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## **MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants**

Spring 2026

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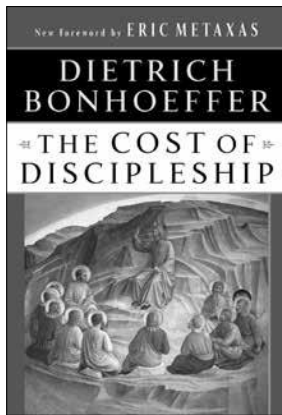
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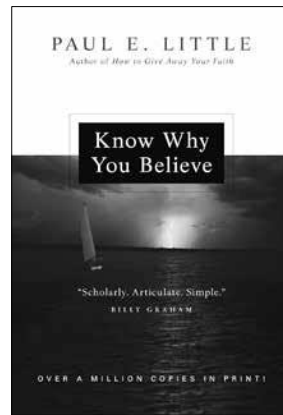
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# Books of Study

Further in-depth Bible studies by the authors presented this quarter in MasterWork® are available in their full-length books. To purchase your own copies to read and study, visit [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com). Or you can order a copy by calling 1.800.458.2772.



**The Cost of Discipleship**  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer



**Know Why You Believe**  
Paul E. Little

InterVarsity Press  
ISBN: 978-0-8308-3422-8

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# How to Use

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

## Group Members

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1. Read Day 1 through Day 5 prior to attending the group time . Complete the personal learning activities in bold type . Record your notes and questions .
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group .
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time .

## Group Leader

---

1. Complete step 1 above .
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the session . The main point of the session and the goal are printed on the leader guide pages at the end of each session . (See p. 18 .) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session .

**The main point of this session is:** God's grace through Jesus's sacrifice transforms our spiritual ruin into righteousness through faith.

**Focus on this goal:** Salvation is not earned by works but is a free gift available to all through faith in Christ.

**Key Bible Passage:** Romans 3:23-24

*Leader Guide*

- Read and study the key Bible passages listed at the top of the teaching plan.
- Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book.

- One option is to follow the leader guide at the end of each session.
- A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the session. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.

<p>written by forty authors over 1,600 years. Sixty-six books tell one seamless story about God who redeems us, and has a future for us. Let's explore the wonderful story of Scripture. The Bible is so successfully fitting in with Christians was</p>	<p><b>DISCUSS</b></p> <p>When might a visit to a library be overwhelming? When might it be exciting?</p>
--	--

*Discussion Questions*

- Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at [masterwork.lifeway.com](http://masterwork.lifeway.com) to fit your group.
- Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
- Arrive early, praying for the group time.

**Leader Guide**

**The main point of this session is:** God's grace through Jesus' sacrifice enables us to obtain our righteousness through faith.

**Focus on this goal:** Salvation is not earned by works but is a free gift available to all through faith in Christ.

**Key Bible Passage:** Romans 3:23-26

**Before the Session**

- You'll continue to use the large paper labeled "Grace" throughout the session. Today you'll look at it in Step 1 and add to it in Step 2.
- Bring an item from home that has been restored or refurbished. If the item is too large, take a photo and be ready to show that with your class. You'll do this in Step 1.
- Bring hymns to sing again, or new hymns to "writing" that the Blood of Jesus cleans by Step 2.

**During the Session**

**STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion**

Open class by checking members' attention to the restored item (or photo of an item) you brought to class.

Show how the work was accomplished, how long it took, and so on.

With eager attention paid out that the item itself did not do any of the work, claim that you (or your actions, about new work with the project) are 100% responsible for the transformation.

Place the large "Grace" poster you wrote on last week and briefly review what you discussed.

*Leader Guide*

The screenshot shows the MasterWork website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "HOME" and "ABOUT". Below that, the "MasterWork" logo is prominently displayed. The main content area features a grid of teaching plans categorized by season: Spring 2012, Summer 2012, Fall 2012, and Winter 2012. Each category has a small thumbnail image and a list of lesson titles. At the bottom, there's a "View all MasterWork" button.

*masterwork.lifeway.com*

*masterwork*

**Study Series: Seamless**  
Author: Hugh Smith

**Lesson Title: "The Beginning"** (pp. 6-19)  
Session 1  
September 4, 2012

**The main point of this lesson is:** God begins to reveal the question resolution of the plan from the opening of the Bible.

**Focus on this goal:** The Holy Spirit offers the empowerment of the beginning to work with God's plan.

**Key Bible Passages:** Genesis 1-13

**Before the Session**

1. Prayers 7:50 (Step 2)
2. Sabbath 7:50 (Step 2)

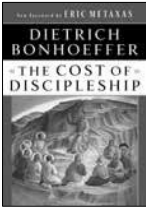
**During the Session**

**Step 1: Title**

Invite students to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. Ask: Is it possible to read the books or watch the movies in the order you wish? What "order" is the value of watching these in order?

Note reading or watching in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and a deeper understanding of the characters, and it helps us see how all the scenes fit together. **Theme:** That's how God's Kingdom works! We can know God best in His Kingdom.

*Customizable Teaching Plan*



# Cost of Discipleship

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** (1906–1945) was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian who helped lead the anti-Nazi Confessing Church. Author of *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, he championed “costly grace” and faithful Christian community. Involved in resistance efforts against Hitler, he was arrested in 1943 and executed at Flossenbürg concentration camp on April 9, 1945.

**Amy Summers** contributed learning activities, discussion prompts, and teaching plans for this study. She graduated from Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Revival of church life always brings in its train a richer understanding of the Scriptures. In the end, what we want to know is not what would this or that man or this or that Church have of us, but what Jesus Christ Himself wants of us.

When we go to church and listen to the sermon, what we want to hear is His Word and that not merely for selfish reasons, but for the sake of the many for whom the Church and her message are foreign. The real trouble is that the pure Word of Jesus has been overlaid with so much human ballast, burdensome rules and regulations, false hopes and consolations that it has become extremely difficult to make a genuine decision for Christ.

So many people come to church with a genuine desire to hear what we have to say, yet they are always going back home with the uncomfortable feeling that we are making it too difficult for them to come to Jesus.

But perhaps it would be just as well to ask ourselves whether we do not in fact often act as obstacles to Jesus and His Word. It is no use taking refuge in abstract discussion, or trying to make excuses, so let us get back to the Scriptures, to the Word and call of Jesus Christ Himself.

We propose to tell how Jesus calls us to be His disciples. When the Bible speaks of following Jesus, it is proclaiming a discipleship which will liberate mankind from all man-made dogmas, from every burden and oppression, from every anxiety and torture which afflicts the conscience.

Only the man who follows the command of Jesus single-mindedly and unresistingly lets His yoke rest upon him, finds His burden easy, and under its gentle pressure receives the power to persevere in the right way. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow Him, knows the journey’s end. Discipleship means joy.



# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Cheap grace avoids the need for discipleship; costly grace recognizes the cost to both Jesus and the recipient of grace .

**Focus on this goal:** Distinguish between cheap grace and costly grace .

**Key Bible Passage:** Matthew 16:25

## During the Session

---

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

---

**Ask** adults to consider recent purchases and identify something they bought that was cheap and something that was costly . **Ask:** *What do you think costs too much these days? What do you think is worth the cost and why?*

**Point out** this study's title is "The Cost of Discipleship ."

**State:** *Throughout this study we will see that discipleship is costly but is worth the cost. Today's session compels us to distinguish between cheap grace and costly grace and determine which grace we are living by.*

### STEP 2 - Cheap Grace

---

**Read** the first line of Day 1 . **Discuss** Day 1, activity 1 .

**Use** Day 1 remarks to examine what cheap grace teaches about forgiveness and justification, and to explore how Christians bestow cheap grace on themselves . **Evaluate** why cheap grace is a denial of the Word of God .

**Invite** a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:1-10 . **Consider** how some might interpret these verses to promote cheap grace .

**Consider** how the Day 1 statement, "*Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before*" is different from what Paul said about grace in Ephesians 2:1-10 .

**Invite** responses to Day 1, activity 2.

**Read** the last paragraph of Day 1. **State:** *In contrast to that cheap grace is costly grace that is described in Day 2.*

### **STEP 3 - Costly Grace**

---

**Invite** someone to read Matthew 11:28-30.

**Use** Jesus's words from those verses to **evaluate** why costly grace is costly and why it is grace.

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 1. **State:** *Peter could write those words with integrity because he paid the price and received the benefits of costly grace.*

**Request** adults identify from Mark 1:17 and John 21:22 the first and last words Jesus spoke to Peter.

**Invite** someone to read Matthew 16:13-16.

**Analyze** how Peter was arrested by grace in all three interactions with Christ.

**Consider** how that was costly grace rather than cheap grace Peter bestowed upon himself.

### **STEP 4 - Efforts to Restore Costly Grace**

---

**Guide** the group to consider why costly grace became cheapened as Christianity spread across the world.

**Explain** how the monastic movement was one effort to restore costly grace and how it evolved into a double standard of maximum and minimum standards of Christian obedience.

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 1.

**Use** Day 3 content to **relate** how God raised up Martin Luther to restore costly grace. **Explain** God's grace arrested Luther with the truth of Romans 1:17.

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 2.

**Explain** that Paul could write those revolutionary truths because they had arrested him as well.

**Invite** someone to read Philippians 3:8-14.

**Ask:** *What did grace cost Paul? Was it worth it to him? Explain.*

## STEP 5 - The Price of Costly Grace

---

**Explain** that Luther also paid the price of costly grace .

**Request** a volunteer read the first paragraph of Day 4 . **Discuss** Day 4, activity 1 .

**Explore** why it's a challenge to live costly grace in a world that demands cheap grace from the church . **Consider** why many professing Christians feel "prohibited from being different from the world for the sake of grace ."

**Guide** the group to describe the "Christian" lifestyle that results from a reliance on cheap grace .

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 2 .

## STEP 6 - The Poverty of Cheap Grace

---

**Read** the first paragraph of Day 5 .

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 1 .

**Note:** *Paul didn't say, "By the grace of God I am what I am so I see no need to change or pay the price for discipleship." Paul worked hard to follow Jesus, always recognizing it was God's grace that empowered him to work hard. It's worth it to pay the price of costly grace because cheap grace will impoverish us .*

**Relate** from Day 5 the author's description of how cheap grace had impoverished the church .

**Ask:** *How are these descriptions more chilling when we realize they were written in Germany in the 1930s?*

**Analyze** how cheap grace impoverishes individual believers .

**Invite** responses to Day 5, activity 2 .

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

---

**Ask:** *Why is it vital that we know how to distinguish between cheap grace and costly grace? How can we determine what kind of grace we're living by? What is our challenge and our hope if we realize we're bestowing cheap grace on ourselves?*

**Read** Matthew 16:25 and **urge** adults to keep those truths in mind this week as they follow Jesus by living in the world .

**Close in prayer.**



# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Only the one who believes is obedient; only the one who is obedient believes .

**Focus on this goal:** Recognize the call to salvation as part and parcel to the call to discipleship .

**Key Bible Passage:** Mark 2:14

## During the Session

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Ask:** *When you have a set of instructions, do you usually disregard those instructions, follow them loosely, or obey them step-by-step? How does that normally work out for you? (OPTION: **Display** a set of instructions, such as for putting together a piece of furniture.)*

**Note:** *Bonhoeffer says, "If we would follow Jesus we must take certain definite steps." This session examines the first step of discipleship and challenges us with a puzzling statement.*

**Read** the main point of this session statement. **State:** *Sometimes we must re-read instructions before they make sense. We may need to re-read and struggle with that statement several times. But if we're willing to pay that price, we will gain the reward of having a deeper understanding of the call to discipleship.*

### STEP 2 - Discipleship = Obedience

**State:** *The first step and interplay between belief and obedience is seen in Jesus's call to Levi (or Matthew).*

**Discuss** Day 1, activity 1 .

**Note:** *Scripture gives no details about a possible prior event that compelled Matthew to obey Jesus's call. That's because this isn't about Matthew, it's about Jesus's authority to demand obedience.*

**Ask:** *According to Mark 2:14, what is discipleship?* **Add** to the discussion with remarks from Day 1. **Discuss** Day 1, activity 2.

## STEP 3 - Would-Be Disciples

---

**Read** the first paragraph of Day Two.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Luke 5:29-32.

**Ask:** *How did Matthew demonstrate an exclusive attachment to Jesus? How did Christ's grace break the bonds of legalism? How did the Pharisees display an adherence to an abstract religion?*

**Use** Day 2 remarks to **describe** abstract Christology. **State:** *We can see examples of "discipleship without Jesus Christ" in three would-be disciples.*

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 1.

**Emphasize** the first would-be disciple reveals that Jesus takes the initiative in discipleship, not us. This man saw a crowd traveling the road with Jesus and wanted to join in with no idea of where that road led. The second man's response to Jesus's call seems reasonable, except that it's quite likely his father had not yet died. He was using his legal family obligation as an excuse to follow Jesus in his own timing. The third man wanted to follow Jesus on his own terms.

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 2. In all three instances Jesus indicated there is a cost to discipleship and following Him must take priority over everything.

## STEP 4 - The First Step, Part 1

---

**Request** someone read the first paragraph of Day 3.

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 1.

**Inquire:** *We might want to identify situations like addiction, crime, or immorality. But what about self-reliance, legalism, pride, fear? Why is discipleship impossible in those situations?*

**Ask:** *What was the first step Jesus commanded of Levi and Peter.*

**Ask:** *Could Levi have believed in God if he'd stayed in that tax collector booth? Or Peter if he'd stayed with his fishing career? Explain your reasoning.*

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 2.

## STEP 5 - The First Step, Part 2

---

**Point out** in Day 4 Bonhoeffer really delves into the seemingly contradictory statement, “Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.”

**Encourage** the group to draw on what has already been discussed in this session and the Day 4 remarks to try to explain what Bonhoeffer means by that statement.

**Invite** someone to read the Day 4 paragraph that begins, “Only the obedient believe ..”

**Invite** responses to Day 4, activity 1.

**Point out** nobody has the power to save themselves, but everyone has the capacity to take the first step of external obedience.

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 2.

**Draw** from the last paragraph of Day 4 to note steps people can take that exclude themselves from the place where faith is a possibility.

## STEP 6 - The First Step, Part 3

---

**Request** a volunteer read the first paragraph of Day 5.

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 1.

**Emphasize** that external works cannot save us, but we need to take those steps that put us in situations where faith is essential and possible. Those steps aren't something we come up with on our own, but rather in answer to Jesus's call.

**Refer** back to Matthew 14:28-29 and **ask:** *When did Peter step out of the boat and into a situation where faith was essential and possible?* [After Jesus commanded Peter to come to Him]

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

---

**Declare:** *First steps are important, whether in following instructions to put together a piece of furniture, or following Jesus into a life of discipleship. But we cannot stop at that first step, content to be saved without moving further into believing and paying the cost of discipleship.*

**Request** the group prayerfully consider Bonhoeffer's challenge as you **read** the last paragraph of Day 5.

**Close in prayer.**



# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** When Jesus calls a person, He calls that person to obedience .

**Focus on this goal:** Examine your life for anything that might be hindering your obedience .

**Key Bible Passage:** Matthew 19:16-22

## During the Session

---

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

---

**Ask** everyone to stand up . Then **request** everyone sit down .

**Ask:** *How difficult was it for you to do what I asked and why? Would you have obeyed if I'd told you to drop to the floor and do ten push-ups? Why?*

**State:** *Our level of obedience is often based on our perceived difficulty or rationality of the instructions. When we apply that to Christianity, we are bestowing on ourselves cheap grace.*

**Read** the main point of this session .

### STEP 2 - Only Those Who Believe Obey

---

**Explain:** *Dietrich Bonhoeffer left his career as a lecturer of Systematic Theology at Berlin University in 1933 when Hitler came to power. He pastored in London for two years and then returned to Germany in 1935 to lead an illegal Church Training College where young ministers were challenged to live entirely devoted to the Lord. So in Day 1 he addresses how pastors must emphasize that only those who obey can believe, and only those who believe can obey.*

**Read** from the second paragraph how Bonhoeffer says a pastor should respond to a person who complains they find it hard to believe, beginning with "You are disobedient."

**Invite** responses to Day 1, activity 2.

### STEP 3 - A Sincere Question

---

**State:** *We may feel that statement could cause people to turn away from Christ or become legalistically self-reliant. Bonhoeffer declared it can rescue people from their entanglement to sin by compelling them to make a decision about discipleship. That's what Jesus did with the rich young man.*

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 1 .

**Use** Day 2 remarks to **explore** what the man expected when he called Jesus "good teacher."

**Evaluate** how Jesus challenged the man's superficial view of goodness .

**Note:** *Another reason we may or may not obey instructions is based on our perceived authority of the one giving the instructions.*

**Determine** how Jesus was establishing His authority to tell the man what he must do to have eternal life .

**Request** a volunteer read the Day 2 paragraph that begins with "Jesus points away from Himself "

**Invite** responses to Day 2, activity 2 .

### STEP 4 - A Limiting Question

---

**Determine** how the man then asked a limiting question (Matt 19:18) and why he did so .

**Use** remarks in Day 3 to **add to** the discussion .

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 2 .

**Point out** Jesus quoted the commandments the man thought he could keep under his own power Jesus was not saying good works can earn eternal life but emphasizing how far the young man fell short of keeping the first two commandments about not having any gods except God and the last commandment about coveting .

**Explore** how "The young man is trapped once more "

### STEP 5 - An Arrogant Question

---

**Ask** a volunteer to read Matthew 19:20 .

**Ask:** *Do you think the man sounds arrogant or despairing? Explain your reasoning.*

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 1 .

**Evaluate** why it is essential to understand Jesus's command to this man flowed out of His love for him .

**Declare:** *This was not something Jesus wanted from this man, but for him. Giving away everything he owned wasn't going to save the man, but it would remove obstacles that were keeping him from following Jesus, which is what he must do to experience abundant, eternal life.*

**Invite** responses to Day 4, activity 2 .

**Use** the last four paragraphs of Day 4 to examine three points Bonhoeffer wanted readers to notice .

## **STEP 6 - An Insincere Question**

---

**Ask:** *Is saying "The answer to all your questions is Jesus" offering cheap grace or costly grace? Explain your reasoning.*

**State:** *It depends on the attitude behind the question. Are we wanting easy solutions to our problems or are we truly seeking to follow Jesus and willing to pay the cost of discipleship? Sadly, the young man was not.*

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 1 .

**State:** *This encounter challenges us to consider whether we will be dismayed and disobedient or joyfully grateful and obedient to Christ's call to follow Him.*

**Read** the Day 5 statement, *"The life of discipleship is not the hero worship we would pay to a good master, but obedience to the Son of God."*

## **STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session**

---

**State:** *Jesus knew what was keeping the man from following Him, and He knows what's keeping us. We can respectfully and humbly ask Jesus to reveal what's preventing us from following Him in complete obedience.*

**Urge** the group to prayerfully consider Day 5, activity 2 over the next few days .

**State:** *Questions such as "What is the most important thing in my life?" and "What is the hardest thing for me to turn over to God?" can be helpful as you ponder that activity.*

**Close in prayer.**



# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Christians often rationalize Jesus's words to mean something contrary to what He said .

**Focus on this goal:** Determine to understand correctly the clear and direct meaning of Jesus's words .

**Key Bible Passage:** Matthew 19:16-22

## Before the Session

---

Obtain a list of common tongue twisters such as found at "103 Funny and Interesting Tongue Twisters for Kids - ChildFun" on the Internet to add to the discussion in Step 1 .

## During the Session

---

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

---

**Challenge** adults to say "Red leather, yellow leather" three times fast.

**Invite** them to recall additional tongue twisters . **State:** *Tongue twisters are fun and they're good exercise to improve articulation. But we must not try to twist Jesus's commands and rationalize His words to mean something contrary to what He said. The cost of discipleship is single-minded obedience, understanding and following the clear and direct meaning of Jesus's call to us.*

### STEP 2 - Twisting Commands, Part 1

---

**Explain** this session is a continuation of the Session 3 study of Matthew 19:16-22 . **Invite** someone to read those verses .

**Inquire:** *In The Empire Strikes Back, Yoda tells Luke Skywalker, "Do or do not. There is no try." How is that similar to Jesus's call to this young man?*

**Emphasize:** *Jesus called this man, and Peter and Levi, to full commitment. Their choice was to obey or not obey, there was no in-between. Ask: Do you think it was any easier for them to obey then than it is for us now? Explain your reasoning.*

**Use** Day 1 remarks and activity 1 to determine formidable forces that many use to rationalize disobedience to Jesus's call.

**Encourage** the group to highlight in Day 1 and discuss this statement: *But the call of Jesus made short work of all these barriers, and created obedience. That call was the Word of God Himself, and all that it required was single-minded obedience.* **Discuss** Day 1, activity 2.

## STEP 3 - Twisting Commands, Part 2

---

**Read** Matthew 19:22 and the first sentence of Day 2. **Analyze** how this man's response was actually more positive than the response of many professing Christians.

**Declare:** *At least he was honest. He didn't try to twist Jesus's words to mean anything more than what Jesus clearly said. He didn't display single-minded obedience, but maybe there was still hope for him because he wasn't deluded by double-minded hypocrisy.*

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 1.

**Use** Day 2 remarks and activity 2 to explore how double-minded Christians try to rationalize Jesus's words.

## STEP 4 - Twisting Commands, Part 3

---

**Use** the first paragraph of Day 3 to explore Bonhoeffer's logic in declaring the absurdity of twisting Jesus's words.

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 1.

**Note:** *As we worked our way through Bonhoeffer's reasoning in Days 1 and 2, it might sound like he is advocating a legalistic interpretation of Jesus's call to this young man, demanding that all true disciples of Jesus literally give away everything we own, quit our jobs, and leave our families in order to follow Jesus in single-minded obedience. But we've got to struggle through his logic to its full conclusion. In Day 3 he introduced a paradox, which is a seemingly self-contradictory statement that with investigation may prove to be true. Guide* the group to investigate this paradoxical understanding by slowly reading and discussing the second paragraph of Day 3 which begins with "Are we to treat the commandment"

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 2.

**Analyze** how an eternal perspective influences our ability to display single-minded obedience .

**Ask:** *Why is interpreting the call of Jesus in a paradoxical way ultimately more difficult than in a straightforward literal way?* **Use** the last paragraph of Day 3 to **add to** that discussion .

## STEP 5 - Problem of Discipleship

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**Declare:** *A paradoxical understanding demands that we remain very careful that we not justify disobedience based on our simply human rational understanding of Jesus's words.*

**Invite** a volunteer to read the second paragraph of Day 4 (“The elimination of single-minded ..”).

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 1 .

**Explain** what Bonhoeffer meant by “an unevangelical interpretation of the Bible” and how that can result in legalism .

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 2 .

## STEP 6 - Final Interpretation

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**Note** that what Bonhoeffer called a paradoxical understanding challenges believers to interpret Scripture legally, but not legalistically .

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 1 .

**Ask:** *Why will we avoid a legalistic interpretation of Jesus's commands when we remember that “our aim is not to set up a law, but to proclaim Christ.”*

**Read** Matthew 19:23-26 **Ask:** *What must we remember about ourselves and about God if we are to follow Jesus with single-minded obedience, rather than twisting or rationalizing His words?*

**Invite** responses to Day 5, activity 2 .

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Ask:** *What was your biggest challenge and/or encouragement from this session's study? In what specific way can this group pray for you as you seek to understand Christ's call on your life and obey Him with single-minded obedience?*

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Discipleship means joining Jesus in His suffering .

**Focus on this goal:** Evaluate your willingness to join Jesus in His suffering .

**Key Bible Passage:** Mark 8:31-38

## During the Session

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Request** adults think about times they've heard or said something like, "You've GOT to do this! This is an absolute MUST!" **Consider** what we are normally referring to with these "must" statements.

**State:** *We may be referring to something we think a person must experience that may cost money, time, or energy but we're convinced it's worth the cost. This session examines the "must" of suffering.*

**Read** the main point of this session . **Declare:** *Our willingness to join Jesus in His suffering requires we be convinced it's worth the cost.*

### STEP 2 - The "Must" of Suffering

**Read** Mark 8:27-29.

**Declare:** *Peter immediately fell from this high point to one of his lowest points.* **Discuss** Day 1, activity 1 .

**Explain** Peter became a spokesman for Satan in trying to prevent Jesus from the divine "must" of suffering and rejection .

**Analyze** the distinction between suffering and rejection .

**Ask:** *What "things of men" was Peter concerned about? What "things of God" did Jesus say Peter needed to be thinking about?*

**Declare:** *Peter had to change his human-centered ideas about Jesus as Messiah before he could have the right idea about himself as a follower of Jesus.*

**Invite** someone to read the last paragraph of Day 1 . **State:** *Peter hadn't learned that lesson yet, but by the grace of God and power of the Spirit he would. He then taught that lesson in his letters.*

**Discuss** Day 1, activity 2 .

### STEP 3 - The Choice of the Cross

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**Evaluate** the significance of Jesus's first phrase in Mark 8:34 .

**Analyze** why "disciples must be left free to make their own choice before they are told of the law of discipleship ."

**Guide** the group to determine from Jesus's second phrase in Mark 8:34 the first law of discipleship .

**Use** Day 2 remarks and activity 1 to **analyze** what self-denial is and is not .

**Request** the group identify from the third phrase of Mark 8:34 another law of discipleship .

**Ask:** *Have you ever heard someone sigh, "This is just my cross to bear"? Is that what Jesus is talking about? Explain your reasoning.*

**Read** Mark 8:38 . **State:** *The cost of discipleship is suffering rejection due to confessing Christ courageously, not angrily or judgmentally, in this world. Again, we can see from Peter's writings that he learned this lesson well.*

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 2 .

**Read and discuss** the last paragraph of Day 2 .

### STEP 4 - The Death of Discipleship

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**Encourage** adults to underline from the first paragraph of Day 3: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die ."

**Declare:** *This is perhaps the most well-known quote from this book. Bonhoeffer wasn't just speaking theoretically; he lived out this truth literally. He could have remained safely out of Germany in the 1930s but chose to return and courageously resist Nazism. He was arrested by the Gestapo on April 5, 1943, and spent two years in prison and concentration camps until his execution on April 9, 1945, just days before the camp was liberated by Allied troops.*

**State:** *That might not be the cross Jesus calls us to bear, but He does call every disciple to take up their cross.* **Discuss** Day 3, activities 1 and 2.

**Request** a volunteer read Galatians 6:2. **Ask:** *What is one cross every follower of Jesus must bear? How can we bear the burden of another's sin? How is that a call to die daily?*

## STEP 5 - The Badge of Discipleship

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**Guide** the group to discuss the first sentence of Day 4.

**Examine** why Bonhoeffer declares suffering is the badge of true discipleship.

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 1.

**Ask:** *Why is the "must" of joining Jesus in His suffering absolutely worth the cost?*

**Invite** someone to read Matthew 26:39 and 42.

**Examine** how we learn from Jesus's prayer why He declared in Mark 8:31 that He "must" suffer."

**Evaluate** how Jesus's cross was His triumph over suffering.

**Ask:** *So is picking up our cross daily our triumph over suffering? Explain your reasoning.* **Use** the last paragraph of Day 4 to **add to** the discussion.

**Invite** responses to Day 4, activity 2.

## STEP 6 - Suffering that Is Not Suffering

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**State:** *When we recognize that suffering is overcome by suffering and becomes the way to communion with God, we choose to bear the world's sufferings and endure the cross Jesus calls us to take up daily.*

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 1.

**Read and discuss** the Day 5 paragraph that begins "In the same way His followers.."

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Note:** *This session challenges us to evaluate our willingness to join Jesus in His suffering and encourages us that doing so is worth the cost.*

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 2.

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** The call to discipleship means a break from the bonds with the world .

**Focus on this goal:** Surrender to Jesus, who calls you to break with the world and mediates between you and the world .

**Key Bible Passage:** Luke 14:26

## During the Session

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Ask:** *What's your favorite candy bar? What do some commercials declare eating their candy bar will do for us?* [OPTION: **Bring** a bag of fun-size candy bars and **offer** to participants .]

**State:** *Perhaps we prefer Snickers®, which promises it really satisfies. Or maybe we want to eat a KitKat® and demand, "Gimme a break!" Following Jesus doesn't mean we get to demand that others give us a break, rather the call to discipleship means we are to make a break from the bonds with the world.*

### STEP 2 - Alone Before Jesus

**Invite** a volunteer to read Luke 14:25-33 .

**State:** *Consider reasons people crowded around Jesus .*

**Point out** discipleship requires breaking with the crowd and getting alone with Jesus .

**Invite** responses to Day 1, activity 1 .

**State:** *Jesus makes some difficult statements in verse 26 that we'll examine further in this session. But the point Bonhoeffer was making in Day 1 is that Jesus calls each person to break from everything and stand alone before Him.*

**Examine** the statement “neither father nor mother, neither wife nor child, neither nationality nor tradition, can protect a man at the moment of his call .”

**Explain:** *Sanctification is progressive as disciples are continually transformed into the image of Christ, but Bonhoeffer declared that beginning the discipleship journey isn't a gradual growth out of the natural order. Following Jesus requires a clean break with all the ways we try to gain life.*

**Request** the group underline in the third paragraph: “By calling us He has cut us off from all immediacy with the things of this world . He wants to be the center, through Him alone all things shall come to pass.”

**Discuss** Day 1, activity 2 .

**Declare:** *If we want to follow Jesus, we must move everything else out of the center of our lives and let Christ alone be our Mediator .*

### STEP 3 - Breach with the World

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**Discuss** Day 2, activity 1 .

**Remark:** *It is essential to read Scripture passages in the context of the entire Bible. It's also important to read Bonhoeffer in his full context, working carefully through his logic to its conclusion .*

**Guide** the group to read and discuss the third paragraph of Day 2, beginning with “The call of Jesus teaches us ”

**Note:** *Bonhoeffer goes on to state that any group of people that claims immediate urgency or importance “must be hated for the sake of Christ.”*

**Ask:** *Why do we have problems with the word “hate” both from a human and biblical standpoint?*

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 2 .

**Declare:** *Think about how much you love your family and what you will sacrifice for them. Our love for Jesus should be so much more than that.*

### STEP 4 - God-Given Realities

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**Note:** *Reading other Scriptures helps us understand Jesus was not teaching us to hate, and also that Jesus is not anti-family. **Discuss** Day 3, activity 1 .*

**State:** *We see clearly from Scripture that we are to love and care for our families. But the best way we can love and care for our families is by loving Jesus more and relating to others through Christ as our Mediator.*

**Discuss** Day 3, activity 2.

**Ask:** *What might loving Jesus more than our family look like in the daily decisions we make about how we parent? Spend our time? Handle our finances?*

## **STEP 5 - External vs Hidden Breach**

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**Read** the first sentence of Day 4. **State:** *We can see from Abraham's life that God calls people to make external and hidden breaks with their old natural life.*

**Invite** someone to read Genesis 12:1,4. **Determine** what kind of break Abraham made.

**Request** a volunteer read Genesis 22:1-14. **Examine** how Abraham was called to make a hidden break.

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 1. **Read** the second paragraph of Day 4, beginning with, "By his willingness to sacrifice Isaac"

**Note:** *We want Abraham's reality of following Christ while enjoying life with his family and possessions, but we must understand that Abraham made external and hidden breaks with his natural life before this was granted to him. He had learned to relate to all his natural life through Jesus the Mediator.*

## **STEP 6 - He Who Divides, Unites**

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**Acknowledge:** *This is not easy. In Luke 14:28-33 Jesus warns the crowd to count the cost of becoming individuals who break with the world.*

**Declare:** *The cost of discipleship is great. But Jesus declares the reward of discipleship is even greater.* **Invite** a volunteer to read Mark 10:28-31.

**Invite** responses to Day 5, activity 1.

**Invite** someone to read the Day 5 paragraph that begins with "Here is a visible brotherhood "

## **STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session**

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**Ask:** *What might it look like in our daily lives for us to be "People of the Mediator"?*

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 2.

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** In the Beatitudes, Jesus described the blessedness of those who have followed Him into discipleship.

**Focus on this goal:** Commit to follow Jesus in discipleship that you, too, might be considered blessed.

**Key Bible Passage:** Matthew 5:1-12

## During the Session

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Guide** the group to consider ways the word “Bless” is used in society. (Bless you. Bless his/her heart. #Blessed.)

**Read** the main point of this session.

**State:** *If we're going to grasp the magnitude of what Christ promises all who pay the cost of discipleship to follow Him, we need to reclaim the meaning of the word blessed. We will do that in this session, and we will be encouraged to commit to follow Jesus in discipleship so we can be truly blessed.*

### STEP 2 - An Unanswered Question

**Explain** the Beatitudes are Jesus’s opening words in the Sermon on the Mount. **Discuss** Day 1, activity 1 to gain context for that sermon.

**Explain** this sermon describes what discipleship looks like living in the dual reality of the kingdom of heaven and this present world.

**Explore** the Day 1 statement, “Disciples and people belong together.”

**Discuss** Day 1, activity 2.

**Point out** the men Jesus warned in John 15 are the same disciples He called blessed.

**Say:** Beatitudes is from the Latin word *beatus* which means “blessed, happy.” However, this is not temporary happiness based on circumstances. The Greek word for blessed is *makarios* which refers to people who are fortunate and favored because they are in right relationship with God.

### STEP 3 - Poor and Mournful

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**Examine** what it means to be poor in spirit. **Consider** what the world might think about disciples who admit they can do nothing in their own strength but are completely dependent on God’s grace, mercy, and power.

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 1.

**Request** someone read Matthew 5:4. **Determine** ways those who belong to Jesus may mourn.

**Ask:** *What are reasons you mourn for this world? Why might mourning for this world cause the world to hate and reject us?* **Evaluate** how those who mourn for Christ’s sake are blessed.

**Discuss** Day 2, activity 2.

### STEP 4 - Meek, Hungry, and Thirsty

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**Ask** a volunteer to read Matthew 5:5.

**Ask:** *Is meekness a valued trait in our world? Explain your reasoning.*

**Explain:** *Meek does not mean weak; it means strength under control such as a bridled horse.* **Discuss** Day 3, activity 1, using remarks in the first paragraph of Day 3 to add to the discussion.

**Assert:** *Meek, gentle disciples don’t throw their weight around to further their own agenda, rather they surrender to God’s authority, trusting Him in circumstances that don’t make sense.*

**Note:** *Jesus’s Jewish audience would have understood “inherit the earth” to refer to Israel inhabiting the promised land of Canaan.*

**Analyze** what the blessing to “inherit the earth” may mean for all disciples of Jesus, again using remarks from the first paragraph.

**Invite** someone to read Matthew 5:6. **Inquire:** *What do people hunger and thirst for in this world? How do they try to satisfy those hungers? What’s the end result and why?*

**Examine** what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and how that hunger and thirst is satisfied.

**Invite** responses to Day 3, activity 2.

## **STEP 5 - Merciful, Pure, and Peacemaker**

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**Ask** a volunteer to read Matthew 5:7. **Discuss:** *Why is it difficult to be merciful in this world? How can we be merciful? Why is it a blessed thing to be merciful?*

**Request** someone read Matthew 5:8. **Ask** the group to describe someone who is pure in heart.

**Read** Psalm 51:10 and **ask:** *What is the only way we can have a pure heart?*

**Discuss** Day 4, activity 1.

**Read** Matthew 5:9. **Analyze** what it means to be a peacemaker. **Consider** why peacemakers receive the blessing of being called children of God.

**Invite** responses to Day 4, activity 2.

## **STEP 6 - Persecuted for Righteousness**

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**Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 5:10.

**Consider** what it might look like to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. **Analyze** why "these meek strangers are bound to provoke the world to insult, violence, and slander."

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 1.

**Remind** the group the overall theme of this sermon is the kingdom of heaven whose blessings far outweigh any persecutions disciples endure.

**Discuss** Day 5, activity 2.

**Point out** the reversal ushered in with the kingdom of heaven. **Say:** *There will be no more poverty, mourning, persecution, hungering, or thirsting. Because of our merciful, meek Savior we are made pure in heart and put at peace with God so that one day we will see His face.*

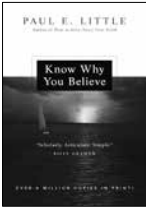
**Ask:** *What do you think you'll see when you come face to face with Jesus? Is there any greater blessing?*

## **STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session**

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**Ask:** *What has been most challenging to you over the course of this seven-week study? What has most impressed upon you the truth that the cost of discipleship is worth it?*

**Close in prayer.**



# Know Why You Believe

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

**Paul E. Little** and his wife, Marie, worked for twenty-five years with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Until his death in 1975, Little was also associate professor of evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He was the author of several books and articles, including *Know Why You Believe*.

**Leslie Hudson** contributed learning activities, discussion prompts, and teaching plans for this study. A member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, Tennessee, Hudson helps others find “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” in God’s Word.

After 2,000 years, no question is going to bring Christianity crashing. Paul fearfully approached the designated “Greek” house at the University of Kansas for a 6 p.m. dinner where he would give a fifteen-minute introductory talk followed by questions from the men.

As a new staff member with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, he was terrified. His fears were magnified because it was a scholarship hall—really brainy students. Further, it was a Jewish scholarship hall! He later described his prayer that day as he walked to the door of the fraternity house:

One young man had his life turned around that night by the “new” thought that God offered him a new life and the power to live it. That young man decided to become a Christian. Paul traveled from campus to campus, leading dorm and fraternity sessions and tirelessly spending hours talking one-on-one with students.

From hundreds of campuses on five continents he sought to capture the attention of the bored, the intellectual, the athletic. He used clipped questions to jog the thinking and help the listeners examine their present worldviews. He’d say, “Believing something doesn’t make it true; refusing to believe it doesn’t make it false.” “Many people who say they don’t believe the Bible have actually never read it.”

In twenty-five years of lecturing Paul found that regardless of the group there were twelve commonly asked questions. “They are predictable,” he said. “If we think through the answers to the common questions we hear, we’ll know the answers to the right ones. Right answers to the wrong questions aren’t of much help!” From his own study of the Bible and research of biblical scholars, he framed his answers. That’s how *Know Why You Believe* was born.

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** The Christian faith is reasonable and able to withstand scrutiny .

**Focus on this goal:** Help learners to examine their own faith and beliefs about Christianity .

**Key Bible Passage:** Matthew 22:37

## Before the Session

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1. **Write** the word *Reasonable* on the board before learners arrive . You'll use this prompt in Step 1 .
2. **Bring** three items you buy almost every time you go to the grocery store, as well as three index cards . You'll use those in Step 1 .

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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**Consider** the three items you buy almost every time you go to the grocery store; you probably know the exact price you pay . On the three index cards, **write** the exact price of each item, one per card .

To open class, **hold up** the three cards and describe the three items .

**Ask:** *Who in here would know the reasonable cost of each of these items?*

**Invite** the volunteer to match the price to the item .

**Say** something like this: *We might consider the price of an item to be reasonable, and we know immediately when it isn't. But is faith reasonable? Why or why not?*

**Give** a brief overview of our new book *Know Why You Believe* by Paul E. Little using the Introductory page .

## STEP 2 - Is Faith Reasonable?

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**Read** aloud the opening paragraph from Day 1 .

**Engage** learners in discussing the boy's answer by **asking**: *Have you ever believed in something that proved to be untrue?*

**Share** a time in your life when you may have doubted that faith in the God of the Bible was rational or reasonable .

**Read** aloud the paragraph that begins “We live in an increasingly sophisticated ...”, and **point out** the author's three thoughts about faith, bolded in the text .

**Ask**: *Before we get started then, would you say that our faith is reasonable? Why or why not?*

## STEP 3 - Objective Faith

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**Read** aloud the opening paragraph of Day 2 .

**Engage** your group in discussing their own objectivity to faith .

**Ask**: *How has gaining information strengthened your faith? How can you look back on your earliest steps of faith and see you misunderstood certain elements of the Christian faith?*

As a group, **consider** the element of “emotional quotient,” or E.Q , as it refers to faith; be prepared to **explain** that E.Q considers how well we recognize and understand emotions in ourselves and others .

**Point** to the numbered list in Day 2 and **ask**: *Have you ever been told any of these pluralistic statements? Where did you hear them and how did you respond?*

## STEP 4 - Rational Faith

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**Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 22:37 and Philippians 1:7 aloud .

**Engage** learners in considering how these verses invite us to use our brains—and our rational processes—to consider and even meditate on God .

**Share** a time in your life when you were given a warning or explanation but chose to ignore it; **include** also the repercussions of that decision .

**Read** Romans 2:8 and **explain** that the Christian faith is always equated with truth; because of that, we can rationally view God's Word .

**Invite** a volunteer to read Romans 1:19-20 and use the Day 3 content to engage learners in discussing how God's invisible qualities and eternal nature are evident in creation.

## STEP 5 - Moral Hindrance

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**Read** the final paragraph of Day 3 and the opening paragraph of the Day 4.

**Ask** for a show of hands of learners who have searched for answers to these questions.

**Explain** that sometimes we think we're seeking understanding to these questions when really we simply refuse to come to Christ.

**Use** the Day 4 content following the heading "Moral Smoke Screens" to guide learners in considering that many people don't come to Christ in faith simply because they don't want to come to Him in faith.

## STEP 6 - Doubt Isn't Fatal

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**Read** aloud the first subhead of Day 5: "*Doubt Strikes Terror.*"

**Read** aloud the second paragraph of Day 5, as well as the two items following it. If you've ever had a time when your doubt or questions have made others panicky or unsure how to answer, share that experience.

**Explain:** *We aren't called to believe without proof; faith invites us to bring our questions to God and walk through them in His truth.*

**Using** the Day 5 content, **assure** learners that most of their doubts and questions are common; many have asked them over and over.

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Invite** all learners to read the last two paragraphs of Day 5 silently.

**Ask:** *What do you expect from this book as we study it over the coming weeks?*

**Point out** the words "assured" and "rewarded" and "answers" in the last paragraph of Day 5. **Challenge** learners to consider and write down their own questions and doubts.

**Say:** *This study will guide you in finding confidence in God's Word and freedom to ask the hard questions.*

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** The foundation of the Christian faith resides in the resurrection of Jesus .

**Focus on this goal:** Help learners to identify the most convincing proof of Jesus's resurrection .

**Key Bible Passage:** 1 Corinthians 15:14

## Before the Session

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**Bring** some building materials to class: plastic interlocking blocks, building blocks, and so forth . Set them at the front of the classroom on a table .

**Invite** a volunteer to study Luke 24:13-49 before class, ready to share the details of the passage . The volunteer will share his or her findings in Step 5 .

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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As learners arrive, **invite** a few to quickly build a simple structure on the table .

**Open** by pointing out the fact that the building materials are simple and rather crude; even preschoolers can use them .

**Stress** that the most important part of the structure is not the blocks or the builder; it's the firm foundation: the table underneath .

**Explain** that, without that firm foundation, the structure collapses .

**Explain** that today's passage will carefully consider the foundation of the Christian faith: the resurrection of Jesus .

## STEP 2 - Strong Reasons for the Resurrection

---

**Invite** a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 15:14, **engaging** learners in considering the two sides of this passage: either Jesus did or did not rise from the grave.

**Read** aloud the three bulleted questions from Day 1, as well as the paragraph following them. **Ask:** *According to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:14, how important is it that Christ's bodily resurrection is the core of our beliefs?*

**Use** the three pieces of data (the existence of the church, the significance of Sunday in worship, and the New Testament) and **lead** the group to consider the permanence of these elements, which all began at the time of Christ's death and resurrection.

**Stress** that one element alone does not prove the resurrection of Christ, but many elements together will help you see it as concrete fact.

## STEP 3 - Accounting for the Empty Tomb, Part 1

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**Point out** that the empty tomb was one of the earliest sources of conspiracy theories about the resurrection of Christ.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 28:11-15 aloud. **Engage** learners in considering how this response of claiming the disciples stole the body seems to be a knee-jerk response and faulty reasoning; **use** the Day 2 content for support.

**Invite** volunteers to turn to Acts 4 and skim the passage as you **summarize** it verbally.

**Engage** learners in considering the bravery of Peter and John, the rage of the Jewish leaders, the conversion of the crowd, and the fervent prayers of the disciples as proof that Christ had risen from the dead using the Day 2 content as a resource.

## STEP 4 - Accounting for the Empty Tomb, Part 2

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**Read** Luke 23:55-56 aloud and **explain** the wrong tomb theory using Day 3 content.

**Ask:** *What valid and logical questions arise from this theory to deny the resurrection of Jesus?*

**Point** to the swoon theory, **explaining** that its basis is found in the idea that Jesus didn't actually die, but passed out. **Stress** that the swoon theory didn't even appear until the end of the eighteenth century.

**Use** the Day 3 content, as well as Luke 23:26-55, to **consider** all the wounds Christ had received, the blood lost, and the unhealable physical punishment He had suffered.

**Read** aloud the final sentence of the second to last paragraph of Day 3.

## STEP 5 - The Appearances of Christ

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**Invite** a volunteer to read the opening paragraph of Day 4 aloud.

**Invite** your pre-enlisted volunteer to give an overview of the two stories (the men on the road to Emmaus and Jesus appearing to His disciples), specifically focusing on the reaction of the people who were physically with Jesus.

**Ask:** *Did these people expect to see Jesus? Did they recognize Him? How did they respond?*

**Engage** learners in considering how these stories point to the legitimacy of Jesus's post-death appearances.

**Use** the Day 4 content to **consider** the hallucination theory, and **use** our author's explanation to **reveal** its lack of logic.

## STEP 6 - Persuaded Against Their Wills

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**Invite** your group to turn to Mark 16 and **enlist** a volunteer to read verses 1-11 aloud. **Ask:** *Were Mary and the disciples expecting Jesus? Were they hoping to see Jesus? How do you know?*

**Read** Luke 24:36-43 aloud and **ask:** *Were these disciples expecting to see Jesus? Were they easily convinced it was Jesus?* **Stress** that even the followers closest to Jesus had a hard time coming to grips with His resurrection.

**Help** learners understand that sometimes we must have endurance, patience, and compassion in sharing the gospel; even Jesus's closest friends struggled with this truth!

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Say:** *There's one more proof to the question, "Did Christ rise from the dead?" and we are that proof!*

**Read** aloud the paragraph near the end of Day 5 that begins, "Finally, there is evidence..." and Canon B. F. Westcott's quote in the next paragraph.

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** The Bible we have today gives overwhelming evidence of being reliably consistent with its initial form .

**Focus on this goal:** Help learners to have confidence in the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible .

**Key Bible Passage:** Luke 21:33

## Before the Session

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**Bring** something from home that's a knockoff of something expensive . You might have a handbag, watch, or piece of clothing, but also consider shampoo or even grocery items . You'll use this in Step 1 .

**Do a bit of research** on the Qumran community and their connection to the Dead Sea Scrolls . You'll share this in Step 3 .

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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**Take** the knockoff item you brought from home and **display** it at the front of the room .

**Open** class by admitting that it's not the "real thing," but **give** the reasons for why you are okay with that (price, decent quality, etc .). **Invite** a few volunteers to share a few "knockoff" items they use regularly .

**Ask:** *Are there certain times when only the real, authentic item will do?* (Consider money, historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, etc .)

**Explain** that today's session will help your group see that the Bible is no knockoff; it's the real thing and we can have confidence in it .

## STEP 2 - Before the Printing Press

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**Remind** the group that Day 1 focused on accuracy of the Bible's original texts before the printing press was invented.

**Invite** volunteers to consider some questions they may have about the reliability of the Bible, and highlight some of the questions asked in the first few paragraphs of Day 1.

**Use** the paragraph that begins "The work of 'scribes' or 'copyists' ...." to explain that the ancient work was held in high regard, a craft known for precision and accuracy.

**Explain** the Masoretic text and its reliability.

**Invite** a volunteer to read 2 Peter 1:20-21 aloud and **ask:** *How does this passage give us confidence?*

## STEP 3 - Old Testament Documents

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**Ask:** *Does anyone know who the Qumran people were?*

**Share** the research you found this week, as well as the Day 2 content, to **point to** the significance of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947.

**Read** aloud the quote about the Masoretic text and take a few minutes to praise the Lord for protecting His holy Word.

**Consider** as a group that the language in which God's Word was communicated had to change through time as the Hebrew people moved and their languages changed. With that background, **detail** the Septuagint, Syriac, and Samaritan versions of the Bible.

**Read** aloud the Laird Harris quote at the end of the Day 2 content.

**Read** Matthew 24:35 and **stress** how Jesus had confidence in the accuracy and staying power of God's Word; we can, too!

## STEP 4 - New Testament Documents

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**Explain** that the Day 3 content dealt with the documents that were the sources for what we call the New Testament.

**Say:** *There are two distinct reasons we can be confident in the text of the New Testament: the number of manuscripts and the timeline of its completion.*

**Use** the Day 3 content to **point out** that over 5000 manuscripts of varying sizes testify to the accuracy of the New Testament.

**Point out** that all of the New Testament was written in the seventy or so years after Christ's death and resurrection . **Read aloud** the last paragraph of Day 3 .

## STEP 5 - Additional Confirmation

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**Use** Day 4 content to **consider** the significance of lectionaries—reading lessons used in public services—as another source for comparing original texts for accuracy .

**Read** aloud the quote from Sir Frederic Kenyon found in Day 4 and **engage** learners in considering that we can and should find confidence in the thousands of years of scrutiny: God's Word is dependable .

**Invite** a volunteer to read Hebrews 4:12 aloud and **use** the Day 4 content to **explain** that Jesus and the Pharisees agreed on the make up of Scripture; they argued over tradition .

## STEP 6 - The New Testament Canon

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**Invite** a volunteer to read 2 Peter 3:14-16. **Note** that Peter was referring to Paul's letters as Scripture .

**Guide** your group through the three bulleted standards for the fixation of the New Testament canon found in Day 5 .

Just for fun, **walk through** each of the books of the New Testament and quiz one lucky volunteer on who authored the book .

Then **ask** your group: *Is there one specific verse that has changed your life, transformed your mind, or given you a new heart? Will you tell us that verse and how it impacted you?*

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Invite** a volunteer to read Luke 21:33 aloud . **Ask:** *Do you believe that heaven and earth will pass away? Do you believe that God's Word will never pass away?*

As a group, **consider** how the answers to these two questions will certainly shape our faith and our lives .

**Encourage** learners to continue to learn about the history of Scripture and study Scripture itself as a tool for personal sanctification .

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Archaeological research regularly verifies and never disproves the biblical record .

**Focus on this goal:** Help learners have confidence in the historical accuracy of the Bible .

**Key Bible Passage:** Proverbs 30:5-6

## Before the Session

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**Write out** the following definition on a board: *verb: to smelt, refine, test, melt a metal to make it pure in a fire and separate from dross; to prove, examine, purge, purify*

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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**Invite** a good-natured volunteer to the front of the class and **say:** *I'm going to need to verify your identity.*

**Explain** that you'll need to see a driver's license or some other form of photo identification, as well as two other items with their name on it (such as a library card or work ID).

**Ask** of the group: *Can anyone in here verify this person's full name, birth date, and address?*

**Explain** that we're accustomed to verifying our identity when flying, voting, or even applying for a loan.

**Remind** learners that this week's study focuses on verifying Scripture, seeing that the first manuscripts were accurate and factual.

## STEP 2 - Biblical History Confirmed

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**Invite** a volunteer to read Proverbs 30:5-6 aloud .

**Point** to the definition on the board and **say**: *Most Bibles say “Every word of God is pure” (Prov. 30:5), but this is the definition for that word that is translated “pure.”*

**Stress** that the original word points to God’s Word being tested and examined and proven pure .

**Use** the Day 1 content to **give** an overview of the archaeology done in the early years of the nineteenth century and how it affirmed much of the Bible’s important areas and events .

**Point to** the bulleted points in Day 1 and **engage** learners in considering how the discoveries have helped reveal the accuracy of the Bible’s people, places, and events .

## STEP 3 - 2000 BC: Abraham’s Time

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**Explain** that the excavations of the cities of Mari and Nuzi have revealed what life was like in the Middle East at the time of Abraham (approximately 2100 BC) .

**Use** the Day 2 content to **help** learners see an accurate view of life in the ancient world . **Read** the paragraph that begins “They dug out .....” aloud, engaging your group in considering the technology and culture of the day .

**Direct** attentions to the description of Nuzi, near the Tigris River, and point out how the family situations of adopting a son and later having a natural son, as well as the instruction of a barren woman to provide a slave girl to her husband, reveal that Abraham’s situation was a common struggle in that time .

## STEP 4 - Old Testament Verified

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**Invite** a volunteer to highlight the riches of Solomon as listed in 1 Kings 9–10 .

**Ask**: *Have you ever read this and thought it might be exaggerated?*

**Point out** that others felt Solomon’s riches had been exaggerated by scribes, but archaeology has shown that other rulers had similar wealth .

**Read** the Millard quote found in Day 3 and **stress** that this seems to be the mark of great wealth at the time of Solomon .

**Help** learners find the significance of the stone found at Dibon, which confirms the battle described in 2 Kings 3.

## STEP 5 - New Testament Verified

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**Point out** that New Testament archaeological research is primarily found in written documents, whereas the Old Testament finds are buildings or cultural items.

**Read aloud** the F. F. Bruce quote, as well as the paragraph following it, from the Day 4 content.

**State:** *The Greek used in the New Testament is not a formal language used by only the elite, but is a common form used by everyday citizens.*

**Compare** these two distinct writing forms by considering the difference in Shakespeare and Mark Twain; both are English literature, but they are contrast wildly.

## STEP 6 - Stone Inscriptions

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**Use** the Day 5 content to **point out** that stone inscriptions have helped to provide a timeline for reconstructing different elements of the New Testament.

**Give** an overview of the controversy over the phrase “Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene” in Luke 3:1, **pointing out** that it was regarded as a mistake for years but was defended by a record found later.

As a group, **consider** the three bulleted items found in Day 5, **pointing out** that these elements have also given us a framework for support of the New Testament.

**Read aloud** the quote found in the last paragraph of Day 5.

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Direct** learners’ attention back to Proverbs 30:5-6.

**Stress** that, though many portions of Scripture have been supported and even verified by archaeology, we can’t use physical proof alone to convince us that the Bible is the true Word of God. Rather, we must put our trust in God, believing that He has given us His Word, inspired by the Spirit, and that even if we can’t prove it, we can believe He is almighty, giving us a word that is accurate and proven.

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Science utilizes faith and reveals the complexity of God's creation .

**Focus on this goal:** Appreciate the care with which God has created people .

**Key Bible Passages:** Psalm 139:13-14; Jeremiah 1:5; John 8:32

## Before the Session

**Divide** a board in half with a vertical line .

**Label** the left side *Science* and the right side *Scripture* . You'll use this in Step 1 and Step 7 .

If you want to find the entire Watchmaker quote from William Paley, **search** "William Paley Watchmaker Quote Natural Theology" and **be prepared** to share it with the class . You'll use this in Step 4 .

## During the Session

### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, they will likely notice how you've labeled the board; that's great . As class begins, **say:** *You may have heard from teachers, professors, or scientists that this is how science and Scripture exist: as contrasting elements, contrary to one another.*

**Invite** a few volunteers to share briefly how they have been taught that science and Scripture are at odds with one another, but don't write them on the board .

**Ask:** *What do we know to be true about God that would make us believe that Scripture and science can actually agree? (God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and active in His creation.)*

**Open** with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to lead your group into deeper faith and better knowledge.

## STEP 2 - Source of Conflict

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**Read** aloud the first two paragraphs of Day 1. **Invite** volunteers to share a time when a science teacher in school or science article taught/claimed/argued for something contrary to Scripture.

**Point out** that both scientists and Bible defenders can take a stand that is not sound; we cannot malign only scientists for the conflict.

**Give** a brief overview of the assertion by Bishop James Ussher that dates the creation of the world to 4004 BC, even though that date is not found in the Bible.

**Ask:** *In this room, who would we consider to be an authority on music? On taxes? On business? On construction?* (Feel free to change these categories according to the makeup of your group.)

**Point out** that we need not accept as fact a scientist's statements on Scripture, as that is not his/her area of expertise.

## STEP 3 - Faith and Science

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**Summarize** the opening paragraphs of Day 2 by asserting that some people believe that a statement that cannot be proven in a laboratory is untrustworthy.

**Read** aloud the paragraph that begins "But there are ways and means .....", **adding** some of your own rock-solid truths that are not scientifically proven.

As a group, **walk through** the four bolded statements in Day 2 which are accepted by faith by scientists.

**Explain** that the scientific method began in the sixteenth century among Christians in order to understand God's intelligent and orderly world.

**Ask** your group: *How can we appreciate science and all we've learned without seeing it as the ultimate answer to all our questions?*

## STEP 4 - Both Sides Have Presuppositions

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**Explain** that there are two basic worldviews presented in Day 3: the Christian worldview and the agnostic (or atheist) worldview.

**Direct** learners to review the text, sharing aloud the things that Christians believe as a set filter for taking in information.

**Read** aloud the William Paley quote that describes the “watchmaker” analogy in the paragraph that begins “To illustrate this, ”

**Present** the agnostic (or atheist) worldview by reading the Richard Dawkins’ quote in the second-to-last paragraph of Day 3.

## **STEP 5 - The Black Box Opened**

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**Say:** *Let’s consider another scientist’s perspective on belief in a creator.*

**Use** the Day 4 commentary to **examine** Michael Behe’s explanation of the complexity of the retina; **read** the second paragraph verbatim if summarizing is too complex! Then **invite** a volunteer to summarize the idea of irreducible complexity and how nothing can be left out of human DNA, proteins, and RNA.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-14 **Invite** learners to tie these passages to the beauty of our irreducibly complex bodies .

## **STEP 6 - Check Out the Meaning of *Evolution***

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**Explain:** *We’ve all heard the term “evolution.” But we’ve got to understand that there are two different types of evolution; one fits into a biblical worldview and the other doesn’t.*

**Use** the Day 5 content to **help understand** that microevolution is a change or mutation within a species; this allows for new variations to arise but never allows for a species to change into a different one .

**Continue** by summarizing that macroevolution is a view that allows one species to become another .

**Consider** as a group how believers must become educated in these terms in order to understand and defend our faith .

## **STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session**

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**Direct** learners’ attention back to the diagram on the board.

**Review** that science need not contradict Scripture; rather, many elements of science can help us praise God for His order and understand His creation .

**Encourage** learners to become knowledgeable about science but to never hold scientific evidence as the highest standard .

**Close in prayer.**

# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** The findings of science increasingly align with Scripture .

**Focus on this goal:** Appreciate the ways in which science supports biblical accounts .

**Key Bible Passages:** Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17

## Before the Session

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**Bring** two items from home that are contrasting in many ways but also similar . Examples might be a carrot and a tomato; a book and an electronic tablet; a plate and a bowl . Almost anything works! You'll use those in Step 1 .

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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**Place** the two items you brought from home in a place where each learner can easily see them .

As learners arrive, **allow** them to notice the items and speculate why they are a focal point .

To open class, **ask:** *Let's consider these two items: In what ways are they different?*

**Help** learners verbally describe the contrasts between the two items . Then **ask:** *Now, how are they similar?* Again, **press** them to consider even small similarities .

**Say:** *So we can all agree that in some ways these items are different; and yet at the same time, there are definite similarities. Correct?*

**Explain** that the same relationship exists between science and Scripture; you'll continue that discussion today .

## STEP 2 - How Does God Fit In?

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**Group** learners into three different teams and assign one definition to each: theism, deism, and gradualism .

**Instruct** each team to consider Day 1 content as well as any other research they have done to define those terms and answer the question, *What does this term teach about the alignment of science and Scripture?*

**Read** aloud Genesis 1:1 and Colossians 1:16-17, **inviting** learners to point out how each of those passages explain the creation of the world and whether or not they believe those passages to be ultimate truth .

**Read** aloud the final paragraph of Day 1 .

## STEP 3 - Science and Scripture Moving Closer?

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**Enlist** volunteers to be prepared to read the following passages aloud: 2 Timothy 1:9; John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3; John 20:26-28; Deuteronomy 30:11-14; and Nehemiah 9:6 .

**Give** an overview of the news that broke in April 1992: the Cosmic Background Explorer satellite found confirmation that the entire physical universe “burst forth from a state of infinite or near infinite density, temperature, and pressure .”

**Invite** the enlisted volunteers to read their passages and, as a group, consider how each of those Scriptures align with this idea of a sudden and fully-formed creation theory .

**Use** the bold headings to stress the main points of the Bible’s explanation of creation, lining up with the findings of the CBOE satellite .

## STEP 4 - Humanity’s Origin

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**Invite** a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 and 1:27 aloud . Read the opening two paragraphs of Day 3 .

**Ask:** *Why did our author choose these two exact elements of creation to be nonnegotiable? What happens if we slacken in our adherence to these two statements?*

**Invite** a volunteer to slowly and carefully read the Francis Schaeffer quote in paragraph that begins “Francis Schaeffer states ” **Engage** learners in discussing the poignancy of this question .

**Briefly summarize** the paragraphs from Day 3 that consider the age of the earth, but be forewarned that this topic could easily become a debate or an argument.

**Stress** that the Bible does not directly address the age of the earth.

## STEP 5 - A Constantly Moving Train, Part 1

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**Use** the opening paragraph of Day 4 to **explain** that “science is a train that is constantly moving,” meaning that scientific theories and popular explanations change over time.

**Stress** that this is in conflict with the Bible, which is 2000–4000 years old (depending upon the book) and is essentially unchanged in its content (see Session 10).

**Explain** that the majority of Day 4 contains a long quote from G. A. Kerkut, an evolutionist, writing about students at Cambridge. Either **read** the story aloud from the text or **summarize** it.

## STEP 6 - A Constantly Moving Train, Part 2

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**Explain** that the G. A. Kerkut story continues in Day 5 and **continue** reading (or summarizing) it.

As a group, **consider** the seven basic assumptions of evolution, **pointing out** that most people identify it by only the last one. Be sure to **invite** learners to share the definitions they wrote for Day 5, activity 1.

**Invite** a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “J. P. Moreland says ....” as well as the next paragraph.

**Stress** that the Bible clearly reveals God is Creator and still actively involved with His creation; though we don’t have all the answers to all the questions, much of science can strengthen our faith.

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Ask:** *Have you ever found yourself feeling hostile or bitter toward someone who doesn’t believe the Bible is truth about the world?*

**Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 5:43–48 aloud and **engage** the group in considering that the science/Scripture debate is not meant to turn us against others, but to draw them in to a discussion about God.

**Close in prayer.**



# Leader Guide

**The main point of this session is:** Contrary to popular opinion, we do not “all worship the same God.”

**Focus on this goal:** Trust in the unique saving power of Jesus Christ alone.

**Key Bible Passages:** John 1:18; 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12

## Before the Session

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1. **Write** the following on the board: *All religions ultimately worship the same God.* You'll use this prompt in Step 1.
2. **Consider** something you sincerely believed as a child that was utterly wrong. (Such as: The moon is made of cheese. Monsters are under my bed. Hamburger is made of ground worms.) You'll share this in Step 3.
3. **Enlist** three studious class members to prepare to give a brief overview about Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. They will share their findings in Step 5.

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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As learners arrive, **direct** their attention to the statement on the board.

**Ask:** *Have you ever heard anyone say this? What do most people mean when they say it?*

As a group, **consider** how many people believe that all religions have certain beliefs about the same God; they simply differ in details, semantics, and other specifics. If you or anyone in your group has a close relationship with a non-Christian religion, briefly share if it makes sense that the god of that religion could ever be the God of the Bible.

**Open** with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to fill you with wisdom and knowledge as you trust God's Word .

## STEP 2 - Is Christianity Unique?

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**Read** aloud the opening three paragraphs of Day 1, **explaining** that today's final consideration of our book will help us to explain the answer to this debate .

**Invite** volunteers to read Acts 4:12; John 1:18; and John 14:6 aloud .

**Say:** *As we can see here, Christianity is not inclusive; there is no way a Christian would agree that our God is permissive to other religions because no other world religions see Jesus as the only Savior.*

**Use** Day 1 to **stress** that Christians are not inclusive; God and His Word are not negotiable, and we are upholding the truth God has given us .

## STEP 3 - What Is Enough?

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**Share** with the group a belief you sincerely held as a child that was completely wrong .

**Point to** the overarching truth of Day 2: *Sincerely believing something does not make it true, just as failing to believe truth does not make it false.*

As a group, **consider** the Ravi Zacharias insight, that there is an either/or principle in comparing world religions; not a both/and principle .

**Mention** a few of the contradictory teachings among world religions (creation, Jesus, eternity) and **point out** that, though some religions have overlap in some teachings or ritual, the essential elements cannot be combined or corroborated .

**Read** aloud the "Is the Golden Rule Enough?" paragraphs, **stressing** that Jesus is the dividing line even in a teaching that is essentially the same between two religions .

## STEP 4 - Basic Christianity

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**Read** aloud the three seminal characteristics of God, according to the authors of the book *Becoming a Contagious Christian*: "God is loving . God is holy . God is just ."

As a group, **consider** the four bolded John 3:16 phrases as they appear in Day 3: **work through** each phrase and **invite** learners to add their own insights or thoughts as they've pondered the verse anew this week .

**Draw** the staggering degree of God's love back to the Golden Rule and God's offer to help us obey Him when we have saving faith in Jesus .

## STEP 5 - Three Major Religions

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**Explain** that the most prominent world religions, based on world population, are Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam .

**Invite** the three volunteers you enlisted before class to give a brief overview of the religions they researched, highlighting what they discovered about how that religion views Jesus .

**Challenge** learners to find those elements in each religion that sound like something similar to a teaching in Christianity; as a group, **consider** how it is different .

**Read** aloud the last two paragraphs of Day 4 and **encourage** believers to celebrate their confidence in Jesus .

## STEP 6 - Concept of God

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**Look** at a good-natured member of your group and **ask**: *Can you define the word God for me?* After he/she has given an answer, **repeat** the request of a few more members . Then **read** aloud the opening paragraph of Day 5 and **briefly give** an overview of how Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims define God according to their belief systems .

**Point out** that even Jews hold a different view of God than Christians, simply because they don't believe that He is the Son of God .

**Invite** a volunteer to read John 8:42-47 to reveal Jesus's words about God to fellow Jews .

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

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**Ask**: *If we had to name the one thing that separates Christianity from all other religions, what is it?* [The answer is Jesus . Other religions believe in higher powers and even obedience to laws, but only Jesus came down to save His people .]

**Close** today's session and this book study with a time of worship by singing, "How Great is Our God" to close class .

**Close in prayer.**