

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness begins with a recognition of the treachery of sin.

Focus on this goal: To help adults recognize the treacherous nature of their sin

Key Bible Passage: 1 John 3:4

Before the Session

Have available a board and marker. (Steps 1 and 2)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners gather, **write** *Sin* in the middle of the board. **Engage** the group in considering adjectives that describe sin. (If you need help getting started, **consider** the words *defiant* and *rebellious*”) **Record** the descriptors on the board as they are offered. Close the activity by **writing** *treacherous* on the board, which is the primary focus of *Holiness*, the book from which our studies over the upcoming nine weeks are drawn.

Briefly **explain** that the author of *Holiness* lived 1816-1900; some of his contemporaries include Abraham Lincoln, Queen Victoria, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Florence Nightingale, Susan B. Anthony, and Vincent Van Gogh.

STEP 2 - The Definition of Sin

Invite your most theatric learner to read the opening paragraph of Day One (p. 7). **Let** the words soak in and **ask:** *What do you learn about the author from this opening paragraph? Who comes to mind as you hear these words?*

Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 3:4. As a group, compose a definition of sin. **Record** it on the board. Using the author’s analysis in Day One (p. 8), **bring out** that sin can be inward or outward (Matt. 5:21-28) and can be committed or omitted (see 25:41-42). **Point out** also that ignorant sins left people in need of atonement (pp. 8-9; Lev. 4:1; 5:14-19).

STEP 3 - The Origin and Source of Sin

Enlist four volunteers to read Mark 7:21; John 3:6; Romans 8:7; and Ephesians 2:3. **Ask:** *According to these verses, does sin come from without [bad companions and bad examples] or from within?*

Read the Day Two Note (p. 9, or the fuller opening paragraph of Day Two through the end of the Note). As a group, **ponder** carefully God’s Word concerning sin: it comes from within.

Engage learners in brainstorming some false teachings they’ve heard concerning inborn sinfulness and how we can fool ourselves—particularly about our own innate sinfulness. **Say:** *Wait; don’t despair! There is one way out of this sinfulness to which we are born.*

STEP 4 - The Extent of Sin

Ask: *What are some of the most amazing buildings, inventions, or man-made objects you’ve ever studied or seen?* If learners can share photos or images, **provide** a few moments for that. **Direct** learners’ **attention** to the second paragraph of Day Three (pp. 11-12). **Stress** that humans can create amazing things—revealing God’s image—yet still fall to vice and sin.

Invite a volunteer to read Jeremiah 17:9. **Ask:** *Does this passage apply to all humanity, or just those who are not saved?*

Read or summarize the final Day Three paragraph (pp. 12-13), **challenging** learners to consider their own “roots of sin” left after their conversion. **Ask:** *What might the author say if determined we felt confident we had no sin in our lives?*

STEP 5 - The Guilt, Vileness, and Offensiveness of Sin

Read Psalm 51:1-9. **Ask:** *Based on this passage, how does God view sin?*

Use the Day Four content (pp. 13-15) to **point out** the “Guilt, Vileness, and Offensiveness of Sin” (the title of that day). **Direct** learners’ **attention** to the first paragraph of Day Four (p. 13), and **invite** a volunteer to read from the phrase “We, on the other hand . . .” (last four lines of p. 13) to the end of the paragraph (p. 14).

Engage learners in discussing how our sin-soaked world inhibits us from seeing sin as it truly is.

STEP 6 - The Deceitfulness of Sin

Briefly **share** a time you were deceived by someone or something, or **invite** a volunteer to briefly give such a testimony. **Say:** *Just as we are deceived by crooked salespeople or swindlers, we are also deceived by sin.*

Use the Day Five content (pp. 15-16) to **draw attention to** subtle ways we minimize or excuse sin. **Read** from the first paragraph on page 16, beginning with the phrase “The forbidden fruit seemed . . .” through the end of the paragraph.

Invite a volunteer to read the publican’s prayer from Luke 18:13 (p. 16), “God be merciful to me a sinner!” **Challenge** learners to practice speaking that prayer to one another, committing it to memory and integrating it into their regular time of prayer.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Say: *Perhaps today’s lesson wasn’t particularly easy to hear. In fact, some of you may feel unsettled right now at the acknowledgment of sinfulness and, in particular, your own sin.* **Point out,** though, that this week’s study lines up with Scripture, and that the splash of truth is good for our worship and our openness with the Lord.

Request adults close their eyes as you **read** the author’s admonition (the last paragraph of Day Five, p. 17).

Close in prayer, acknowledging the treacherous nature of sin and **asking** God to open each person’s eyes to that horrible truth.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness requires sanctification.

Focus on this goal: To help adults step up to responsibility for their own sanctification

Key Bible Passage: John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3

Before the Session

Label some index cards with the following words, one per card: *Strong; Healthy; Wise; Peaceful; Holy.* (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Explain: *I've got some goals written on cards. As I hold up each card, I'd love to hear some of you volunteer simple steps toward that goal.* (For example, when you hold up "Strong," sample answers might include lifting weights, eating more protein, or push-ups.) **Save** "Holy" for last. As you hold up that card **ask:** *Can we actually become holier?* **Engage** learners in considering this question for just a second, then **continue** by **saying:** *Not only can we grow in holiness, but we're commanded to do so. That's what we'll be exploring in today's session.*

Open with prayer, asking God to make all receptive and attentive to His truth about sanctification.

STEP 2 - The Nature of Sanctification, Part 1

Enlist volunteers to read John 17:17 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3. **Ask:** *If these were the only Scriptures we had about sanctification, what could we glean from them?* **Discuss** that question as a group.

Read the Day One Note (p. 21). **Ask:** *Do most Christians understand sanctification to the level our author indicates we should? Explain your reasoning.*

Use the Day One content (p. 22) to consider the nature of sanctification.

Help learners **connect** justification, regeneration, and sanctification as the key elements of salvation. **Read** Hebrews 2:11 to show that Jesus is the One who sanctifies us.

STEP 3 - The Nature of Sanctification, Part 2

Challenge learners by **saying:** *The author approaches sanctification in an academic approach in Day Two, but for good reason.*

Read the opening paragraph of Day Two (p. 23), then **enlist** six volunteers to review each of the six statements (A-F) and simplify them in their own words (Day Two activity 2, p 25). **Encourage** brief discussion after each volunteer gives a simplified version.

As a group, carefully **consider** how John 15:5, Galatians 5:22, and Luke 6:44 reveal these truths about sanctification even though they don't contain the word.

STEP 4 - The Nature of Sanctification, Part 3

Ask for volunteers to reread John 17:17 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3. **Remind** adults of the heavy emphasis God the Father and God the Son place on sanctification.

Continue the process of Step 3 by **enlisting** volunteers to review each of the statements in Day Three (G - L) and summarizing them in their own words. Again **engage** brief discussion after each statement.

After all have been explained, **invite** a few volunteers to share one of the statements that helped them better understand sanctification or that they had never considered to be a truth.

Encourage learners to consider seeking their own deeper understanding of the integral elements of salvation.

STEP 5 - Visible Evidence of Sanctification

Point out the title of Day Four: "Visible Evidence of Sanctification." **Ask:** *Before our discussion today, would you have considered that sanctification is internal, external, or both? Why? What did the author conclude?*

Explain that this day's focus answers the question: "What are the visible marks of a sanctified man?" (p. 27).

As a group, carefully but briefly **review** points A-J, **making note** of what does not equal sanctification (A-E) and what does (F-J). **Share** one element that convicted you this week and how it exposed inadequate sanctification or an unbiblical view of it.

Read 1 Peter 2:21-23 and Galatians 5:22-23 and **ask:** *How do these words ring differently after what we've learned today?*

STEP 6 - Distinction between Justification and Sanctification

Ask: *Have you ever heard a memorable definition of justification?* **Remind** learners that Day Five analyzes the similarities and differences between justification and sanctification. As a group, carefully **consider** the bulleted points that reveal the similarities of the two (p. 30), **emphasizing** specifically that both are found in the grace of God, both appear together, and both are necessary to salvation.

Then **delineate** between justification and sanctification by reviewing those bulleted points (pp. 30-31). **Explain** plainly that justification is counting us righteous, whereas sanctification is our actually becoming righteous. **Help** learners **see** that works have no place in justification, while our works of holiness are vitally important as we become sanctified.

Say: *Justification looks at our standing before God; sanctification looks at our nature.* **Invite** adults to make statements utilizing the two terms to help the group clarify their understanding of the full nature of salvation.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read Hebrews 12:14. **Ask:** *How will the idea of sanctification carry more weight in your life now that you've been enlightened through this week's study?* After a few have shared, **ask:** *What emotions arise at the idea of becoming sanctified?*

Read the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 32), **sharing** how you've been challenged, encouraged, and enlightened. **Inspire** learners to continue their own personal study and pursuit of sanctification.

Close by praying Hebrews 12:14, that all those present would diligently pursue holiness.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness is essential for the present and for eternity.

Focus on this goal: To help adults commit to holy lives

Key Bible Passage: Hebrews 12:14

Before the Session

Display a marker board or other large writing surface. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **pose the question:** *What are some things that are wise to do every day?* **Write** responses on the writing surface as they are mentioned. After learners list around ten items **ask:** *Is any of this news to anyone here? Are we all on the same page that these are things we should do every day?* (Hopefully you've crafted a list so that the answer is a resounding yes.)

Review the list, one item at a time, and **ask rhetorically:** *Who does these every single day?* **Acknowledge** that though we often know what to do, we don't always do it. **Stress** that this week's study will consider how seriously we've committed to living holy lives.

STEP 2 - True Holiness, Part 1

Briefly **overview** what you learned about sin and sanctification from Sessions 1-2.

Say: *In Days One and Two of this week's study, the author goes into great detail describing a holy person. Read* the Day One paragraph (pp. 36-37) that begins "First let me . . ." revealing what holiness is not.

Direct learners to the Day One text (pp. 37-38) labeled A-E. Draw attention to the words “habit” (point A), “endeavor” (point B), “strive” (point C), and “follow after” (points D and E). **Ask:** *What do these words suggest to us? Do we get the idea here that holiness will ever be fully accomplished in our lives?*

Briefly **overview** each point, **engaging** the group in discussion as interested. **Enlist** a volunteer or two to share which points stood out to him or her in this week’s study.

Observe that 1 John 2:6 is a great Scripture to keep us focused on these items.

STEP 3 - True Holiness, Part 2

Draw attention to the fact the words “follow after” again appear in each of the points F-L in Day Two (pp. 38-39).

Read Romans 13:8 and **state** that points F-G refer to our relationship with others, not only our outward acts but our genuine love and affection.

Read Colossians 3:23-24. **Stress** that points H-L reveal how a holy man or woman seeks to have a heart that is genuinely set upon the Lord. Briefly **share** a time you did something that outwardly seemed right, but your heart wasn’t the source of that act.

Use the final four paragraphs of Day Two (pp. 40-41) to **encourage** learners: even in our pursuit of holiness we will never fully root out sin; holiness is a progressive work.

STEP 4 - Importance of Holiness, Part 1

Read the opening paragraph of Day Three (p. 41) as well as the opening line of point A. **Engage** learners in discussing the fact that our holiness does not save us, but it is required, first and foremost because God commands it of us.

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Peter 1:15-16. **Observe** that passage quotes Leviticus 11:44-45.

Point out the phrase “We must be holy because” at the start of each point in Day Three. **Ask:** *Does this statement make you want to be holy or push you back from it? Explain your reasoning.*

Briefly **consider** each point as a group, **inviting** learners to share their own fears, failures, and questions.

STEP 5 - Importance of Holiness, Part 2

Invite learners to turn to Hebrews 12 and read verses 1-2. **Explain** that verses 3-11 point to the fact that God disciplines His children because He loves them and because it is for our benefit.

Call on a volunteer to read Hebrews 12:12-14. **Focus attention** on verse 14 by asking the author's bolded questions in Day Four (pp. 43-44). You may want to even **instruct** learners to close their eyes and listen as you read the questions to them.

Balance the solemn questions with the hope offered in the last paragraph of Day Four (p. 45): if we are justified, we are sanctified! **Encourage** learners to find confidence in their salvation as they pursue holiness.

STEP 6 - Advice on Holiness

Read John 15:5 and **drive home the point** of Day Five: we cannot be holy without Christ.

Direct adults to review the Day Five Note (p. 45). **Share** a time in your life when you decided to adopt a new holy habit, but fell short. Then **guide** learners to the prayer at the end of the second Day Five paragraph (p. 46). **Read** the prayer and say: *This is what it means to come to Christ for holiness: we admit our shortcomings and depend entirely on Him to make us holy as we seek it with all we have.*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Close today's session in a time of silent prayer. After a couple of minutes for silent prayer, **end** the time **by reading** Hebrews 12:14.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness only comes about through a spiritual fight.

Focus on this goal: To help adults take up the good fight

Key Bible Passage: 1 Timothy 6:12

Before the Session

On a board or large piece of paper, write *fight* in the center and display it. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct attention to the word “fight.” **State:** *We might not physically fight in our daily lives, but the imagery is all around us. Can you think of some common phrases that contain the word fight?* (Help learners get started with *fight back tears, fight like cats and dogs, fight or flight, fight fire with fire, and fighting a losing battle.*)

Enlist a few volunteers to share how they “fought” this week, whether that was fighting their own desires, fighting a tax assessment, or something similar. **Ask:** *Have you ever considered that holiness is a fight? That’s what we’re exploring today.*

STEP 2 - A Fight, Part 1

Inquire: *What is spiritual warfare?* **Engage** learners in considering whether or not most Christians take spiritual warfare seriously or prepare for it.

Use the Day One content (p. 50) to **stress** that spiritual warfare is real and eternal in nature. **Read** the Day One Note (p. 50). **Enlist** a volunteer to read

1 Timothy 6:11-16. **Explain** these are the words of Paul to a young preacher, Timothy.

Use the Day One content (p. 51) to point out the three things we must fight in our faith: our own flesh, the world, and the devil. **Consider** each individually, **engaging** learners in describing what it means to “fight” each one.

STEP 3 - A Fight, Part 2

Ask: *Does it seem to you that believers take spiritual warfare as seriously as it deserves? Explain your reasoning.*

Enlist volunteers to read 2 Timothy 2:3 and Ephesians 6:11-13. **Comment** that Paul most certainly took the fight of faith seriously. **Point out** that in international war, some nations remain neutral. **Emphasize** that’s not an option with soldiers of Jesus.

Ask if participants feel the ongoing effects of the war for holiness in their own lives. **Allow** a brief time of sharing about those effects.

Lead learners to read to themselves the three paragraphs (p. 53) that begin with the phrase “It is a fight . . .” **Engage** learners in identifying different ways they or others experience this fight, both inwardly and outwardly.

Read Galatians 5:17, **pointing out** that the fact we feel the battle is a sure sign of our salvation.

STEP 4 - A Fight of Faith

Say: *We’ve already discussed the link between sin and holiness as well as sanctification and holiness. In Day Three, we also see the bond between faith and holiness.* **Use** the opening paragraphs of Day Three (pp. 54-55) to reveal that faith in God’s Word is the foundation of the Christian’s life and strength in warfare.

Read the Day Three paragraph (p. 55) that begins, “Faith in our Lord Jesus . . .” as well as the paragraph that follows. **Engage** learners in tying weakness and faith into an understanding of holiness.

Direct learners to Hebrews 11, **pointing out** several of the heroes of the faith highlighted there and how their fight is revealed. **Invite** a volunteer to read Luke 18:5. **Encourage** learners to make “Lord, increase my faith” a daily plea.

STEP 5 - A Good Fight

Read 1 Timothy 6:12, emphasizing the word “good.” Share a time when you were required to work a job or complete a task you didn’t want to do, but that was good for your maturity and work ethic.

Read the Day Four opening paragraph (p. 57) and **instruct** learners to silently peruse points A-G. **Challenge** learners to consider spiritual warfare battles they’ve endured in their lives and to answer the questions, “How can you now see good that came from that fight? Did it seem good at the time?”

Encourage learners to believe their spiritual fights are good for themselves, others around them, and the kingdom of God.

STEP 6 - Encouragement for the Fight

Explain: *In Day Five, the author closes with two words of encouragement: first to a person who realizes he’s actually fighting for worldly rewards and not God’s kingdom, and second to those who have been a faithful soldier.* Briefly **highlight** those two encouragements.

Challenge learners to consider which battle they are fighting—the worldly battle or the holy battle—by analyzing where they focus their time, money, attention, and passion.

Read 2 Timothy 2:4, **exhorting** all learners to make their fight one for holiness, not worldly acclaim.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Ask rhetorically: *Do you hear today’s lesson and wonder if you’re strong enough for this fight?*

Read the final two paragraphs (p. 60). **Share** any reassessing you have done this week in your own personal battle for holiness. **Challenge** others to do the same.

Close by praying two or three of the verses from this session, or perhaps **lead** your group in singing “Onward, Christian Soldiers” or “The Battle Belongs to You.”

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness only comes after counting the cost.

Focus on this goal: To help adults count the cost of following Jesus into holiness

Key Bible Passage: Luke 14:28

Before the Session

1. **Bring** four to six recently purchased items (such as groceries or household staples that would be a commonly-purchased item for most people). **Know** the exact cost of each item. (Step 1)
2. **Enlist** two volunteers who might enjoy playing a bit of an informal game show. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Seat the volunteers at a table, facing the group. One at a time, **reveal** the items you brought and **instruct** the volunteers to write their best guess as to the cost of the item. Whoever guesses closest without going over gets a point. After all the items have been guessed and prices revealed, **congratulate** the one with the most points. **Say:** *These household items aren't the only things for which we need to consider the cost. That's our focus in today's holiness session.*

STEP 2 - What It Costs, Part 1

Read Luke 14:25-33, stressing verse 28. **Invite** a few volunteers to read Luke 14:28 from a variety of translations. **Say:** *We would never make a large purchase without considering the cost, but have you ever considered the cost of being a true Christian?*

Use Day One content (p. 65) to **explain** that Christ alone gave Himself for our salvation, but we must consider the cost of living, in every aspect of life, according to that salvation.

Read the Day One paragraph (p. 65) that begins “But it does cost something” **Direct** attention to point A (pp. 65-66) and **discuss** how genuine faith will “cost” us our self-righteousness.

STEP 3 - What It Costs, Part 2

Explain that, in addition to self-righteousness, true Christianity will also cost a person his or her sin, love of ease, and favor of the world (pp. 66-68). Using Day Two content, briefly touch on each of these costs.

Say: *Let’s see the truth of these statements in the early church.* **Invite** learners to find Acts 5 in their Bibles, then **enlist** a volunteer to read verses 12-33,40-41. As a group, **determine** which of the statements (A from Day One and B-D from Day Two) applied in the passage just read.

Read the closing two paragraphs from Day Two (p. 68), **sharing** your own fear and faith at those powerful words.

STEP 4 - Why It’s Important

Relate: *In Day Three, the author describes that people who have a second-hand knowledge of salvation and the gospel are in particular danger of having no genuine faith. He describes four situations as examples of this danger.*

Enlist four volunteers to read the four Day Three paragraphs that begin with the phrase “For want of ‘counting the cost,’” If you have a personal experience with someone in such a situation, **share** the story without revealing the person’s identity.

Read the paragraph (p. 70) that begins, “These are solemn and painful truths.” As a group, **brainstorm** how these truths should shape how we share the gospel with others.

STEP 5 - Count and Compare

Say: *After much consideration, the author gives us a succinct way to literally count the cost of true faith.* **Direct** learners’ attention to the list, identified as A-G in Day Four (pp. 71-73), of how we can count the cost of following Jesus.

Briefly **discuss** each of the points as a group, **reading** the Scripture at the end of each point that encourages us in each form of comparing costs.

Ask If anyone intentionally counted and compared any of these costs, or knows of someone who has done so. **Volunteer** that the author would urge us to literally complete each “count and compare” analysis. **Voice** your encouragement for adults to make such an intentional counting of the cost of following Jesus.

STEP 6 - Conclusions

Ask: *Now that we’ve looked at why we must count the cost and how to count it, we’ve got to ask: Is it worth it?* **Be the first** to share your answer, honestly and with vulnerability, regarding the worth of the cost. If others are willing to share, **give** them space to do so.

Invite all learners to read to themselves point A in Day Five (p. 73). **Read** the last question, “What does it cost?” in unison and **let the question hang** in the air a few moments.

Proceed next to point B in Day Five (p. 74), which reminds us that God thought highly enough of our eternal souls to send Jesus to die for us.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read point C in Day Five (p. 74), and **challenge** learners to prayerfully count the cost of following Jesus into holiness. **Lead** them to consider someone they know who is struggling in the faith whom they could encourage this week through a letter, phone call, or face-to-face meeting.

Invite a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 74).

Close in prayer, inviting learners to take this week’s call to count the cost as a personal invitation to follow the author’s guidelines and complete the tasks this week.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness comes with growth in grace.

Focus on this goal: To help adults grow into greater holiness

Key Bible Passage: 2 Peter 3:18

Before the Session

Bring a few photos of yourself from different eras of your life: childhood, teenage years, young adult, and so forth. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Show the photos of yourself through the years. (You might want to display them on a focal wall or pass them around.) **Ask:** *Can you see anything in me that has stayed the same through all these years? Has anything changed about me through the years?* After responses, **choose** two of your favorite photos—one from your young life and one more current—and **share** how you’ve grown between the two: physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. **Say:** *We don’t really stay the same, do we? Today, we’ll consider how we grow in grace as we grow in holiness.*

STEP 2 - Growth Is Possible, Part 1

Invite learners to open their Bibles to 2 Peter 3. Briefly **explain** that the first part of this chapter is Peter’s explanation of the final days, in which Christ returns. Then **read** 2 Peter 3:14-18, **stressing** the words “Grow in the grace” in verse 18.

Point out that sometimes growth happens without much work on our part (such as physical growth or cognitive growth). In other instances, we must persevere to grow in an area. **Ask:** *According to 2 Peter 3:18, does growing*

in grace sound like something that happens without much work on our part or something we must pursue? **Use** the Day One content (pp. 78-80) to **encourage** learners to take this session as a time to analyze whether they are growing in their spiritual lives.

Ask: *Who can name a strong Christian? How did he or she get to that point?*

STEP 3 - Growth Is Possible, Part 2

Say: *Each week, we've heard the author stress that these topics are not optional or elective for the Christian: sin, sanctification, holiness, a willingness to fight, counting the cost, and growth are essential considerations for every Christian.* As a group, **discuss** points A-E of reasons we should grow in grace (pp. 80-81).

Invite a volunteer to read John 15:1,8. **Stress** that we are called not only to bear fruit, but to bear much fruit; only if we are growing is that fruit evident to us and to others.

Read the last point E question (p. 81, beginning with the phrase “Whose fault is it . . .”) and the answer in the remainder of the paragraph.

STEP 4 - Marks of Growth

Summarize the opening Day Three paragraph (p. 82), **stressing** the fact that we are typically bad judges of our own holiness. **Point out** that, even so, there are marks we can look for in our lives.

As a group, briefly **analyze** each of the marks of growth found in Day Three, points A-F (pp. 82-84). **Share** with the group your experience with some of these items in your own personal study this week—perhaps how you saw evidence of growth in some areas or a lack of growth in other areas.

Stress that more work on our part is not necessarily the key to growth. Instead, more yielding to the Holy Spirit, increasing our faith and love, is the key.

STEP 5 - How to Grow

Ask: *Day Four is entitled “How to Grow.” Before you even read this week’s study, did you already know what it would say?*

As a group, **discuss** the disconnect between *knowing* how to grow and actually *doing* that which helps us grow. **Help** learners **recognize** excuses for not growing and **combat** those with the truth that almost nothing is more important to our eternal souls than growing in grace and holiness.

Read James 1:17, **pointing out** that God gives us the ability to grow in grace. **Emphasize** that even though the ability to grow is a gift, we must actively participate in those things that benefit or facilitate our growth.

Briefly **lead** learners through the means of growth, points A-E (pp. 84-86).

STEP 6 - Practical Applications

Read Philippians 3:13 and **ask**: *Do these steps feel like a to-do list for Christians? How do we help ourselves see the author's admonitions more like a life change than burdensome instructions?*

Provide time for learners to silently review the three attitudes or dispositions toward growth (points A-C) in Day Five (pp. 86-87). **Discuss** each one as needed.

State that there is one more attitude or disposition: intentionally growing in grace. Briefly **share** times from your own walk when you fit the descriptions of points A, B, and C. Without asking learners to volunteer an answer aloud, **ask** them: *Are you growing in grace?*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Conclude the session with an extended time of prayer. **Open** the prayer time with your own confession of any lack of growth you've discovered in your own life this week. **Pause, allowing** learners time to consider their own response to the Lord.

Close the prayer time by **reading** 2 Peter 3:18 as the benediction.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Holiness produces assurance.

Focus on this goal: To help adults determine, if they lack assurance, why they lack it

Key Bible Passage: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Before the Session

On a board or large paper, **write:** *I'm sure _____ because _____.*
Display in the meeting area. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **invite** them to consider something they can be sure of even though they can't prove it or see it. To encourage lighthearted responses, **offer** the following or similar examples: "I'm sure gravity exists because I'm standing on the ground and not floating." "I'm sure my dog is bored because he dug three holes in the yard yesterday." "I'm sure my hair is thinning, because I saw a photo of myself from five years ago."

After a few volunteers have shared their answers **say:** *Today's topic is similar, but much more solemn: Are you sure you're saved? How do you know? This week's study helps us answer that question with confidence.*

STEP 2 - True and Scriptural

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 4:6-8 from the Day One opening (p. 92). **Enlist** a few other volunteers to read the passage from different Bible versions. **Explain** that this text records the words of Paul to Timothy as Paul recognized his earthly death was at hand.

Use the Day One content (pp. 92-93) to **point out** Paul’s downward, backward, and forward outlooks at death. **Ask:** *Do you perceive any doubt or fear in Paul’s words?*

Direct learners to the Day One paragraph (pp. 93-94) that begins “Such a statement . . .” From that paragraph, **read** the Scriptures of other Bible writers who looked at death with full assurance.

Read the final paragraph of Day One (p. 94).

STEP 3 - Saved but no Assurance

Observe: *Some people, like Paul, are saved and confident in it. But not everyone is; some are saved but don’t have assurance.*

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 10:8-13. **Ask:** *According to these verses, what is the prerequisite for salvation?* **Stress:** *The answer is faith; there is no requirement that we feel saved in order to be saved.* **Read** the Day Two paragraph (p. 95) that begins “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ . . .” in order to **drive home** this point.

Ask: *What are some elements of life that might keep us from experiencing the joy and assurance of our faith?* **Direct attention** to the last paragraph of Day Two (pp. 95-96) to give some examples of people in this situation.

STEP 4 - Desirable

Say: *Maybe today you don’t have assurance of your faith, but let’s consider how to not stay there.*

Group learners into four teams, and **assign** each team one of the Day Three statements (p. 96-98, points A-D). **Instruct** each team to answer in one summary sentence the question: “Why should we want to be exceedingly confident in our salvation?” **Allow** a few minutes for teams to work, then **call on** them to present their sentences.

After all teams have shared, **read** 2 Timothy 1:9-12, **pointing out** the confidence in Paul’s statement even in as he struggled.

Read the Day Three paragraph (p. 98) that begins, “I commend these four points . . .”

STEP 5 - Seldom Attained

Engage participants with the Day Four Discuss (p. 99). If necessary, **point out** that the author believed such assurance was “seldom attained” (p. 99).

Ask why that might be and what impact such a lack of assurance would have on one's spiritual life.

Invite learners to scan Day Four (pp. 99-101) for the three reasons the author suggested that assured hope is seldom attained. For each reason, **brainstorm** how that condition would create a barrier to assured hope. After all three have been considered, **inquire** which one participants believe is most prominent and why.

Read the final two Day Four paragraphs (p. 101), pausing briefly after each verse.

STEP 6 - Closing Words

Observe that the author specifically addressed two groups in Day Five, "those who have not yet given themselves to the Lord" (pp. 101-102) and "all believers who read these words" (pp. 102-103). **Returning** to the four teams from Step 4, **assign** two teams to prepare summaries of the author's words to the lost and two teams to prepare summaries of his words to believers. **Allow** time for teams to work, then **call on** each for their summary. **Supplement** summaries as necessary.

If not already addressed in the group summaries, emphasize the first two paragraphs after Day Five activity 2 (p. 103) regarding doubts and losing assurance for a season.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read the final Day Five paragraph (p. 103). **Emphasize** the correlation between holiness and assurance.

Make yourself available to talk with "those who have not yet given themselves to the Lord" or with any who are uncertain regarding their relationship with the Lord about how they can experience the assured hope this week's study has discussed.

Close in prayer, thanking God for His desire that His people know the kind of assurance portrayed in Scripture.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: The one who is holy is part of the true Church against which hell shall not prevail.

Focus on this goal: To help adults verify their membership in the true Church on the rock

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 16:18

Before the Session

Bring to class any membership cards you have, such as to a gym, library, professional organization, shopping club, or more. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

To open class, **hold up** the membership cards you brought. **Go through** them briefly, **sharing** the store or organization and why you are a member. **Include** the dues and benefits associated with being a member of each.

Enlist a few volunteers to share some memberships they hold in a similar manner. **Ask** each person who shares: *Is the membership worth the cost? What's the best benefit you get from this membership?*

Inquire jokingly: *Did any of you bring your church membership cards today?* **Point out** that being a member of a God-honoring, Christ-led church is the next topic in our holiness series.

STEP 2 - A Building

Explain that this week's study focuses on five elements about the church that Christ referred to in Matthew 16:18. **Enlist** a volunteer to read Matthew 16:13-20. **Ask:** *When you hear the words of verse 16, what comes to mind as you consider this church that Jesus was talking about?*

Point out that some believe Jesus was speaking of one specific building, denomination, or cultural life centered around Christianity; that's not correct. **Read** the Day One paragraph (p. 108) beginning, "The Church of our text"

As a group, **consider** the author's description of the church in the remainder of Day One, **pointing out** how his explanation differs from what many people consider to be a church.

STEP 3 - A Builder

Acknowledge: *We have a spiritual building, the church. And where there is a building, there is a builder.*

Lead the group to consider Jesus's statement: "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). **Ask:** *What are some characteristics and identities you know of Christ? As each is said, discuss* how that attribute affects His ability to build a church. For example, if the answer "all-knowing" is offered, delve into the idea of an all-knowing builder.

Read Ephesians 5:29-30, **pointing out** that Christ loves the body of His church.

Engage adults in reading to themselves the last two Day Two paragraphs (p. 111), mentioning things that stand out to them.

STEP 4 - A Foundation

Summarize that you've discussed the building and the builder; now it's time to press on to the foundation.

Ask: *Has anyone ever been taught from Matthew 16:18 that Peter himself was the foundation of the church? Use* the information in the opening Day Three paragraph (pp. 111-112) to **explain** that is not the proper rendering of Christ's statement.

Read and **unpack** the Day Three paragraph (p. 112) that begins, "The foundation of the true Church was laid . . ." as well as the paragraph following it. **Lead** a discussion on the concept of Jesus as the foundation, **pointing out** that Christ as the Mediator between God and man, our High Priest, is the one connection between all in the true Church.

STEP 5 - Perils Implied

Add to your church discussion from Matthew 16:18—building, builder, foundation—with Day Four's presentation of implied peril: "the gates of hell." **Help** learners understand that the "gates of hell" points to earthly death in

the original language. Still, this phrase represents the power of Satan and his forces. In Matthew 16:18, this phrase points out that we, as Christ's true Church, will not fall victim to death, that is, be separated from God. Still, there is war to be waged.

Read Matthew 5:11 and **discuss** the remaining Day Four content (pp. 114-115) as a group.

STEP 6 - Security Asserted

Direct attention to the end of the opening Day Five paragraph (p. 115): “all the powers of hell shall never overthrow His Church.” **Point out** that this last element of the Church—it's assured security—is a promise guaranteed by Christ Himself.

Read Zechariah 2:8 and **ask:** *How does the promise of this verse line up with people who are actively persecuted today because of their faith?* **Use** Day Five content (pp. 116-117) to **help learners see** that our earthly lives are not the same as our eternal ones; we may suffer on earth in any number of ways for our faith, but we will never be taken out of God's eternal Church in Christ.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Invite learners to bow their heads, then **read** the last two Day Five paragraphs (p. 117). **Lead** in a sinner's prayer, **inviting** any who are uncertain of their membership in the true Church of Christ to pray it with you.

Close in prayer, thanking God for the security of knowing our membership is in His Church.

Offer a word of encouragement to each learner as they leave, such as, “Walk worthy of Jesus's Church!”

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Only the one to whom “Christ is all” will be truly holy.

Focus on this goal: To help adults make Christ their all

Key Bible Passage: Colossians 3:11

Before the Session

Write ALL in large letters on a board or large piece of paper display it at a focal location. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct attention to the word “ALL” prepared before class. **Say:** *The word all has a very specific meaning. “All” does not mean “some;” “all” means “everything.”*

Read the following phrases, **inviting** learners to comment on the significance of “all” in each: “It’s going to cost all you’ve got.” “That’s all I have.” “All in.” “All-nighter.” “Hold all the aces.” “Know it all.” **Invite** volunteers to share other idioms or statements they’ve said or heard lately that contain the word “all.”

Say: *Today’s title is “Christ Is All.” Do you think the author means that literally? Why or why not?*

STEP 2 - In the Counsel of God

Invite a volunteer to read Colossians 3:1-11. **Point out** that verse 11 is the focal verse for today’s last study from *Holiness* by J. C. Ryle. **Ask:** *What are some phrases in this text that point to Christ being our all?*

Direct learners to the Day One content, **noting** that points A-F summarize the history of time—from before creation to eternity—and **stress** that Christ is the “all,” or the supreme being at all times. *Say: From before time began, through all of known life on earth, and even after earth is gone, Christ is God’s focus. He’s the glory, the force, the King, and the Judge.*

Read the last two paragraphs of Day One (p. 123) and **invite** learners to comment as they feel led.

STEP 3 - In the Bible

Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph of Day Two (p. 124).

Assign one or more points (A-K) to each learner, **asking** them to briefly summarize from their point(s) how Christ is revealed in the Bible through other people and acts.

Lead the group to consider: *How does this line of thinking help you see the Bible, from the micro to the macro, as God’s story of Jesus?* **Help** learners **understand** that Christ is the focus of the Bible, because everything in the Old Testament points toward Him and everything in the New Testament reveals Him.

Read the last paragraph of Day Two (p. 126), **instructing** learners to privately answer the question. If you’ve ever been through a season when the Bible was not significant, **share** what cause you to view it differently now.

STEP 4 - In True Religion

From the opening paragraphs of Day Three (p. 126) **assert** that Christ is all in our religion, or the inward and outward proof of a relationship with God.

Help learners identify the key words of each point (A-D) for this truth: A) justification, B) sanctification, C) comfort, D) Hope.

Invite learners to turn to Colossians 1 in their Bibles and read verses 15-20 to themselves. **Engage** adults in discussing how this passage applies to points A-D.

Challenge learners to look up the passages in Day Three this week and ponder this truth.

STEP 5 - In Heaven, Part 1

Say: *We now enter into the last consideration for the truth that Christ is all . . . in heaven.* **Invite** a volunteer to read Revelation 5:6-13. *Ask: How does this passage point to the fact that Christ is the focus of everyone and everything in heaven? What are some things we can do daily to keep*

the concept of heaven and our joining with Christ there on the front of our minds? How might regularly employing this outlook change our daily walk?

Begin an overview of the author's four conclusions, only the first of which is in Day Four (see 1) through 4), pp. 130-132, each beginning with "Is Christ all?".

STEP 6 - In Heaven, Part 2

Lead learners to summarize the "Is Christ all?" conclusions in Days Four and Five. [Answers might be something like this: 1) Is Christ all in my religion? 2) Is Christ all in my salvation? 3) Is Christ all in my faith? 4) Is Christ all in my daily walk?]

Point out that, after each of numbered conclusion come with a warning (explicit in the first three, implied in the fourth). **Stress** that responding to these conclusions honestly is of utmost importance.

Share any struggle you may have had with one of the conclusions and what brought you into agreement with that conclusion.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Say: *This wraps up our nine-week study from J. C. Ryle's book Holiness. What will you remember about this study? What insight or question has stood out to you most prominently?*

Read the last paragraph of Day Five commentary (p. 132), slowly and intentionally. Volunteer to meet with any participant wishing to learn more about following Christ or growing in holiness.

Close in prayer, recommitting yourself and the group to holiness that comes only from true and genuine faith in Christ.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: In the midst of the terrible truth of suffering, God has a message: He is God, trust Him.

Focus on this goal: To help adults trust God amid their suffering

Key Bible Passage: Isaiah 43:2-3a

Before the Session

Enlist three learners: one to share a testimony of trusting God amid suffering (Step 1); one to give a synopsis of the apostle Paul and his suffering (Step 4); and one to give a synopsis of the Job and his suffering (Step 5).

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

To introduce this session, **state** the fact that every person, at some point in life, experiences suffering. **Ask**, with a show of hands, if learners agree with that statement. **Allow** time for comments if possible.

State that when they suffer, Christians are called to trust God. **Draw attention** to the title of the study and **say** that the author will emphasize that simple yet profound truth throughout the study.

Invite the learner enlisted earlier to share his or her personal testimony about trusting God amid suffering.

STEP 2 - The Terrible Truth, Part 1

Explain that the author of this study knows a thing or two about suffering. Briefly **recount** that her first husband was murdered by the people he was serving as a missionary and her second husband died less than five years after their marriage (see the introduction, p. 136).

Read her statement (p. 138): “A good many things in this life we really can’t do anything *about*, but God wants us to do something *with*.” **Lead** learners in a brief discussion on the meaning of that statement.

State that one way we can learn what God wants us to do with our suffering is by meditating on Scripture. **Invite** learners to share their answers to Day One, activity 2 (pp. 138-139). **Record** the Scripture citations on the board.

STEP 3 - The Terrible Truth, Part 2

Ask: *What is suffering?* **Acknowledge** sometimes words are difficult to define; we just know we will know it when we see it. **Read** the author’s definition of suffering (Day Two Note, p. 139) and briefly **discuss** if learners think it is an adequate definition. **Invite** learners to share their own definitions of suffering (Day Two, activity 1, p. 139).

Acknowledge that sometimes, in the heat of a moment, we may think we are suffering, when, in fact, we are not. However, **state** that in our suffering, we can learn much about God.

Call on a volunteer to read Psalm 91:1-7. **Emphasize** that God is our refuge and fortress amid our suffering. **Engage** learners in a discussion of: (1) what it means for God to be our refuge and fortress, examining the meanings of those two words and possibly examining other translations of the words in different versions of the Bible; and (2) practical ways for God to be our refuge and fortress (Day Two, activity 2, p.140).

As time allows, **encourage** learners to share in small groups what they have learned about God through their suffering.

STEP 4 - The Terrible Truth, Part 3

Ask: *How is it possible for the person who is suffering to find peace when there is no answer to the question, Why?* **Acknowledge** that Why? is a normal question, and there is nothing wrong with it, but believers should not get stuck in the quagmire of Why?

Call on a volunteer to read Isaiah 43:2-3a. **State** that understanding God’s character helps believers to move beyond that initial question and thank God for who He is and for His presence in their suffering.

Invite the person enlisted earlier to review the suffering of the apostle Paul. **Point out** that there was no answer to the “Why?” question for him. **Invite** learners to share what today’s Christians can learn about suffering and keeping the faith from the apostle Paul (Day Three, activity 2, p. 142).

STEP 5 - The Message, Part 1

State that the Bible has page after page about individuals who have suffered. **Call on** the individual enlisted earlier to review the suffering of Job. **Point out** that God characterized Job as blameless. **Emphasize** that the fact that Job was blameless yet suffered greatly shatters the idea that good people do not suffer.

Invite learners to share biblical truths learned through Job's suffering (Day Four, activity 1, p. 144).

STEP 6 - The Message, Part 2

State that beyond the apostle Paul and Job, Jesus Christ our Savior is the ultimate picture of suffering in the Bible. **Guide** learners to consider why the symbol of suffering—the cross—is the central image in the Christian faith (Day Five, activity 1, p. 147).

Call on a volunteer to read John 16:33. **Lead** learners to identify Jesus Christ's encouragement in this verse. **Challenge** learners to memorize the verse in the coming week.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Close in prayer, asking God to help us trust Him amid our suffering.

After the Session

Compile Scriptures shared in Step 2 (p. 149) from Day One, activity 2. **(Type** the entire Scripture, not just the reference.) **Send** this Scripture list to all learners, **encouraging** them to participate in this four-week study.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Successfully negotiating suffering requires acceptance and gratitude.

Focus on this goal: To help adults accept their suffering and still have gratitude to God

Key Bible Passage: Psalm 50:23; 116:12

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

To introduce this session, **ask** learners to identify common responses to suffering, such as denial, anger, fear, discouragement, desire to flee and so forth. **State** that while those are normal responses, this lesson highlights that acceptance and gratitude are the Christian's path to successfully negotiating suffering.

STEP 2 - Acceptance, Part 1

Read the well-known quote from Reinhold Niebuhr: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." **Observe** that Niebuhr seems to echo the author's perspective that acceptance is essential to navigating suffering.

Ask: *What does it mean to accept suffering?* **Point out** that acceptance is not instant or automatic for the Christian, and it does not mean that the Christian cannot pray that the suffering be removed.

Call on a volunteer to read Luke 22:42 when Jesus willingly accepted the cup of suffering. **Stress** that one aspect of accepting suffering is acknowledging the unchangeable nature of God.

Invite learners to share their responses to Day One, activity 1 (p. 152), briefly discussing how acknowledging the eternal nature of God helps Christians accept suffering.

STEP 3 - Acceptance, Part 2

Explain that acceptance is more than mental acquiescence, and it is not giving in or giving up; it also involves action.

Call on a volunteer to read Isaiah 50:7 (p. 154). **Write** the words “confounded” and “ashamed” on the board, encircled with a slash mark through each word. **Challenge** learners to discuss how that Scripture teaches that God wants us to take the next step as we experience suffering.

Discuss what it means to “set my face like a flint” (Day Two, activity 1, p. 154).

Guide learners to describe what a “next thing” might look like.

STEP 4 - Gratitude, Part 1

Write the word *gratitude* on the board. **Organize** the class into two groups, **challenging** each group to find Scripture references related to gratitude. After a few minutes, **call on** each group to report its findings.

Write the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:18 on the board. **Call on** learners to repeat the words in unison. **Ask:** *What is the command in this verse?* **State** that there are no conditions or circumstances in which Christians are not to give thanks.

Admit that giving thanks in difficult circumstances goes against every human tendency, but giving thanks can become a part of how Christians respond even in tough times. **Lead** learners to identify practical steps to learning to give thanks (Day Three, activity 2, p. 157).

Back in the two groups, **ask** each group to write a prayer of thanksgiving, even amid suffering, and to share that prayer with the larger group.

STEP 5 - Gratitude, Part 2

Continue the discussion on gratitude by **stating** that it honors God. Briefly **discuss** how gratitude recognizes God for who He is.

State that the author scribbled down on a piece of paper four thoughts to dealing with suffering (p. 158) right before her husband was diagnosed with cancer. **Call on** learners to list those thoughts. **Brainstorm** scriptural references and practical steps in implementing those thoughts (Day Four, activity 1, p. 158). **Invite** learners to share how they have personally put any of those thoughts into action and how doing so helped them amid suffering.

Write these two statements on the board: *God is still God. God is still love.*
Lead learners to discuss how those two simple statements make all the difference when a person experiences suffering.

STEP 6 - Gratitude, Part 3

Ask learners if they know anyone who has “made a career” out of suffering. If needed, help adults understand that phrase (p. 160). **Lead** a discussion of why such an approach doesn’t honor God.

Engage learners in determining the difference between allowing suffering to describe a person compared to allowing suffering to define a person. **Ask** if description or definition is more God-honoring. **Call on** learners to read Psalm 50:23 and 116:17 and discuss how thanksgiving is a sacrifice when it comes to suffering.

State that the entire perspective of suffering can be transformed by Psalm 55:22. **Write** the Scripture (p. 161) on the board and lead learners to recite it in unison. **Erase** the word “burden” and replace it with the word “gift.” **Invite** learners to again read the statement in unison. **Emphasize** that the same Hebrew word means both “burden” and “gift.” **State** that in God’s hands, a burden can be a gift as we cling to the truth that God will sustain us.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Close in prayer, thanking God even in the midst of the burdens that we experience and **praying** that those burdens will draw us closer to Him.

After the Session

Personally **contact** learners who may be bearing heavy burdens. **Assure** them of your prayers and God’s faithfulness. **Seek** for ways you or others in the group might be able to help bear the burden.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Even one's suffering can be given to God as an offering.

Focus on this goal: To help adults begin to see their suffering as a sacrifice to offer to God

Key Bible Passage: Romans 12:1

Before the Session

Enlist a learner to share the Old Testament story of Joseph and how he endured great suffering yet still honored God. (Step 3)

Enlist another learner to share a testimony about coming to regard personal suffering as a gift to be offered to God in order to honor Him. (Step 7)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

To introduce this session, **invite** learners to share about one of the most special gifts they ever received and why it was special. Next, **guide** learners to identify some of God's gifts. **Ask:** *Is there any sense in which our suffering can be seen as gifts that can honor and glorify God?*

STEP 2 - A Gift to Be Offered

State that the first point the author makes about suffering is that it is a gift.

Call on a volunteer to read Romans 12:1. **Lead** a brief discussion of what it means to present our bodies as living sacrifices and how doing so involves every part of our bodies.

Ask learners to explain if they agree or disagree with the author’s statement (p. 166): “Everything in my life I begin to see as a gift, and I do mean everything.”

Invite learners to share how God has used their suffering for His glory (Day One, activity 2, p. 166).

STEP 3 - Everything Is a Gift

Ask learners what they do with a gift they receive but don’t want. **State** that as we experience the gift of suffering, it is not a gift we can return or regift to someone else.

Challenge learners to start their days with a prayer time of thanksgiving to God, even offering thanksgiving for the gifts of suffering that we did not want or choose. **Guide** learners to discuss how such a perspective can transform our understanding of how God is working in our lives.

Call on the learner enlisted earlier to share the story of Joseph. **Organize** the class into two groups and **direct** both to review lessons we can learn about suffering from Joseph (Day Two, activity 2, p. 168). After a brief time for discussion, **instruct** the groups to identify their top three lessons and share those with the entire gathering.

STEP 4 - Offering of Sacrifice, Part 1

State that the second point the author makes about suffering is that of sacrifice. **Explain** that although we cannot return or pass along the experience of suffering, we can offer it back to God and watch as He transforms our lives in ways that honor Him.

Observe that the entire Bible is predicated on the idea of sacrifice—from the Old Testament sacrificial system to the ultimate of God sacrificing His own Son. In the same two groups, **assign** one group the story of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17, pp. 169-170) and the other the story of the little boy with the loaves and fishes (John 6:1-14, p. 170). **Instruct** the groups to prepare to summarize their story for the entire class, being as creative as they desire (such as creating a role-play or song), then to highlight the biblical truth from that narrative (Day Three, activity 1, p. 170).

Lead learners to discuss how they can incorporate the biblical truth from these two accounts into their everyday lives.

STEP 5 - Offering of Sacrifice, Part 2

Ask learners to share, as they are comfortable doing so, some things they are facing that they don't think they can handle on their own. **Direct** learners to close their eyes in prayer, praying silently the prayers they wrote in Day Four, activity 1 (p. 172). **Close** the time with a prayer that God will take all of these difficulties and use them for His glory.

Read the statement from the missionary in chapel that the author recalled (p. 172). **Guide** learners to discuss how God can use the broken pieces of our lives for the sake of others.

STEP 6 - Offering of Obedience

State that the author's third point about suffering is that of obedience. **Call on** a volunteer to read Ezekiel 24:16-18. **State** that even as a broken-hearted man who had lost his wife, Ezekiel was obedient.

Read the author's statement (p. 174) that "there is no consolation like obedience." **Lead** in a discussion of how obedience can be an essential part of the healing process. **Acknowledge** that each of us struggles with obedience.

Invite learners to share how God reveals what "the next thing" is in their lives, and what their next thing is, even if this next thing seems inconsequential (Day Five, activity 1, pp. 174-175).

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Call on the person enlisted earlier to share his or her personal testimony about suffering.

Close in prayer.

After the Session

Send notes of encouragement to those who acknowledged they are facing circumstances they don't think they can handle. **Pray for** them during the week ahead.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: When we meet our suffering with acceptance, gratitude, and offering, it is transfigured into glory.

Focus on this goal: To help adults anticipate the transfiguration of their suffering into glory

Key Bible Passage: Isaiah 58:10-11

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

To introduce this session, **ask** learners if they want to be a victim or a victor. **Tell** a brief fictional story (or possibly a nonpolitical story from the news) about a person who experienced suffering and responded to the circumstances as a victim. Next, **tell** a brief story about someone you know (or possibly a story about a Christian whom you have read about) who experienced suffering and responded to the circumstances as a victor.

State that this lesson highlights how God can transfigure our suffering into glory.

STEP 2 - Transfiguration

Call on a volunteer to read Isaiah 58:10-11. **Hold up** a coin and **ask** learners to share how offering and transfiguration are two sides to the same coin of suffering.

Direct learners to share how they have seen the truth of Isaiah 58:10-11 lived out personally. **Guide** learners to discuss what factors can threaten to shake our faith when troubles come. **Invite** learners to share their experiences with overcoming shaky faith (Day One, activity 2, pp. 180-181).

STEP 3 - The Principle, Part 1

Write this equation on the board: *The principle of the cross = the principle of exchange.* **Say** that the author summarizes the principle of the cross is

the principle of exchange this way: from death to life, from sorrow to joy, from loss to gain. **Lead** a discussion of the meaning of this principle.

Enlist a volunteer to read John 12:24-28. **Invite** learners to share how these verses summarize the principle of the cross (Day Two, activity 2, p. 183).

STEP 4 - The Principle, Part 2

State that Jesus continually turned what was considered to be conventional wisdom upside down. **Ask** a volunteer to read Matthew 10:39 as one example of Jesus doing so. **Invite** learners to share their paraphrases of that Scripture (Day Three, activity 1, p. 183) and to share personal experiences of that truth as time allows.

Point out that this truth is reflected throughout Scripture in both the Old Testament and New Testament. **Call on** a volunteer to read 2 Chronicles 29:27. **Lead** learners to discuss how that Scripture expresses the same truth as Matthew 10:39. **Guide** learners to discuss how such symmetry in Scripture is vitally important for those who are suffering to understand.

STEP 5 - The Perspective

Explain that the Old Testament contains multiple stories of how God transfigured suffering into glory. **Invite** learners to name some of these Old Testament examples. If the group has difficulty, **have them search** the individuals identified in Hebrews 11. **Point out** that likewise, the New Testament has stories of God doing the same. **Invite** examples from the New Testament.

Organize the class into groups. **Instruct** the groups to have each group member name the one biblical character with whom they most identify and to highlight a biblical truth learned from that person of faith. After time for group discussion, **call on** groups to share their findings. **List** the biblical characters and biblical truths on the board.

Invite learners to describe Paul's perspective on suffering, based on Philippians 1:29-30 and Colossians 1:24 (Day Four, activity 2, p. 187) and how they can mirror that perspective.

Ask learners to describe how faith became a stronghold amid suffering throughout both the Old and New Testaments. **Lead** a discussion of how it is (or can be) a stronghold for believers today who are suffering.

STEP 6 - The Paradoxes

Call on a volunteer to read Luke 1:38. **Focus attention** on the last phrase of that verse.

Guide learners to think about Mary as one whose life was transfigured for God's glory. **Ask** learners to describe how Mary's life is a vivid example of Jesus's words in Matthew 10:39. **Invite** learners to share how Mary's example of obedience can inspire believers today to obey amid suffering (Day Five, activity 1, p. 188).

Mention the lyrics from a timeless hymn, "Trust and Obey," which state, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." **Challenge** learners to privately rate themselves, on a scale of 1 to 10, regarding to what degree their lives exemplify their trust and obedience in God.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Draw this study to a close by **repeating** the title of the book from which it is drawn, *Suffering Is Never for Nothing*. **Recount** some of the personal suffering the author shared in the book, **restating** her perspective that there are many things in life that we cannot do anything about, but that God wants us to do something with.

State that every person at some point will experience suffering. **Guide** learners in a group prayer, **acknowledging** that personal suffering can be an opportunity to bring glory to God.

After the Session

Continue to pray for learners who are suffering. **Pray** that their lives might honor God amid the suffering and that they might be drawn closer to Him.