lifeway.com; order online at www.LifeWay.com/BelovedDisciple; or visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you. Decide whether the church will pay for member books or whether participants will pay for their own. Experience has shown that if members pay for their books or a portion of the cost, they are likely to make a more serious commitment to the study. You may want to provide scholarships for members who cannot afford to purchase books.

7. Find a meeting room that will accommodate your large-group sessions and reserve it for the duration of the study. Reserve small-group meeting rooms for the number of groups you will have. Arrange the meeting rooms to be as intimate as possible. Chairs in the small-group rooms should be arranged in circles or semicircles. Semicircular rows of chairs are acceptable for the large-group room as long as all participants can view the video.
8. Conduct a planning session for the large-group leader and the small-group facilitators. Complete the following actions in the meeting.
 - Download copies of this leader guide for your small-group facilitators. Discuss the group-session format and their responsibilities, which include:
 - greeting and registering participants at the introductory session;
 - calling members assigned to their small groups after the introductory session to introduce themselves, explain the locations of their small-group meeting rooms, and encourage them to complete the daily assignments for week 1;
 - taking prayer requests, conducting a prayer time at the beginning of the small-group period, praying for participants, and encouraging participants to pray for one another;
 - guiding members to discuss the Principal Questions (listed at the beginning of each week's material in the member book) and the Personal Discussion Questions;
 - promoting fellowship among group members;
 - noting opportunities for follow-up ministry.
 - Discuss registration procedures. Assign small-group facilitators to handle registration. The members registered by a particular facilitator would become members of her group. Make adjustments if numbers fall unevenly. Instruct facilitators to be at their stations 30 minutes before registration begins at the introductory session. Provide them with member

books, registration cards, pencils, and reusable name tags. Tell each registrar that she has the responsibility of making a good first impression. She needs to wear a name tag, greet members with enthusiasm, answer their questions or promise to find out the answers, make them feel welcome, and direct them to the large-group session.

9. Promote the study, using the suggestions provided in the following section.
10. Pray, pray, and keep praying that God will involve the members He desires and that He will validate this study with His obvious presence and activity!

PROMOTING THE STUDY

This study provides a wonderful opportunity for outreach because it is free of rules and does not require a particular church affiliation. Target persons in your community who are interested in Bible study. Church bulletins, newsletters, handouts, posters, fliers at Mothers' Day Out, announcements in worship services and in Sunday School classes, phone calls, and word of mouth are excellent and inexpensive ways to promote the study. Sometimes local radio and television stations announce upcoming events free of charge.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JULIE WOODRUFF, the writer of the leader guide, is the women's minister at Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

Julie began the women's ministry at West Conroe Baptist Church in Conroe, Texas, where her husband was the pastor for 13½ years. Julie also taught a women's Sunday School class and Bible study there.

Julie and her husband, Sid, have two children, Lauren and Jordan.

CHERIS GASTON is a member of First Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee. Cheris writes worship skits, acts, serves as the director of the adult drama team, and leads a Bible study for women.

She is the author of a book of worship scripts, *Under His Direction*, and of *When You Come Wearing Slippers: The Retreat/Conference Leaders' Guide*. She is a part of "At His Feet," a ministry team of five women who lead Bible studies, skits, games, and music for women's retreats and conferences.

Cheris and her husband, Danny, have two children, Hannah and Seth.

CYNTHIA HOPKINS speaks at women's and youth events and writes articles, curriculum, and devotions for a wide variety of LifeWay publications, including a monthly column in Parenting Teens magazine. Her devotional book, *What Now?*, helps equip teenagers to live out their faith after the spiritual high of a camp or retreat experience. Cynthia is the founder of Platform 320, a nonprofit ministry that encourages women to step up to the lives they were made for.

Cynthia is married to Clay, who is the associate pastor at FBC College Station, Texas. They have two children, Brandon and Abby. Check out Cynthia's blog at www.cynthiahopkins.org.

12 SIGNS YOU'RE A FANTASTIC FACILITATOR

You might not be the type of person who thinks about gathering extra pens for the Bible study group you're leading; on the rare occasion you do remember, absolutely zero of them have a daisy hot glued to the end. The email/phone list you collect at the first meeting might be written on a napkin because that is the only paper product available at the last minute when the thought occurs to you to gather that information. You might even make it through the entire study without once bringing a tray of brownies.

And here's the beauty of it all: God will use you anyway.

Your effectiveness as a Bible study leader has far less to do with experience, personality, and delicious desserts than willingness, authenticity, and a teachable spirit. There are some steps you can take, though, to provide an environment conducive to great discussion and growth. Here are 12 signs you're taking those steps and effectively leading your Bible study group.

- 1. YOU KNOW YOUR ROLE.** Ultimately, the Holy Spirit facilitates every bit of growth and learning that takes place. You're simply the conduit He uses to get that growing out in the open. Let that truth take a load off!
- 2. YOU THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.** There's a learning curve to figuring out what works and what doesn't with each group; good leaders embrace it and are flexible.
- 3. YOU LOOK FOR THE BALANCE BETWEEN GUILT AND "IT DOESN'T MATTER."** Group members tend to stop showing up when they get behind on homework, typically somewhere around week 3. Your approach can do a lot toward maintaining strong attendance and helping women stick to it. Asking, "What do you think?" instead of "What did you write?" is a good place to start.
- 4. YOU TRUST THE GROUP.** Encourage members to highlight meaningful truths from their homework and be prepared to share them in class. Then let their thoughts and questions help facilitate discussion.
- 5. YOU ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS.** This study is simply a source of ideas. As you prepare, add to the ideas you find here by jotting down your own thoughts and questions. Then use those as you lead the group.
- 6. YOU ASK QUESTIONS THAT PROMPT DISCUSSION.** Should you ask open-ended questions? Yes.
- 7. YOU ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTIONS YOU PLAN TO ASK THE GROUP.** If you find a question awkward or difficult to answer, they probably will, too.

- 8. YOU LOOK TO EXPLORE WHAT PEOPLE ARE LEARNING MORE THAN WHAT THEY ALREADY KNOW.** Here's what makes people feel like they don't belong—when they come into a group and everyone seems to know all the answers. Everyone doesn't know all the answers, but the discussion sometimes makes it seem that way. To some extent, we should all struggle with the truth every time we study the Scriptures. The direction of the questions you ask can help with that.
- 9. YOU EMBRACE SILENCE.** Sometimes people need to let a question marinate a bit before they answer. Resist the urge to rush the process. Rather than answering it yourself or jumping to another question, don't be afraid to embrace a moment or two of silence.
- 10. YOU INVEST IN PEOPLE.** Anyone can push a button on a remote. There's more to it than that, and that's why there likely wasn't a long list of volunteers playing rock-paper-scissors to see who got to facilitate this semester's study.
- 11. YOU'RE AUTHENTIC.** Don't ask any question of your group you're not willing to answer yourself. In fact, you should be ready to answer them on occasion when you need to get the discussion started.
- 12. YOU PRAY BOLDLY AND PRAY BIG.** Beth has pointed out, "We don't just study the Scriptures to build up Bible knowledge. We get to know the Scriptures to be equipped to do what He's called us to do." Pray it happens in your group. Pray it happens in you.

AFTER THE STUDY: MENTORING

What about after the study? Mentoring is vital and often overlooked as an ongoing necessity of life in the body of Christ. Here are some ways you can use *Beloved Disciple* as a springboard for deep and continuing relationships, even after the study ends.

- **PAIR BIBLE STUDY MEMBERS—AN OLDER WITH A YOUNGER, IF POSSIBLE.** You can do this on day one with two purposes in mind: to encourage accountability during the study and to foster ongoing mentoring relationships.
- **ENCOURAGE PAIRS TO MEET WEEKLY, BIWEEKLY, OR MONTHLY.** We can get together for the purpose of spiritual growth without it being an event listed on the church calendar. Call it lunch, call it catching up, call it an afternoon at the park—it doesn't matter what it looks like, as long as we're recognizing the priority of doing life together and investing in other believers.
- **EXCHANGE PHONE NUMBERS.** Paul continued to mentor Timothy even when they could no longer meet face-to-face. Mentoring can still happen among those whose lives are busy and full.
- **AS A GROUP, COMPILE A LIST OF GOOD BOOKS, BIBLE STUDIES, AND BLOGS.** Print the list and give to group members as the study ends. Encourage them to use the list as a resource of potential study or discussion in mentoring relationships going forward.
- **PRAY WITH INTENTION.** Rather than praying together as a whole group each week in opening or in closing, consider breaking into small groups of two or three on occasion. This will help foster the formation of relationships within the group that will last beyond the study.
- **ENCOURAGE THE ASKING OF GOOD QUESTIONS.** Create a short list of questions mentors can ask mentees as they seek to form deeper relationships for the purpose of spiritual growth. Print these or write your own: What are you reading and studying in addition to your quiet time that is deepening your relationship with God? What is God teaching you right now? Do you feel like you're wrestling with God in any area of life right now? How are you handling that? Have you stepped out in faith lately? Who have you had an opportunity to share the gospel with? Who are you praying for the opportunity to share the gospel with? What is the best way I can pray for you right now?

OPTIONAL STUDY FORMATS

COED GROUPS

If your study includes both male and female participants, consider breaking into gender-specific small groups for discussion each week. If you don't break into smaller groups or if this is not possible, be intentional about including everyone by considering the male perspective as you prepare your questions. Be encouraged that the *Beloved Disciple Bible Study*, Scriptures covered, and viewing guides can apply entirely to both men and women.

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY

This particular study is primarily directed toward believers; however, you can still use it as a way to reach out to your neighbors, opening discussion about the gospel message and what it means to follow Christ. Choose a day of the week and time to meet, then invite your neighbors to your home for small group study. As you ask questions in this context, be reminded that even unbelievers want to be effective in what they feel is their purpose in the world. Lead participants to see that ultimately this is dependent upon a relationship with Christ and connection to His body, the church.

LARGE GROUP

If you expect a large number of participants, enlist additional leaders for smaller groups of 12-15 each or a size that meets the needs of your group. Begin each session in the large group with a time of welcome and watching the video session. You might also include a time of worship through singing. Then break into small groups, where leaders facilitate discussion of the video message and previous week's study.

SMALL GROUP

Since you're staying together as one group throughout the session, this format offers the most flexibility. Choose to discuss homework first, then watch and discuss the downloadable video. Or, after a welcome and icebreaker question, show the video and then discuss the homework and teaching session together.

RETREAT

Frame your retreat sessions around the downloadable video sessions of *Beloved Disciple*. Consider planning your retreat according to this schedule, using times appropriate with the group, location, and so forth:

Friday Evening:

1. Dinner. Assign a small group leader to each table. Offer ice-breaker questions to help groups begin to connect.
2. Worship. Pre-enlist a worship leader to lead your group in a few songs.
3. View Session One.
4. Small group discussion. Depending on your setting, lead groups to discuss at tables or to move to other pre-determined locations. Use the questions found on page 16 of this book to lead discussion.
5. Break. Options: free time, mixer, or activities that fit your group.
6. Worship.
7. View Session Two DVD.
8. Small group discussion.

Continue this format throughout the day on Saturday, or through the length of your retreat. Be sure to include ample time in between sessions for meals and opportunities to connect and reflect. End your retreat with a closing challenge and time of large group worship.

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

Plan A


BEFORE THE SESSION

1. If you expect 20 or more participants, set up tables with cards indicating a division of the alphabet at several stations. For example, those with last names beginning with letters A–E will sign up at one station, F–J at the next, and so forth.
2. Enlist a volunteer or small-group leader to sit at each station. Designate those each leader registers as members of her group. Adjustments will need to be made where numbers fall unevenly.
3. Each registrar, whether a leader or a volunteer, should be at her station 30 minutes before registration is to begin. Each should be equipped with member books, registration cards or sign-up sheets (drawn up by your church or study leader), pens, and name tags.
4. Each registrar assumes responsibility for members' first impression. She needs to wear her name tag, be ready to greet new members with enthusiasm, anticipate questions with knowledgeable answers, make participants feel welcome, and tell them what to do next. (After registration members will report to the joint session for the introductory segment. After this first introductory meeting, members will begin each week in their large groups for welcome, worship, and prayer.)

DURING THE SESSION

Introduction to *Beloved Disciple* (60 min.)

1. Open the introductory session with prayer.
2. Welcome members and introduce leaders. If your group is small, have each member introduce herself. You may want to create an icebreaker.
3. After introductions, give instructions and information about the course. Include the following points.
 - a. Lead members to scan the first week's daily assignments in the member book. Explain that they are to complete a week of study before each group session. Emphasize that although the daily assignments are crucial, members should attend the weekly sessions even if their work is incomplete. Tell them to expect each daily assignment to take about 45 minutes.
 - b. Encourage members to read the introduction in the member book before beginning their study.
 - c. Using the introduction to week 1 as an example, explain that the format is designed to enhance

learning. Point out that the Principal Questions, listed in the introduction to each week, and the Personal Discussion Questions, appearing with the symbol , will be discussed in weekly sessions.

- d. Emphasize that the primary purposes of small-group discussion are—
 - accountability. In-depth Bible studies are most often completed successfully in a group.
 - to underscore basic biblical truths. This will be accomplished through discussing answers to the Principal Questions, which ensure that the week's content has been received and understood.
 - to personally apply the study. This will be accomplished through discussing answers to the Personal Discussion Questions.
 - e. Express the need to be good stewards of time. Ask members to adopt these time guidelines.
 - Leaders: Be early each week!
 - Members: Be on time each week!
 - Small groups: Start on time!
 - Members: Your personal comments are vital to the discussion time, but please make them brief.
4. Announce that after today's introductory meeting, members will participate in a small group each week as well as a large group. Tell them they will receive a call within 24 hours identifying their leader and telling where their group will meet for discussion of sessions 1–10. Allow 45 minutes for small-group discussion divided according to the following schedule.
 - Prayer requests and prayer (5 min.). Ask that prayer requests be stated in one brief sentence. Graciously intervene if a request becomes lengthy.
 - Discussion of Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.). Allow 7–8 minutes to discuss each day's assignment. Each day's Principal Question can be answered in 2–3 minutes, leaving 5–6 minutes for the Personal Discussion Question. Write these time divisions on a marker board for all members to keep in mind and adhere to.

Introductory Video Presentation (50 min.)

Each week after the group discussion, gather members in a joint session to view the video that enhances and concludes each unit. Take 5 minutes for the transition. The video presentation will be from 45 to 50 minutes.

Closing Remarks and Prayer (5 min.)

Share closing comments and briefly introduce week 1. Ask members to complete week 1 before the next session.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Compile all registration cards and, if there are more than 12 members and more than 1 leader, divide the list of members into small groups. These discussion groups need to be a maximum of 12 members.
2. Direct leader(s) to call members within the next 24 hours to introduce themselves and tell them where their group will meet the following week.
3. Enlist a leader or a volunteer to create attendance sheets from the registration cards so that every leader can take roll in each session. These attendance sheets need to be given to each leader prior to the next session.


Plan B**BEFORE THE SESSION**

1. Be prepared to register members. Secure member books, registration cards or sign-up sheets, pens, and name tags. Assume responsibility for new members' first impression. Wear a name tag, be ready to greet members with enthusiasm, anticipate questions with knowledgeable answers, make participants feel welcome, and invite them to take a seat.
2. Have praise music playing as members enter the room. If desired, have light refreshments available.

DURING THE SESSION

1. Open the introductory session with prayer.
2. Welcome members and introduce yourself. Ask each member to introduce herself by stating her name, identifying the person in her life who has loved her most, and explaining how she knows that is true. State that we will study the life and ministry someone who called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:7). Ask someone to quote or read John 3:16. State: John the apostle knew that Jesus loved him because He came to give His life for him and for the whole world. Our goal is to discover the depths of Christ's love for us through the writings of John, the beloved disciple.
3. Give instructions and information about the course, including the following points.
 - a. Direct members to scan the first week's daily assignments in the member book. Explain that they are to complete a week of study before each group session. Emphasize that although the daily assignments are crucial, members should attend the weekly sessions

even if their work is incomplete. Tell them to expect each daily assignment to take about 45 minutes.

- b. Encourage members to read the introduction in the member book before beginning their study.
 - c. Using the introduction to week 1 as an example, explain that the format is designed to enhance learning. Point out that the Principal Questions, listed in the introduction to each week, and the Personal Discussion Questions, appearing with the symbol , highlight key points in each week's material.
 - d. Emphasize that the primary purposes of each week's group discussion are—
 - accountability. In-depth Bible studies are most often completed successfully in a group.
 - to underscore basic biblical truths. This will be accomplished through discussion and group learning activities, which ensure that the week's content has been received and understood.
 - to personally apply the study. This will be accomplished through particular activities in the session.
 - e. Express the need to be good stewards of the time for each session. Ask participants to be on time for each session. Emphasize that although each person's comments are vital to the discussion time, members should make them brief.
4. Announce that after today's introductory meeting, members will follow this schedule each week.
 - Welcome, prayer, and discussion (50 min.). State that members will be allowed to request prayer. Ask that prayer requests be stated in one brief sentence. Then the group will discuss the week's content.
 - Break and return to group (10 min.). Ask the group whether it would like to have light refreshments and beverages each week during this break. If so, decide how this will be done.
 - View video segment (50 min.). Explain that the video presentation, which will be from 45 to 50 minutes, enhances and concludes each unit of study.
 - Closing assignment and prayer (5 min.). Explain that you will close each session by reminding members of their at-home assignment and by having prayer.
 5. Share closing comments. Briefly introduce week 1. Ask members to complete week 1 before the next session.
 6. Close by praying that members will experience Christ's love as never before through their study of John.

RESPONSE SHEET

Introductory Group Session

As we begin a journey that will take us throughout Galilee into Samaria, to Jerusalem, to Ephesus, and to Patmos, let's consider adopting the same invitations for embarkation that John encountered.

Read John 1:35-51.

1. Let's sense Christ asking us the same question: "[Your name], My child, what do you want?"

What are you seeking here and now in this _____ of your life?"

2. Let's be willing to "_____."

3. Consider the unfathomable grace of God that we sometimes "find" Christ when we didn't even know

_____ was the _____ we were _____.

4. We will miss untold treasures if we confuse "_____"

with "_____."

5. Let's begin our journey as a true seeker "in whom there is _____."

6. Wherever we've recently _____, Jesus has _____.

7. As Christ reveals how He has "_____" _____, our eyes are somehow

_____ to "see" _____.

By design, no answers are provided for these blanks.

FRESH WINDS OVER GALILEE

Session 1

Plan A

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Complete all of week 1 in the member book.
2. Pray that each member will be teachable and that God will reveal Himself through this study.
3. Pray for God's guidance in your preparation.
4. Carefully read "During the Session."
5. Arrange the room to create an intimate setting for your group. If you have a group of 12 or under, arrange the chairs in a tight circle. If you have more than 12, two tight semicircles will work well.
6. If you are using the video, do the following.
 - Make sure all arrangements have been made to secure and set up necessary equipment in the room.
 - Preview the video and fill in your response sheet in the member book. This step will be beneficial to you in case you are detained or distracted with administrative duties as members watch the video.
 - Prepare several sentences in response to the video.

Child Care Open, Attendance and Homework Check (15 min.)

DURING THE SESSION


Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members as they arrive and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Look for brief (two- or three-minute) answers to the Principal Questions so that you can be satisfied that the material was understood. All answers should have been obvious as the reading and the learning activities of week 1 were completed; however, make sure you have written answers in case members do not volunteer or understand.

Each day's Principal Question will be followed by a Personal Discussion Question, which is identified in each day's study by the symbol . Give members the opportunity to answer, but do not pressure them. Ask them to be discreet and never to name another person who could be hurt by the discussion. Appropriate discussion of these questions is key to the application of the session. Be ready to redirect discussion if it becomes inappropriate.

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* What was John the Baptist's purpose for preaching?
- *Personal Discussion:* Can you relate? On the set of scales in the margin indicate where your balance lies between relationship and legalism.

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* How was John identified in his family?
- *Personal Discussion:* How would you explain to a new Christian the relationship between the things of God and the things of family?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* What name did Simon call Jesus in Luke 5:5?
- *Personal Discussion:* At this season of your life, what do you sense that you need most?
 - Preparation for a fresh work of God
 - Repairing from a tear
 - Restoration from a kind of fall

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* How did Christ build His new followers?
- *Personal Discussion:* How do you picture Christ's expression and demeanor as He called these four fishermen to follow Him? Briefly explain.

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* According to Mark 1:25-26, what happened when Jesus commanded the demons to come out of the man?

- *Personal Discussion:* What kinds of feelings did you have the last time you encountered someone who was suffering terribly?

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 1.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so at this time. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 2 and a closing prayer. Take the 5 remaining minutes in the first hour to prepare for the video.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 1 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 2 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 1 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 1 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 2?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 1?
3. Read "Before the Session" on page 19 to learn what preparations you need to make for session 2.

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Spend time in prayer for those in your group.
2. Provide tear sheets, markers, and tape for group work.
3. Write the following small-group assignments on index cards: *Group 1: Matthew 4:18-22. Group 2: Mark 1:14-20. Group 3: Luke 5:1-11.*
4. Have praise music playing as group members arrive.

DURING THE SESSION

Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Welcome group members and check homework as they arrive. Encourage group members to introduce themselves to someone they don't know.
2. Lead the group in a time of prayer.
3. Discuss the illustration on page 9. Ask: What is the difference between relationship and legalism? Where does your balance lie?
4. Instruct members to form pairs and to read Luke 3:1-9 together. Discuss what it must have been like to hear the Word of God after four hundred years of silence.
5. Ask a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. As a group, list the priorities God delivered in this directive. Describe the relationship between the things of God and the things of family.
6. Divide into triads. Ask them to list facts about John. Then have them share their lists with the entire group and combine them to make a complete list on a marker board or on a tear sheet.
7. Divide into three groups and give them tear sheets, markers, and the index cards with Scripture references. Ask groups to read their assigned Scriptures and to record on their tear sheets facts about Jesus' calling His disciples. Then allow each group to share its findings with the entire group. Compare each list and circle facts that are unique to each Gospel.
8. Discuss the questions on pages 20–21. Keep the discussion moving so that you will not run out of time. The purpose is to hear different ideas on how group members perceive Christ and His followers.
9. What were the things that attracted Peter, Andrew, James, and John to Jesus? List responses on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.
10. Discuss as a group what impact the events discussed in day 5 might have had on John.

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 1 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

11. Remind members of the letters Beth asked them to write telling Christ what they are seeking most through this study. Challenge members to continue praying for these desires throughout the study.
12. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 2 before the next group session.
13. Dismiss with prayer that during this study each member will distinctly hear Jesus' call on her life.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 1

Sometimes we also may have the desire to take our _____ *whips* _____ and _____ *turn* _____ *over* _____ *the* _____ *tables* _____ in our worlds: in our _____ *children's* _____ *schools* _____, in our _____ *communities* _____, in our _____ *churches* _____, etc. We've got to be so careful what we rationalize by Scripture. Before we proceed, we are wise to remember a few important things. We'll make six points today based on the calling of John.

Read Mark 3:13-19 and John 2:12-17.

1. Christ could not _____ *sin* _____ in His _____ *zeal* _____ or _____ *anger* _____. See Ephesians 4:26-27.

Anger and rage are highly motivational, but they are extremely destructive.

2. Godly _____ *indignation* _____ is measured by the _____ *absence* _____ of "_____ *self* _____."

3. God looks upon the _____ *heart* _____ beneath the action. We can even have a _____ *wrong* _____ *heart* _____ about a _____ *right* _____ *issue* _____ and find ourselves disciplined by God.

4. Paradoxically, we receive our calling as _____ *one* _____ *kind* _____ *of* _____ *person* _____ but can only fulfill it _____ *as* _____ *another* _____. See Matthew 18:2-3. "Unless you change and become _____ *[your answer]* _____, you will never _____ *[your answer]* _____ _____ *[your answer]* _____."

5. Though _____ *preparation* _____ is important, Christ seems to have an affinity for _____ *on-the-job* _____ *training* _____.

6. The kind of change God desires comes one primary way. See Mark 3:14: "that they might be with him and that he might send them out."

SIGHTS AND INSIGHTS

Session 2

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Look for brief answers to the Principal Questions that will indicate the comprehension of the reading and learning activities in week 2. Be prepared to offer the answer if a member does not volunteer. Also be prepared to keep personal discussion within appropriate bounds.

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* According to John 11:41-42, what confidence did Christ have in His praying?
- *Personal Discussion:* How differently would we pray if we were convinced of two critical factors: that our Father is the omnipotent Creator and Sustainer of the universe and that He always hears us?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* Based on Mark 5:35, what was the reasoning of those who discouraged Jairus from bothering the teacher anymore?
- *Personal Discussion:* Where has God taken you personally to transfigure your perception of Him?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* What is the obvious risk of great revelation, and how are we told in 2 Corinthians 12:7 that God safeguarded the apostle Paul against it?
- *Personal Discussion:* Under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, what did Paul pray for us (see Eph. 1:17)?

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* Based on Luke 19:41-44, why was Jesus apparently so grief-stricken?

- *Personal Discussion:* Read James 3:13-16. Why do you think humility is so wise?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* What happened as soon as Judas took the bread at the Passover?
- *Personal Discussion:* When was the last time you saw someone you consider to be a rock in unabashed anguish, virtually inconsolable, and overwhelmed with sorrow? Describe how you felt.

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 2.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 3 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 2 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 3 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 2 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 2 on time? If not, how can I make sure our time is used more wisely in session 3?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 2?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Write group assignments on index cards for activity 5.
Group 1: Matthew 17:1-9. Group 2: Mark 9:2-10. Group 3: Luke 9:28-36.
2. Provide tear sheets, markers, and tape for group work.
3. Have praise music playing as group members arrive.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Direct group members to form pairs with the person sitting beside them. Ask them to introduce themselves to each other if they are not already acquainted and to tell something about themselves. Then they should share prayer requests with each other and pray.
2. Ask a volunteer to read Mark 1:29-39. Recap what has occurred in the past 24 hours with Jesus and the disciples.
3. Ask for volunteers to reveal their favorite places for prayer. Ask each, What makes that place work for you?
4. Ask the group to discuss the assignment on page 33. Ask whether members prayed, beginning with John 11:42, “I knew that you always hear me,” and concluded with John 11:41: “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.” Share testimonies about practicing God’s presence.
5. Divide into three groups and give each group an index card with a Scripture reference. Direct groups to read their verses and record details of the passages on tear sheets. Then ask groups to share with the entire group. As reports are given, hang tear sheets on the wall. Circle the information that differs in each account and underline the information that is the same.
6. As a group, answer the questions on page 38: “What did they discuss as they came down the mountain? Why do you think Jesus let the three disciples follow Him to Jairus’ house and to the transfiguration? What points do you think He was trying to make to Peter, James, and John? What do Jesus’ actions say to you today?”

7. Ask small groups to read Mark 10:35-45 and to answer this question: In what ways do we ascribe to the same philosophy of spiritual toddlerhood that James and John had? Ask them to make lists to share with the large group.
8. Ask members to share ways Satan has betrayed them. Remind them to be general with their answers. Record on a marker board or on a tear sheet a list of words that describe ways Satan has betrayed them.
9. As a group, make a list of what Jesus represented to the disciples for the three years they followed Him. Write the list on a marker board or on a tear sheet.
10. Ask, What emotions do you think Peter, James, and John felt as they watched Jesus struggle in the garden of Gethsemane?

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 2 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

11. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 3 before the next group session.
12. Referring to the list of what Jesus represented to the disciples, close in prayer thanking Jesus for being those things to members, as well.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 2

Reflect on John 18:15-18,25-27.

1. Few experiences lend more opportunity to be disappointed by someone we've highly esteemed than a traumatic event.
2. Each of us is wise to ask the following question: Who have I given enough power to throw me off course by his or her denial-like actions toward Christ?
3. Sudden uncharacteristic actions do not by themselves render the person or ministry fraudulent.

See 2 Corinthians 11:2-3.

4. Wise is the man or woman who realizes he or she, too, could momentarily deny Christ. May we never withhold from another something that—in due time—we may desperately need.

Read John 18:28-31,38-40; 19:12-16.

1. Chaotic events don't place us suddenly out of control nearly as much as they remind us how little control we had all along. See 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
2. When we feel tremendously out of control in one area, without God's help we will ordinarily transfer a tighter control-grip on another area.
3. We will never develop authentic confidence in God's sovereign control until we let Him see us through seasons when life seems out of control.
4. Keep in mind that Satan's first goal in a believer's life in trauma is to encourage cessation of communication with God.
5. God may not always answer our questions, but He will always answer us.

Psalm 65:5: "You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior."

Jeremiah 33:3: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

Psalm 69:13: "O God, answer me with your sure salvation."

DEFINING MOMENTS

Session 3

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* Based on what you studied in day 1, how would you describe John?
- *Personal Discussion:* What thoughts might have gone through John's mind as he heard the verdict?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* According to Ephesians 1:19-20, what does God promise us if we keep believing?
- *Personal Discussion:* Read John 19:28-30. Reflect on the events of the previous 3 years for John and 33 years for Mary. What kinds of feelings do you think they might have experienced?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* Based on Acts 1:3, what length of time did Christ use to reveal Himself after He rose from the dead?
- *Personal Discussion:* Have you jumped out of the boat of the comfortable and acceptable? Do you want Jesus even if you have to make a fool of yourself to get to Him? If so, elaborate. If not, what's holding you back?

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* In Acts 1:8 what did Jesus tell His followers they would receive?
- *Personal Discussion:* Think of several reasons God may have for not telling His followers (both past and present) the times and dates of the kingdom.

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* What does Galatians 3:29 say about you?
- *Personal Discussion:* Have you ever begged for something that you realize would have done nothing but help keep you in your crippled estate?

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 3.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 4 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 3 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 4 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 3 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 3 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 4?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 3?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Arrange for someone in the group or someone you know to sing the hymn “Were You There?”
2. Have a wooden cross made that is big enough and thick enough for group members to drive nail into.
3. Bring hammers, nails, and small slips of paper for activity 2.
4. Prepare the following assignment sheets.

Group 1. Read John 21:1-14 and answer the following questions: Who was in the boat? When did Jesus appear on the shore? What question did He ask? What did He suggest they do? What was the result? What did John say? How did Peter respond? What did the rest of the disciples do? When they arrived on shore, what did Jesus do for them? How did the disciples know it was Jesus? How would you have responded if you had been a part of the group? As a group, decide what is the most significant part of the account.

Group 2. Read John 21:15-23 and answer the following questions: What three questions did Jesus ask Peter? How did Peter respond? What did Christ say to Peter in verse 19? What was the obvious motivation for which Christ wanted Peter to follow Him? Where was John while Jesus and Peter were talking? When Peter saw John, what did he ask? What do you think was the tone in Peter’s voice when he asked the question? Share testimonies of similar experiences when group members have asked, “Lord what about him?” What was Christ’s response to Peter in verse 22?

5. Write the following definition on a tear sheet to display during the session: *ahar: after, later, behind, following.*
6. Provide tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Play praise music as members arrive.
2. Place the cross at the front of the room. Hand out slips of paper and ask group members to write a besetting sin on the paper and fold it. State that this is a time of worship. Explain that in a moment, after the song is sung, the group members are to quietly make their way

to the front and nail their sins to the cross. Ask that members remain silent during this time as they reflect on the price Jesus paid for their sins. Turn off the lights as the enlisted person sings “Were You There?” As facilitator, begin the procession to the cross to show members what to do. After all members have nailed their sins to the cross, spend time thanking God for sending His Son into the world to die for our sins.

3. Allow volunteers to share testimonies of what the worship experience meant to them.
4. As a group, discuss what might have gone through John’s mind as he heard the verdict “Crucify Him!”
5. Ask a volunteer to read John 19:28-30 and discuss the question on page 56: “Reflect on the events of the previous 3 years for John and 33 years for Mary. What kinds of feelings do you think they might have experienced?”
6. Lead group members to close their eyes and ask them to imagine the scene you are about to read to them. Ask them to place themselves somewhere in the scene and to picture all the details. Read John 20:1-18 slowly and with emotion so that the group can get the picture. Discuss what group members felt and saw as they put themselves in the account.
7. Divide members into two groups and give them the assignment sheets you prepared. Allow time for work and ask each group to share with the entire group.
8. As a group, search Acts 1:1–2:21 and put together a chronological order of the significant events. List these on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.
9. Ask volunteers to share what they wrote about the early church in the activity on page 67.
10. Display the definition of the Hebrew word for *future*. Ask, If we are going to become the effective servants God desires us to be, what is the balance between our past and our future?

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 3 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

11. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 4 before the next group session.
12. Close with prayer thanking God for the miracles you have seen this week in His Word and asking Him for faith to let Him change us.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 3

Read Acts 4:23-32.

The Greek word *deesis* refers to a particular need for which one prays.

How did God respond to their prayers?

- The place where they were meeting was shaken. The Greek word means “to move to and fro, shake ... to put into a state of waving, rocking, vibratory motion.”
 - They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - They all spoke the Word of God boldly.
1. They neither denied nor minimized the seriousness of the problem (v. 23).
 2. The believers united for prayer in a way God highly honors. (The Greek word is *homothumadon*.)
 - *Homos* means one and the same.
 - *Thumos* means temperament, mind. Also, “With one mind, with unanimous consent, in one accord, all together.” *Thumos* can also mean passion as well as mind or thought.

If God honors His people coming together with ONE MIND and passion, whose mind is right?

Philippians 2:5 (KJV) says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” What kind of mind did He have?

 - He made Himself of no reputation.
 - He took on the form of a servant.
 - He humbled Himself. Proverbs 13:10 says, “Pride only breeds quarrels.”
 3. They corporately exalted God. In doing so, they glorified Him and reminded themselves to whom they belonged (Acts 4:24).
 4. They cited Scripture relevant to their challenge (vv. 25-26).
 5. They reminded themselves that anything God allows to threaten His own, He will use to bring about great glory.
 6. Then they asked big things.

BEYOND THE LIMITS

Session 4

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* According to John 4:9, what was the situation at the time of the disciples' ministry?
- *Personal Discussion:* How has God allowed something to push down your fence so that He could expand your horizon?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* Why might John have been with Christ's biological family?
- *Personal Discussion:* Would you be willing to live—and die—alone with Christ?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* How do we know from Paul's testimony that John held a primary role in the Christian church in Jerusalem (see Gal. 2:9)?
- *Personal Discussion:* Who has extended you a hand of fellowship and how? Or to whom have you graciously extended one and how?

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* According to Hebrews 2:14-15, what kind of freedom did Christ give us?
- *Personal Discussion:* When you're weak, down, or tired, doesn't Satan occasionally try to awaken old temptations in you? If so, how?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* How do you imagine John felt as the solitary remaining apostle?
- *Personal Discussion:* Are you desperate for a surplus of love and acceptance? If so, tell why.

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 4.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 5 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 4 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 5 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 4 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 4 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 5?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 4?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Prepare an overview of Acts 4:13–7:60, highlighting events described in those chapters.
2. Write the following quotation on poster board or on a tear sheet and hang it on the wall: “Saints ... die to the world only to rise to a more intense life.”¹
3. If you have access to the Internet, visit the website www.voiceofthemartyrs.org to learn the story of a Christian group that is being persecuted today. Prepare to read or summarize the account during the session.
4. Provide an index card for each member, along with tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Play praise music as members arrive.
2. Ask group members to form pairs and share prayer requests. Allow time for them to pray. Encourage them to continue praying for one another throughout the week.
3. Share the overview of Acts 4:13–7:60.
4. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 8:1–4. Discuss as a group how verse 4 could change the way you pray about the persecution of Christians today.
5. Read Hebrews 13:3. Read the story of the Christian group that is being persecuted today, if you found this information. Pause and pray for these and other believers who are being persecuted, as well as for their persecutors.
6. Form small groups of three to five persons each. Give each group a tear sheet and ask groups to list as many prejudices as possible in three minutes. Then ask groups to share their lists with the entire group and hang them on the wall.
7. Discuss the question on page 75: “Why is it so much easier to hate from a distance?”
8. Give each group member an index card. Ask members to write down their prejudices. Assure them that no one else will read them. This is between the individual and God. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 8:15. Spend time in individual prayer confessing those prejudices

to God, asking for forgiveness, and praying for those they are prejudiced toward. Once you have given adequate time for individual prayer, close the prayer time by thanking God for our salvation through Christ and the forgiveness of sin. After the prayer time, place a trash basket in the middle of the room and ask members to tear up their cards and throw them away. Read Psalm 103:12 as a reminder that God not only forgives our sin but also forgets.

9. Ask for personal testimonies in response to the question on page 76: “How has God dramatically changed your attitude toward some target of your personal prejudice?”
10. Divide members into small groups. Give each group a tear sheet and a marker. Ask groups to list ways to extend the hand of fellowship to people. Then have them share with the large group.
11. Ask and discuss: Why are we sometimes so reluctant to extend the hand of fellowship? Discuss the statement on the poster: “Saints ... die to the world only to rise to a more intense life.”
12. Remain in small groups to discuss answers to the question on page 88, “What is the difference [between the call to the world and the call of the world]?”

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 4 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

13. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 5 before the next group session.
14. Close by asking those who were willing to admit on page 91 that they are desperate for a surplus of love and acceptance to raise their hands. Surround these members and pray over them. Read Isaiah 54:10 and Psalm 90:14. Ask God to remind all of you of His love toward you.

1. Lynn M. Poland, “The New Criticism, Neoorthodoxy, and the New Testament,” as quoted in R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Minneapolis: First Fortress Press, 2000), 139.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 4

Part 1: Grasping the Concept of Divinely Inspired Scripture

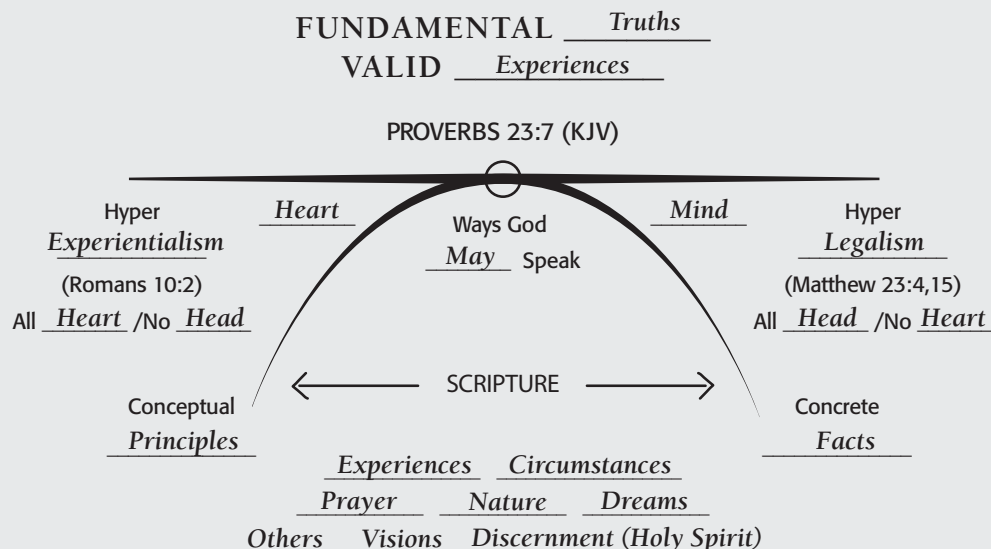
According to 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God - breathed.” The original Greek word is *theopneustos*. *Theo*—God. *Pneustos*—breath or spirit. Consider each of the following Scriptures.

1. Based on a comparison between 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 1 Chronicles 28:19, we might say the men God used to write Scripture served as neither the author nor the ink. They served as the quill. The author is God the Holy Spirit and the ink flowing through that pen is the Holy Spirit, the breath of God that He’s pouring through.
2. The Word is eternal, but God chose to give inspiration through progressive revelation (see Ps. 119:89).
3. Compare Genesis 2:7. When God breathes, He breathes life. Hebrews 4:12 tells us His Word is alive.
4. See Luke 1:1-3. We are told that many undertook writing accounts of Christ’s life and fulfillment of God’s plan; yet we don’t have “many” of those accounts in the Bible.

Part 2: Grasping God’s Primary Intention Through His Inspiration of John’s Gospel

Read John 1:1.

1. One of the overriding themes in the Gospel of John is presented from the very first verse: Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John wanted his reader to know and recognize the Word.
2. The Greek term for Word is Logos. Basically it refers to the expression of God revealed to man. God revealed Himself through His Son and His words.
3. The only way we will ever really know the Word, both the Person and the print, is to know His words. Both of these verses employ the Greek word rhema.
4. As we learn to receive and apply *rhema*, we are wise to remember that God’s Word is written: by God about God, to others about others, to us about us.



RECEIVING HIS FULLNESS

Session 5

Plan A

BEFORE THE SESSION

Refer to page 19 for a list of preparatory actions.

Child Care Open, Attendance and Homework Check (15 min.)

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* How does Hebrews 11:6 echo the idea of godly hedonism?
- *Personal Discussion:* Write in your own words what you think Piper's statement means: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."¹

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* According to John 20:30-31, what was John's purpose in the Gospel of John?
- *Personal Discussion:* If your life were a Gospel like John's, who could people believe your Jesus to be? Respond specifically and concretely.

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* What was the obvious and eternal significance of the wedding in Cana in John 2?
- *Personal Discussion:* When was the last time you attended a party centered on Christ's presence? Briefly describe it.

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* What does Psalm 147:4 tell us about the estimated one hundred billion stars in our galaxy alone?

- *Personal Discussion:* What did David seem to be feeling when he wrote Psalm 8:3-4?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* What happened to the soldiers after Christ responded, "I am He" in John 18:6?
- *Personal Discussion:* What do the "I am" statements mean to you?

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 5.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 6 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 5 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 6 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 5 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers:
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 5 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 6?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 5?

1. John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* (Sisters, OH: Multnomah Publishers, 2001), 21.

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Write the following assignments for activity 5 on separate index cards.
 - *Group 1: Moses in Exodus 33:13,15-18*
 - *Group 2: David in Psalm 63:3-7*
 - *Group 3: Paul in Philippians 3:8-10,14*
 - *Group 4: Peter in 1 Peter 1:6-9*
- Write the following statement on poster board or on a tear sheet and hang it on the wall: *When we're not filled with the good things Christ came to bring us, we will grasp at substitutes. An unsatisfied soul is a disaster waiting to happen.*
- Write the seven "I am" passages from the Book of John on sentence strips and hang them around the room (see activity, p. 110). Be sure to include the Scripture reference from which each "I am" statement is taken. Also hang an empty strip beside each Scripture slip.
- Arrange to have snacks at the end of the session for a time of celebration.
- Provide tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

- Play praise music as group members arrive.
- Begin by quoting John 3:16 together and pray, thanking God for the gift of His one and only Son.
- Based on John 1:14-16 and the definition of *grace* on page 94, ask volunteers to share the phrase that means the most to them and why.
- Read C. S. Lewis' statement on page 95. Lead group members to share what they think Lewis meant by the statement "We are far too easily pleased."¹
- Divide into four small groups and give each group one of the index cards you prepared with assignments. Ask each group to read its assigned passage and to describe the personal gain that came to these men in their pursuits of God.
- Ask, What are some sources from outside the Bible from which many of us derive our impressions and definitions of Jesus? Compile a list on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.
- Ask volunteers to share anything they have witnessed that they would consider to be an unquestionable miracle of God.

- Do the activity on pages 106–107 as a group. Assign verses to group members and ask them to read them aloud. Finally, ask, What are some of the basic themes of these passages?
- Write the number 100 billion on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall. Point out to the group that an estimated one hundred billion stars are in our galaxy alone. Read Psalm 147:4. Ask members to share what it means to them to know that the God who created the world also created human beings. Ask, What does John 3:16 mean to you?
- Draw attention to the "I am" statements on strips around the room. Ask each group member to stand beside the "I am" statement that means the most to her today. Encourage members to share why that particular statement means the most to them.
- Ask members to look up the references that accompany their statements and to write on the blank strips beside the passage how the title is associated with us.

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 5 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

- Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 6 before the next group session.
- End the study time by praising God as the great I Am and His Son, Jesus, as the fulfillment of every need we can have. Thank Him for His all-sufficient grace.
- Close with a time of celebration. You are halfway through the study. Congratulations! Keep up the good work. Enjoy snacks together and fellowship. Celebrate the truths you have learned by sharing testimonies, giving all praise to God.

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1–2, as quoted in John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* (Sisters, OH: Multnomah Publishers, 2001), 22.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 5

See **John 3:5**. One of the most often repeated phrases from the mouth of Christ is “ I tell you the truth .” In the NIV the phrase appears 77 times in the Gospels.

Jesus used the phrase ...

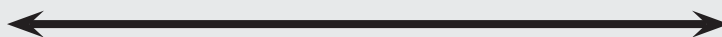
1. For the sake of emphasis.
2. For clarity on issues of profound importance like life and death.
3. For clarity on issues of controversy.

Christ tells us the truth. Truth breeds trust.

Take a good look at Psalm 31:1-5,13-16,21. Camp on the words in verse 14: “I trust in you, O Lord.” What makes a person able to trust God when the circumstances around him are screaming to disbelieve? He has come to trust in the God of truth (v. 5).

1. Christ will tell us the truth even when we think we'd prefer a lie. Why?
 - Because He is Truth (John 14:6).
 - Because only the truth sets us free (John 8:32).
2. Thankfully, Christ's truth always comes coupled with His grace.
3. Christ holds His church and His children responsible for telling not only His truth but His whole truth.

Two extremes in unbalanced teaching or portraying:



<p>God has nothing to do with anything we could ever <u>interpret</u> as <u>negative</u> or <u>painful</u></p>	<p>God is always <u>angry</u>, never <u>pleased</u>, and usually <u>out</u> to <u>get</u> <u>us</u> (Luke 4:18).</p>
--	--

(2 Tim. 4:3-5).

See **John 16:33**. Christ Jesus came to us as the exact representation of the Father. He taught neither of the above extremes. See **Matthew 18:4-7**.

LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY

Session 6

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* According to 1 Corinthians 2:9-14, why is the Holy Spirit so vital in a relationship with God through His Word?
- *Personal Discussion:* What do you need most from the Holy Spirit?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* In what ways does Christ love His own (see John 15:9)?
- *Personal Discussion:* What kinds of things hold us back from immensely productive lives?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* Based on context and Christ's response to Judas' question in John 14:19-25, what did Christ mean when He said that soon the world would not see Him but His disciples would see Him?
- *Personal Discussion:* Are you more like a porcupine or a puppy in terms of receiving the demonstrative love of God (whether through His Word, through His Spirit bearing witness in your inner being, or through a human vessel)?

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* What were some of the encounters Jesus had with women in Scripture?
- *Personal Discussion:* To which of the women in today's reading do you most relate? Why?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* What was the ultimate reason Jesus exercised restraint over His divine rights in Matthew 26:53-54?
- *Personal Discussion:* What are a few things you would like to have called "mine," but life experiences proved otherwise?

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 6.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 7 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 6 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 7 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 6 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 6 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 7?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 6?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Write the following statement on neon-colored poster board and place at the front of the room: *The Holy Spirit is the key to everything in a believer's life.*
2. Prepare three assignment sheets with the following instructions.
 - Read John 15:1-17 and list everything you can about Christ's Father.
 - Read John 15:1-17 and list everything you can about Christ.
 - Read John 15:1-17 and list everything you can about Christ's disciples.
3. Provide crayons, markers, and sheets of paper for activity 6.
4. Provide blank sheets of paper for the closing activity.
5. Provide tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Open the session by sharing testimonies of ways God has shown Himself this past week. Spend time praising Him.
2. Discuss as a group the question on page 116, "What difference could the Spirit of God make when living *in* a person, as opposed to *with* a person?" Call attention to the neon poster and discuss the statement "The Holy Spirit is the key to everything in a believer's life."
3. As a group, make a list of wrong motives we might use in making requests to God. Record these on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.
4. Divide members into three groups and give them the assignment sheets you prepared. Allow time for group work; then call for reports.
5. Ask members to form pairs. Say: Based on John 15:1-17, God offers both a love we can live in and a source we

can draw from. Share with your partner which of those offers you have personally experienced and which offer you need to trust more.

6. Distribute crayons, markers, and sheets of paper. Ask group members to draw their favorite places where they have seen God reveal His glory. Remind the group that this activity is not to discover the best artists but to give members an opportunity to remember special times when God has revealed His glory through nature. If some want to show their works of art, let them, but don't force anyone to share.
7. Divide into groups of four and ask each group to list on tear sheets ways Christ discloses Himself to us other than those on pages 126–127.
8. Divide members into six groups and assign each group a passage of Scripture from the assignment on pages 128–130. Direct each group to discuss the questions related to its passage of Scripture. Ask each group to write a modern-day example of that Scripture or to paraphrase the verses and share how Jesus longs to meet the need. After groups have had time to complete their work, call for reports.
9. As a group, list as many of the concepts John either presented *more* or with greater emphasis in his Gospel. Instruct members to do this activity from memory. No cheating!
10. Assign the verses on page 133 to group members. Ask them to read the verses aloud and to describe how each underscores identification by association.

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 6 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

11. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 7 before the next group session.
12. Distribute blank sheets of paper. Close by asking group members to write prayers expressing thanksgiving to God for the right of sonship.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 6

Our previous lesson concluded the written focus on the concepts of “more” and “abundance” in the Gospel of John. Today we will pick up and expand on an important principle for the believers life that

was established in week 6, day 5: identification by association. No other chapter in all four Gospels has “more” to say about this wonderful principle than the incomparable John 17.

In contrast, man’s natural life principle is: identification by exaltation.

“**Identification by association**” is beautifully illustrated in John 17.

1. Between Father and Son. Read John 17:1-5.

A. Traces of Intimacy

- In timing (the time has come ...)
- In the essence of eternal life
- In reference to relationship before the world began

B. Terms of Intercession

- “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”
- Identification by association for glorification.

2. Between Father, Son, and those God gave Him. Read John 17:6,20.

A. Traces of Intimacy

- The revelation of the Father received through ...
 - 1) Obedience to His Word (*logos*)
 - 2) Acceptance of His words (*rhema*)
- Christ’s insistence that glory had come to Him through them
- Christ’s passion for the love God has for Him

B. Terms of Intercession

- “protect them by the power of your name.”
- “protect them from the evil one.”
- “that all of them may be one ... brought to complete unity.”

LETTERS FROM THE HEART

Session 7

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* According to 1 John 1:9, what is the secret to sharing a life of fellowshiping with Christ and walking in the light?
- *Personal Discussion:* What have you experienced through your *koinonia* relationship with the Father and the Son that you almost cannot stand for others to miss?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* How did Paul describe God's love in Ephesians 3:18-19?
- *Personal Discussion:* Deep in your heart, what are you most afraid of?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* Why do we love, according to 1 John 4:19?
- *Personal Discussion:* Have you found this principle to be true (that loving difficult people is important to God, so He continually brings these relationships into our lives)? Yes No If so, estimate how many persons you've been very challenged to love in the past five years. ____ If any of those relationships became some of your dearest, please explain.

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* What do John's words "love in truth" in 2 John mean?
- *Personal Discussion:* What do you tend to focus on during a microscope day?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* How did Paul describe the participation of labor between a believer and God in Colossians 1:29?
- *Personal Discussion:* Write what you think a one-sentence description of your life would say. Then describe what you would want it to say.

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 7.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 8 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 7 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 8 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 7 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 7 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 8?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 7?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Make a copy of the responsive reading below, based on 1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-2, for each member.

2. Prepare the following assignment sheets for activity 4.
 - Group 1: 1 John 3:1-3
 - Group 2: 1 John 3:19-22
 - Group 3: 1 John 4:13-18
3. Prepare the following assignment sheets for activity 6.
 - Group 1: 1 John 3:11-15
 - Group 2: 1 John 3:16-22
 - Group 3: 1 John 4:7-12
 - Group 4: 1 John 4:16-21
 - Group 5: 1 John 5:1-5
4. Provide tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Hand out and read the responsive reading.
2. Ask members to turn to and read silently 1 John 1:4 and John 15:11. Ask, Do you see similarities between the catalysts for complete joy? Encourage sharing.
3. Ask members to share their responses to the question on page 139, “What have you experienced through your *koinonia* relationship with the Father and the Son that you almost cannot stand for others to miss?”
4. Divide members into three groups and give each group one of the assignment sheets you prepared. Ask groups to read their assigned verses and to record everything we can know and apply about God’s love for us.
5. Ask members to share their answers to the first two activities on page 143. Ask them to describe how they imagine the property with a condemned house on it looks. Ask, What might your sign have said?

6. Divide members into five groups and give each group one of the assignment sheets you prepared. Each group is to read the verses and determine what the passage says about love. Then the group should determine a creative way to present its findings with the group. Some ideas are drama, art, and music.
7. As a group, share responses to the activity on page 147: “Glance over the entire letter of 1 John. How often do you find terms of endearment for his readers, and what are they?” List these on a marker board or on a tear sheet.
8. Ask members to name lies Satan confronts us with. List these on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.
9. Divide members into three groups and name each group Gaius, Diotrephes, or Demetrius. Ask each group to read about the assigned man in 3 John and to write an epitaph for him. Give groups tear sheets to record their completed epitaphs.
10. Ask group members to give examples of Sabbath moments (see pp. 155–156).

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 7 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

11. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 8 before the next group session.
12. Challenge members over the next week to take time for rest. Assign each member a partner and have partners exchange phone numbers. Encourage partners to call each other for accountability.
13. Close by thanking God for our fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thank Him for His amazing love and for the love letters He sent us through John. Pray that we might love as He loves us.

Walking in the Light

Leader: God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Group: If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice the truth.

Leader: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Group: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Leader: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Group: If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

Leader: If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

Group: And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 7

Our journey with the apostle John will take us now over the waters of the Aegean Sea to a small island called Patmos. In week 8, day 1 we will look more closely at John's arrival and the introduction to the Book of Revelation. Today, however, we're going to consider to the best of our understanding the vision of Christ that John recorded in **Revelation 1:9-18**.

While we understand that John received a one-time-only vision of Christ, I believe we can draw some important parallels about becoming the kind of people to whom Christ can reveal Himself.

1. Though a prisoner in exile, John remained spiritually keen and fervent.

Revelation 1:10, "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit."

2. John was faithful with what he "heard," and God invited him to "see" (Rev 1:10,12).

The original word for *hear* often used in Scripture is *akouo*, meaning "not only to hear but to respond and obey."

3. John came to the startling realization that the immortal Christ exceeded

anything he could have stretched his mind to imagine (v. 17).

4. John encountered the tender familiarity wrapped in the complete

unfamiliarity of unveiled "God - ness" (v. 17).

5. Conspicuously absent in the record of John's staggering encounter with the

immortal Christ is a single word from the disciple's mouth (Eccl. 5:1-2).

AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS

Session 8

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* What does Jeremiah 32:17 say about God?
- *Personal Discussion:* What kinds of clouds—if any—are in your life?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* What does Christ pinpoint about Himself to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:1? What is the corresponding verse in the Revelation 1 vision?
- *Personal Discussion:* How does the command to return to your first love speak to you?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* According to 1 Peter 1:6-9, how are believers able to be faithful in suffering?
- *Personal Discussion:* Do you know a believer in Christ whose faithfulness astounds you in the midst of his or her suffering? If so, describe him or her.

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* Based on Hosea 11:3-4, what does God say about healing?
- *Personal Discussion:* How have you personally seen the enemy counterfeit one of God's benefits?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* What was the promise, and to whom would it come (see Rev. 2:26-28)?
- *Personal Discussion:* What are some ways that we women can misuse our sexuality?

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 8.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 9 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 8 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 9 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 8 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 8 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 9?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 8?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Make the following assignment sheets for activity 4.

Group 1—Ephesus

Read Revelation 2:1-7.

- List pertinent information from page 164.
- What warning did Christ give the church in verse 5?
- What was Christ's message to the overcomers in the church in Ephesus?
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Ephesus?

Group 2—Smyrna

Read Revelation 2:8-11.

- List pertinent information from pages 166–67.
- What are some facts about Smyrna?
- What was missing in Christ's message to the church in Smyrna?
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Smyrna?

Group 3—Pergamum

Read Revelation 2:12-17.

- List pertinent information from pages 170-71.
- What are some facts about Pergamum?
- What two things did Christ promise to those who overcame?
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Pergamum?

Group 4—Thyatira

Read Revelation 2:18-29.

- List pertinent information from page 174.
- What was Thyatira known for? What are some other facts about Thyatira?
- Who are the two women Scripture associates with Thyatira? Describe both women.
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Thyatira?

2. Provide tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Open with a time of praise. Ask members to speak aloud the titles and descriptions of Jesus in Revelation 1:4-8. Use this praise time to focus everyone's attention on Jesus.
2. Direct members to discuss the question on page 159: "What do you think John meant by the reasons he gave for being on Patmos?"
3. Ask, What are the repeated components in Jesus' message to the churches? List responses on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.
4. Divide into four groups and give each group one of the assignment sheets you prepared. Also give each group a tear sheet and a marker. Give groups as much time as possible to work, leaving adequate time for reports.
5. Call for group reports. Allow the entire group to share insights or ask questions.

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 8 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

6. Ask members to complete their daily assignments in week 9 before the next group session.
7. Allow a few moments for members to reflect on the video presentation and on week 8 and to jot down one major truth God impressed on them. Close by giving an opportunity for members to thank God for this truth and to help them apply it in their lives. Close the prayer time by asking God to give these women wisdom and grace to be overcomers and to receive all that Christ has waiting for them.

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 8

In the midst of many symbols and shrouds, the Book of Revelation frames several visions of such startling clarity and detail that we could stand before them for hours and continue to discover something new. **Revelation 7:9-17** encases one of those.

As we study these Scriptures, let your imagination play like a videotape. We'll push the pause button on several different elements in the scene and see what we can glean.

1. A great multitude that can't be counted standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

This multitude is ...

- Every nation: *ethnos*—set apart by location, customs, and laws
- Every tribe: *phule*—set apart by blood lines tracing to common ancestors
- Every people: *laos*—set apart by various common bonds of a society
- Every language: *glossa*—set apart by dialects or languages

These four descriptions represent every means of division between the inhabitants of earth.

2. Those who have come out of (the) great tribulation (v. 14). Carefully note that scholars are divided about the exact meaning of this phrase. Some believe the masses of people pictured have come out of “great tribulation” (as may be implied in the KJV and could simply imply Acts 14:22), while others believe they have come out of “*the* great tribulation” (as *may* be implied in the NIV and NASB). *If* Scripture means *the* great tribulation, this gathering suggests that the most profound evangelical movement in church history will occur during the most dreadful days of human history.

Compare Revelation 6:9-11. Many scholars believe these martyrs are among those gathered in Revelation 7:9.

3. The consummation of perfect unity in glorious diversity. Please don't miss the fact that these “nations, tribes, and peoples” are gathered as one, but—at least in this vision and for this time—retain some level of distinction.
4. The worship of the angels (vv. 11-12). “Amen!”
5. The tent of God (vv. 15-17)

FROM A THRONE'S EYE VIEW

Session 9

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* How could a chronic fear of death inhibit a believer's entire life and ministry? What does Hebrews 2:14 say about the subject?
- *Personal Discussion:* Have you ever seen yourself or someone you love interpret rejection as a deathblow?
 Yes No If so, explain.

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* For what did Christ commend the church in Philadelphia after acknowledging its "little strength" in Revelation 3:8?
- *Personal Discussion:* Why do you think the need to matter is sacred?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* How did the church at Laodicea describe itself (see Rev. 3:17)?
- *Personal Discussion:* How do you most make yourself useful?

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* Where is the Lamb depicted as standing in Revelation 5:6?
- *Personal Discussion:* List three of your greatest challenges or concerns.

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* How did John respond when no one was found to open the scroll in Revelation 5:4?
- *Personal Discussion:* How do you feel about the fact that the plan of redemption was obviously already set in motion before humans were created?

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 9.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking and affirming members. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with a few introductory words about week 10 and a closing prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 9 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

1. Give a brief response to the video.
2. Briefly introduce week 10 and encourage members to complete the study before the next session.
3. Close with prayer and collect name tags.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Immediately record concerns or impressions you had to pray for members. Pray for these throughout the week.
2. Evaluate session 9 by asking yourself the following questions and recording your answers.
 - Was I adequately prepared for today's session?
 - Did I begin and end session 9 on time? If not, how can I help make sure our time is used more wisely in session 10?
 - Does anyone need extra encouragement this week? Follow up with a card or a phone call, if appropriate.
 - What was my overall impression of session 9?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Prepare the following assignment sheets.

Group 1—Sardis

Read Revelation 3:1-6.

- List pertinent information from page 181.
- What are some facts about Sardis?
- How did the history of Sardis contribute to deadness in the church?
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Sardis?

Group 2—Philadelphia

Read Revelation 3:7-13.

- List pertinent information from page 184.
- What are some facts about Philadelphia?
- What are some pointers for ministry from the church in Philadelphia?
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Philadelphia?

Group 3—Laodicea

Read Revelation 3:14-22.

- List pertinent information from pages 188–89.
- What are some facts about Laodicea?
- What were some characteristics of the church in Laodicea?
- What lessons can the church today learn from Christ's message to the church in Laodicea?

2. Be prepared to lead the group in singing “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Supply hymnals or record the words on poster board or on a tear sheet.

3. *Optional:* Find a recording of “Name Above Every Name” to play as a conclusion to the session.
4. Provide tear sheets and markers for group activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

1. Begin with prayer.
2. Divide members into three groups. Give each group one of the assignment sheets you prepared, a tear sheet, and a marker. After group work, ask each to report to the entire group. Allow group members to contribute or ask questions.
3. Ask volunteers to read Isaiah 6:1-5; Ezekiel 1:22-28; and Revelation 4. List basic similarities to and descriptions of the throne room on a marker board or on a tear sheet.
4. Ask volunteers to answer the questions on page 195.
5. Lead the group in singing “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 9 (50 min.)

Closing Assignment and Prayer (5 min.)

6. *Optional:* Play the recording you obtained of “Name Above All Names.”
7. Close by thanking God for the Lamb, who was slain from the foundation of the world for the salvation of the world. Praise Jesus because only He is worthy.

RESPONSE SHEET

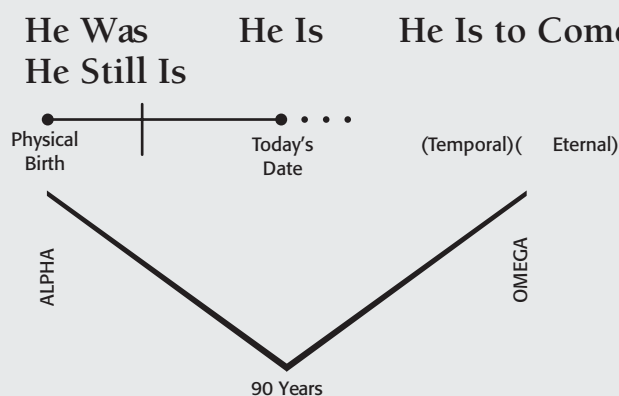
Group Session 9

Read Revelation 12:7-12. Revelation 12:9 calls the enemy of our souls by five names:

- The great dragon
- That ancient serpent
- The devil
- Satan
- Accuser

Primary defenses against the accuser:

1. “By the blood of the Lamb.” Once we are covered by the blood of the Lamb, Satan can do nothing to “uncover” us. So what’s a devil to do? Try to make us “feel” uncovered.
2. “By the word of their testimony”



The Accuser's Formula

Your Is
- Your Was
+ Your Is-to-Come

Incomplete

God's Formula

Redeemed was
+ Cleansed is

Powerful Is-to-Come

BLESSED BENEDICTION

Session 10

Plan A

DURING THE SESSION

Large Group—Welcome, Worship, and Prayer (15 min.)

1. Greet members and hand out name tags.
2. Lead a time of worship and praise.
3. Pray, asking for God's presence and blessing.
4. Dismiss to small groups.

Small Groups (45 min.)

1. Ask for prayer requests and have prayer (5 min.).
2. Review the week's Principal Questions and Personal Discussion Questions (40 min.).

Day 1

- *Principal Question:* How were the 144,000 marked, according to Revelation 14:1?
- *Personal Discussion:* How do you feel about having a seal marking you as Christ's for all the supernatural world to see?

Day 2

- *Principal Question:* Why will people refuse God (see Rom. 2:5)?
- *Personal Discussion:* What makes you shudder and know in your heart that God's wrath must come?

Day 3

- *Principal Question:* Exactly how will Christ strike down His foes (see Rev 19:15,21)?
- *Personal Discussion:* What are you anxious for God to avenge on your behalf?

Day 4

- *Principal Question:* In Revelation 21:14 what did John see on the 12 foundations of the city wall?
- *Personal Discussion:* To what part of this old order will you be happiest to bid farewell?

Day 5

- *Principal Question:* How had John lived the essence of John 15:12-17?
- *Personal Question:* List the kinds of things you imagine John thought and felt on the ride back to Ephesus.

If time allows, ask for ways God spoke in week 10.

Conclude the 40-minute discussion time by thanking members and affirming their participation over the past 10 weeks. If you are using the video, do so now. If not, dismiss with concluding remarks and prayer.

Break and Return to Large Group (5 min.)

View Video Presentation 10 (50 min.)

Closing Remarks and Prayer (10 min. rather than 5 if you are doing an optional evaluation)

1. If you prepared an evaluation, distribute it at this time and allow 5 minutes to complete it.
2. Offer closing remarks about what has been learned.
3. Close with prayer.

AFTER THE SESSION

Evaluate the entire study by asking yourself:

- Did members seem to grasp the principles?
- Are there group members with no church home whom I should invite to visit church with me?
- Should I remain in contact with any members to encourage them?
- Would I consider taking another course of this kind?
- Would I consider leading another course?
- What was my overall impression of *Beloved Disciple*?

Plan B

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Enlist someone to lead a time of praise and worship or get a praise CD and a CD player to open the session.
2. Prepare the following assignment sheets for activity 4.
 - Group 1—the seals (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1-5)*
 - Group 2—the trumpets (Rev. 8:6-13; 9:1-21)*
 - Group 3—the bowls (Rev. 16)*
3. Prepare the following assignment sheets for activity 5.
 - Group 1—Revelation 19:11-21*
 - Read the passage and give this segment a title.
 - List facts gathered from these verses about Christ.
 - List facts about the beast.
 - Group 2—Revelation 20:1-6*

- Read the passage and give this segment a title.
- List all details about Satan.

Group 3—Revelation 20:7-10

- Read the passage and give this segment a title.
- List all facts about Satan's defeat.

Group 4—Revelation 20:11-15

- Read the passage and give this segment a title.
- List every detail about the great white throne.
- What is the difference between the great-white-throne judgment and the judgment seat of Christ?

- Write the numbers 1–4 on small sheets of paper and tape them to the bottoms of chairs for activity 5.
- Enlist four members to read Revelation 22 and to be prepared to report on (1) descriptions of the new heaven and earth, (2) John's personal responses, (3) warnings, (4) and invitations.
- Be prepared to lead the group in singing "To God Be the Glory." Supply hymnals or record the words on poster board or on a tear sheet.
- Provide tear sheets and markers for activities.

DURING THE SESSION

Group Session—Welcome, Prayer, and Discussion (50 min.)

- Begin with a time of praise and worship led by the person you enlisted. Or have a sing-along, using a praise CD.
- Divide into triads and assign them the activity at the top of page 204: "Read Revelation 13 and record every way the kingdom of darkness imitates works of the Godhead but with a twisted, evil intent."
- Ask members to name a praise and worship song they at first found difficult and unfamiliar but over time came to love as a favorite. Ask, What made the song a favorite for you? Explain that no one else could learn the song of the 144,000 because only they had lived it.
- Divide members into three groups and give them the assignment sheets you prepared. Ask each group to read the Scripture, note descriptions that stand out most, and list any coinciding wrath of the kingdom of darkness as well as reactions of unredeemed humanity (particularly repentance or lack of it). Call for reports after groups have had time to work.
- Divide members into four groups according to the numbers you placed under the chairs. Give groups the assignments you prepared. Allow time for group work. Then call for reports.
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud Revelation 21. As a group, determine ways Revelation 21 contrasts with Revelation 20. List these on a marker board or on a tear sheet on the wall.

- List on a marker board or on a tear sheet descriptions of the New Jerusalem found in Revelation 21.

- Call on the four members enlisted to report on the following from Revelation 22: (1) descriptions of the new heaven and earth, (2) John's personal responses, (3) warnings, (4) and invitations.

Break and Return to Group (10 min.)

View Video Segment 10 (50 min.)

Closing Remarks and Prayer (5 min.)

- Thank members for their participation in and faithfulness to this study.
- Read aloud Revelation 22:13-21. State that the group will close in prayer, responding to the invitation to come (see Rev. 22:17). Invite those who can kneel to do so; those who cannot kneel, to stand or sit. Praise God that Jesus is coming again! Ask Him to draw members into a deeper love relationship with Him and to burden them to tell the good news to those who do not know Him.
- End the study by singing "To God Be the Glory."

AFTER THE SESSION

- Evaluate the entire study by asking yourself:
 - Did members seem to grasp the overall principles emphasized in this 10-week study?
 - Are there group members with no church home whom I should invite to visit church with me?
 - Should I remain in contact with any members of my group to encourage them?
 - Would I consider taking another course of this kind?
 - Would I consider leading another course of this kind?
 - What was my overall impression of *Beloved Disciple*?

RESPONSE SHEET

Group Session 10

1. The one-word call to worship probably has great significance (v. 7). The word *hallelujah* (NIV) or *alleluia* (KJV) comes from the original Hebrew *halelu*, meaning to praise, and *Yah*, the shortened form of Yahweh or Jehovah. With one exception (Ps. 135:3), *allelouia* is always found at the beginning or end of psalms, suggesting that it was a standardized call to praise in the temple worship. This may suggest that, although every nation, tribe, and tongue will be part of this glorious wedding, the ceremony itself may be decidedly Jewish.

In ancient Hebrew tradition ...

2. The actual wedding arrangements were the responsibility of the groom and his father. (See Judg. 14:10-11.)
3. The chief responsibility of the bride was to prepare herself (v. 7):
- The bride prioritized purity.
 - The bride took special baths of clean water and fragrant oils.
 - The bride chose fine jewelry to wear on her wedding day.
4. During the ceremony, held under the wedding canopy or *huppah*, the bride traditionally circled the groom (Jer. 31:22).
5. Seven blessings were pronounced during the ceremony (Rev. 21:1-3,22-23).
6. Although deep repentance and personal cleansing took place in preparation, the actual wedding day was marked by great gladness of heart (Song of Songs 3:11).
- Custom prohibited anyone from mourning or fasting on the day of the wedding (Rev. 19:7).
 - The original word for “be glad” is *agalliao*, which means “to exult, rejoice with exuberance; often to leap for joy, show one’s joy by leaping, skipping, or dancing, denoting excessive or ecstatic joy and delight.”

Personalize Isaiah 62:5: “As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will [my] God rejoice over [me].”