



THE **BASICS**

A Bible study for small groups

Leader's Guides

Compiled by Carlyle Aguren

A note from Carlyle:

The majority of this curriculum is a compilation of Scripture and commentary I have pieced together, not originally written. I'm indebted to the sources I've pulled from listed below:

<i>30 Days to Understanding The Bible</i> by Max Anders	The Bible (NIV, NLT, ESV, NASB, MSG, PHILLIPS, TLB)
<i>And Jesus Said "... Remember Me"</i> by Ty Saltzgiver	<i>The Blue Book</i> by Jim Branch
Bible Study Fellowship	<i>The Case for Christ</i> by Lee Strobel
<i>Discovery</i> by Will Wyatt	<i>The Emotionally Healthy Church</i> by Peter Scazzero
<i>Emotionally Healthy Spirituality</i> by Peter Scazzero	<i>The Jesus Storybook Bible</i> by Sally Lloyd Jones
<i>Galatians for You</i> by Tim Keller	<i>The Ology</i> by Marty Machowski
GotQuestions.org	<i>The Ragamuffin Gospel</i> by Brennan Manning
<i>John: A Commentary</i> by Dale Bruner	<i>The Reason for God</i> by Tim Keller
<i>My First 30 Quiet Times</i> by Ty Saltzgiver	
<i>Reflections for Ragamuffins</i> by Brennan Manning	Miscellaneous publications from other trusted sources.

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THE BASICS

An Introduction for Leaders

This curriculum was started as a project to create a year-round, weekly version of the Bible study *Discovery* by Will Wyatt. As more topics and dozens of other Christian sources were added, the curriculum became a catechism of sorts, offering basic Christian truth in the form of questions and answers.

Who is this curriculum for?

This curriculum is designed for both new believers and seasoned believers. However, some of the material can be dense so it requires a level of patience and focus. If done with college students, it may work best with upperclassmen, meeting September through April. The topics are simple enough for new believers to come to a deep, intimate, biblical understanding of God and humanity, and for seasoned believers to continue to be pierced deeply by God's word.

Who should lead this material?

The curriculum is designed to give the leader ample creativity and freedom. Therefore, it's preferred that the leader is a mature Christian, able to teach, and capable of facilitating rich discussion.

Thoughts on leading well:

Each week will have a leader's guide to help you prepare and lead. You will have full creative liberty to lead the group how you see fit, as long as your leadership and content remain biblically-based. The leader's guides are simply a helpful suggestion.

Each handout has a main point, introduction, contents and discussion questions at the beginning. Briefly review these before beginning.

The curriculum is designed for each meeting to last between one and two hours. However, you are free to adjust the meeting to be as short or long as is healthy for your group. The outlines are for each member of the small group to receive a copy of at the meeting (You can print the outlines inexpensively at a nearby office supply store. Give out only the current week's handout per week to keep people from skipping ahead).

The primary Bible translation used is the New Living Translation (NLT), a thought-for-thought translation. The NLT does very well communicating the meaning of the original text where some word-for-word translations can be difficult to understand. In the portions of the curriculum where we look at specific word meanings we'll use the ESV, a word-for-word translation.

Week by week the curriculum will become a bit more dense with more scripture, questions, and commentary; that is by design. Hopefully, as time progresses, your group will develop chemistry and enjoy spending more time discussing things together.

It's recommended that members get a folder or binder to collect the outlines from each week.

Each leader's guide will look similar to this. On this example you'll read simple explanations for the framework of the night. It's recommended to print and bind this entire document to make preparation and access to content simple.

EXAMPLE LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: This portion of the leader's guide will have a one or two sentence main point for the meeting. This main point will be your anchor as you prepare to lead.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	<p><i>(Recommended length: 10-15 mins.)</i></p> <p>This is where you'll greet and talk to everyone, possibly with food ready and music in the background. Arrival is important to do well so people feel safe and comfortable.</p>
Introductions	<p><i>(Recommended length: 10-15 mins.)</i></p> <p>People will introduce themselves and answer a get-to-know-you question. If people can feel known and have a chance to speak about themselves, they're much more likely to engage throughout the night.</p>
Invitation	<p><i>(Recommended length: 2-3 mins.)</i></p> <p>This is where the leader will officially welcome everyone and read some Scripture. Continuity is key here because the invitation will prepare the group to engage well for the remainder of the night.</p>
Life Story	<p><i>(Recommended length: 5-7 mins.)</i></p> <p>A five-minute life story will build unity well in a group. Do your best to keep it at five minutes or less and let the group know before the story starts that they'll have a chance to ask the person five questions. Encourage everyone to be as open as they're comfortable being.</p>
Review	<p><i>(Recommended length: 3-5 mins.)</i></p> <p>You'll review with the group a few points and questions from the previous week. Reviewing will remind people of important truth as well as prepare the way for the current week's lesson.</p>
Lesson	<p><i>(Recommended length: 30-60 mins.)</i></p> <p>This section is the main part of the meeting and the leader's guide will have important points to hit. There's no perfect way to lead your group throughout the handout. Simply prepare well, pray, and lead as you see fit according to your own abilities and the group dynamics.</p>
Illustration	<p><i>(Recommended length: 3-5 mins.)</i></p> <p>Ending the evening with an illustration helps tie together and solidify the lesson. Examples will be provided, and feel free to be creative in choosing songs to sing or listen to, videos to watch, short articles to read, etc. If there are multiple illustrations you'd like to use, you're free to use one in the lesson also. <i>(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).</i></p>

Elements of a Great Small Group

Leave The Heavy Lifting to God

Remember that God is the one who teaches and interprets his Word in the hearts of others.

After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. - 1 Corinthians 3:5-6 (NLT)

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. - 2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NLT)

Engage People as Whole People

As Christian leaders it is important to know that people are more than just spiritual beings. God made us whole people in his image, which includes physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. When the small group meets let's work hard to engage our friends physically through food and drink, mentally by diligently studying Scripture, emotionally through sharing about our lives and connecting deeply to Scripture, socially by building authentic friendships with one another, and spiritually by keeping Christ at the center of the group.

Lead well by listening well. Practice being intensely present with the group by practicing eye contact and encouraging active listening among everyone in the group. By listening well you encourage people to come out of hiding and be themselves. Be a model to your group by being vulnerable yourself.

Arrange the group in a tight-fitting circle. This will give everyone the ability to give eye contact to whomever is talking as well as feel close to the rest of the group. Give all members opportunities to speak, read Scripture, and engage well.

Prepare Well

Thorough preparation will be well worth your time. Consider your time preparing for small group as a time to commune deeply with God, allowing him to give you a more full understanding of the topic that week. Try praying through the Scripture in the outline, letting it sink into your heart. Try going on a prayer walk with the outline in hand, praying through the Scripture and each section of the outline.

Go through one chapter per week with the group. Because the topics build on one another try to progressively study the curriculum in the suggested order rather than isolating certain weeks. Print an outline for each member and a leader's guide and an outline for yourself.

The study is designed so that there is no prep work done beforehand for the members. Think of it as a launch pad for members to study on their own rather than a landing strip after already studying it themselves beforehand. It is encouraged that members review and meditate on the material for the days afterward for their own spiritual well-being.

A simple question to ask before the reading of a piece of Scripture is, "Look for a word, phrase, or idea that stands out to you," then ask people to share.

If someone asks a difficult question don't be afraid of saying, "I don't know."

Example Get-To-Know-You Questions for Small Group

Light Questions

What is one high and one low from your past week?

What is a hobby you have?

Tell us a nickname you've had and how you got it.

Describe your dream date.

What's your favorite place in your town?

If you could travel anywhere in the world for a week, where would you go and why?

What's a weird talent you have?

What's one of your life goals?

What's one of the best gifts you've ever received?

Who has been one of the most influential people in your life?

What's one of the best gifts you've ever given?

What is one of the most embarrassing moments of your life?

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

If you had one song to sing at karaoke what would it be?

If you got a tattoo, what would it be, where, and why?

What is one of your favorite jokes?

When you were a child, what was one of your favorite holiday traditions and why?

Moderate Questions

If you had to live this past week over again, would you change anything? If so, what?

What is one way one of your parents has sacrificed for you?

Finish this sentence: "If you lived in my house for a week, you might be surprised by..."

Finish this sentence: "I wish God would..."

What are 3-5 words your parents would use to describe you?

What are 3-5 words your friends would use to describe you?

What's a question you've never been asked but wish someone would ask you?

When have you made your mom or dad proud?

What is the last thing you prayed for?

What question would you ask everyone here that would help us go deeper with God and one another?

Tell us about an adult (teacher, coach, etc.) who has influenced your life and how so.

What's a difficult situation you've been through?

Deeper Questions

What's a regret you have?

When is the last time you cried and why?

When is the last time you apologized to someone and why?

What is an important conversation that has shaped your life?

What makes it hard for you to follow Jesus?

What is your relationship with your dad like?

What is a moment you'd rather forget?

What's your most significant accomplishment?

What's a movie or song that's touched you deeply?

How do you comfort yourself when things go bad or get difficult?

Describe each member of your family with one adjective.

Describe your parents' and/or grandparents' marriage(s).

How was conflict handled in your family?

How did your family do in talking about feelings?

Were there any family secrets?

What was considered "success" in your family?

Were there any heroes in the family? "Losers"? Scapegoats?

What kinds of addictions, if any, existed in your family?

Were there traumatic losses in your family, like a sudden death, long illness, miscarriage, bankruptcy, or divorce?

Have ideas for good questions? Write your own down.



THE BASICS

Week 1

Introduction to Small Group

Why do we do small group? How?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Jesus gathered diverse groups of people and shared his life with them. The Bible teaches us not to give up meeting together and to encourage and help each other in our faith.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start with you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is a hobby you have? Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	For this first meeting either share your own life story or ask another one of the leaders to share theirs. Model the standard for length (<i>five minutes</i>) and healthy vulnerability. Then tell the group that everyone will get a chance to do the same at some point. Ask the group to ask you five questions about your life.
Review	N/A
Lesson	Start with the discussion questions found on the handout. Pair everyone up and have them fill out the questionnaire on one another. After 5-10 minutes have pairs briefly introduce one another to the group. Go over the given Scripture and discuss the related questions. Encourage the group to be honest, comfortable, funny, and free in their discussion.

Give everyone the Table of Contents handout that outlines the year and briefly explain what topics the group will be covering

Emphasize that this group will focus primarily on one's identity as a Christian more than one's behavior as a Christian. Behavior will certainly be discussed but it will be outweighed by God's identity (who he says he is) and our identity (who God says we are).

Because this is the first meeting, some of the goals are comfort in the small group atmosphere, unity and freedom among everyone, and clarity in what direction the small group is headed. By the end of the night the group should be more comfortable with each other than they were when they arrived.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. Preferably one that will give vision to the group about the direction for the rest of the year. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 2

God Made You

Am I significant to God? Am I loved? If so, how much?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: We live in a society that awards significance based on what we have or do. But God chose to create us, knows everything about us, and loves us because of who he is, not because of anything we've done. Knowing how valuable we are to God helps us know him more deeply.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is something you've never done?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. What kind of people did Jesus spend time with?
2. Who does The Bible (Hebrews 10:24-25) say about consistency?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Take 10 minutes to read and process the scriptures and write answers to the self-reflection questions. After that, slowly work through each stanza of Psalm 139 and the other scriptures and discuss what people wrote. Beforehand, thoroughly read the scriptures yourself and write thoughtful questions.

Consider reading the passage on Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3. After Jesus is baptized God says "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." One reason why this is significant is that this takes place before Jesus' public ministry starts. Matthew doesn't give us any reason to believe Jesus had done any miracles or any notable ministry work before this. God says he loves his son dearly simply because Jesus is his son. How silly is it for us to ever think that our relationship with God starts with what we do for him? It is always based on what God does for us. The work we do with him is an obedient response to what he's already done.

Consider reading the passage on Jesus and the adulterous woman from John 8. Most people are attracted to qualities in a person that they like and make them feel good. The adulterous woman in John 8 did nothing for Jesus - nothing at all. This story has nothing to do with what this woman does for God. It has everything to do with how Jesus shows this woman how much he loves her. Jesus loves bad people who may not think they're lovable.

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 3

Sovereignty of God

Is God really in control of everything? What does the word "sovereign" mean? How powerful is God?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: God is sovereign, meaning he is bigger than anything, knows everything, and is everywhere all the time. He is alone in his power, wisdom, and freedom. Knowing God is sovereign and good should give us confidence that we can trust him with everything.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is the best gift you've ever given someone? Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Which is more true: What God says about himself or what we think he is like?2. Which is more true: What God says about us or what we feel about ourselves?3. What is one thing we've studied the past few weeks that's been meaningful to you? Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Creatively discuss as much of the Scripture and notes as you can. When reading through Scripture a simple question to ask is "What is a word, phrase, or idea that stands out to you?"

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 4

An Overview of The Gospel

What is the gospel of Jesus? What does it have to do with me now? How do I describe it simply? Is the gospel more intellectual or emotional?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Here is a way to order the gospel: Creation, Sin, Jesus, Life. Jesus became who we were so that we could be in his family forever.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: Who is one of your heroes? Why?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. What does the word "sovereign" mean?
2. What was significant to you personally about God's sovereignty?
3. How would believing in God's sovereignty change your attitude?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Consider watching *Falling Plates*, a video available online produced by the ministry Cru in 2012.

Have you, as the leader of the small group, had an experience with someone where your clear understanding of the gospel was important? Has anyone ever asked you why you believe in God, or to tell them the story of God from the beginning?

Emphasize this point: The gospel is equal parts intellectual and emotional. For example, it is necessary for us to intellectually understand the transaction that occurred with Jesus' death and resurrection. Our emotions are engaged when we realize that he died for us because he dearly loves us.

Go through each of the four parts (Creation, Sin, Jesus, Life) and make your own notes, stories, and questions to add throughout the outline to promote discussion.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. (*Examples provided in Example Illustrations section*).

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 5

The Incarnation

What is significant about God coming to our world as a person? What does God's immense descent have to do with me?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Jesus came into our world and became a person. The better we understand how important this is, the better we understand how much God loves us.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is a story that your friends or family tell about you often? Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	1. The order of the gospel is that God loves us, <i>then</i> we follow him. How can we as believers practice this truth with others? Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Fun idea: Decorate the room where you meet with Christmas decor like lights, paper snowflakes, Christmas snacks, etc. It's a fun surprise for everyone because this lesson is about the meaning of Christmas.

If you have the book, read *Operation No More Tears* from The Jesus Storybook Bible. This can start the meeting well.

Read the commentary section and discuss each individually.

Discuss the setting and especially emphasize *why* the setting was the way it was and why certain visitors were involved.

The setting of Jesus' birth flattens any thought of a social or spiritual hierarchy with Jesus. By being born in a lowly stable Jesus demonstrates that anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, can confidently approach him and deeply know him.

Discuss the application portion.

Consider incorporating multiple illustrations throughout the night. (*Examples provided in Example Illustrations section*).

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. (*Examples provided in Example Illustrations section*).

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 6

Who is Jesus? | Part I

Who is Jesus? Is he more God or man? How powerful is he? Why did Jesus come into our world? What did he teach?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Jesus is God in human flesh. God chose to come down to our world to show us what he is like and to rescue us from sin into life with him through his death and resurrection.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What's a great decision you've made recently?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. Describe the setting that Jesus was born in. What was it like? What does that mean about our access to Jesus?
2. What else about last week's outline was significant to you?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Creatively discuss as much of the Scripture and notes as you can. When reading through Scripture a simple question to ask is "What is a word, phrase, or idea that stands out to you?"

All of the scripture references in Section III, "More on Jesus," aren't meant to be covered in the meeting. They're to be a resource for people to refer back to and study on their own.

To finish the lesson, consider asking common questions regarding the topics covered thus far. Use scriptural evidence from previous outlines and write some example answers to share after people have discussed them:

1. Why did Jesus have to die for our sins? Why did he have to die rather than just telling us he forgives us?
2. It's hard for me to turn everything to God and believe he is in control of everything. Why should I believe God is in control?
3. Why does God love me?
4. If no sin can separate me from God, why should I stop sinning?
5. How do I know that I'm significant to God?

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 7

Who is Jesus? | Part II

What makes Jesus unique? What are some scenes from his life that show me what he's like?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: If we want to see the heart of God we look at Jesus. Jesus is a friend of sinners and what he does matches exactly who he is on the inside.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: When is the last time you cried?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. Based what we learned last week, how would you describe Jesus' identity? (a.k.a. Who is Jesus?)
2. What was Jesus' mission? (a.k.a. Why did Jesus come?)
3. Jesus was the "Lamb of God," or the "perfect sacrifice." What does that mean?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Discuss the points under "Characteristics of Jesus." Take creative liberty in how you want to discuss the points.

Give everyone 15 minutes alone with one of the passages of Scripture under "Specific Scenes from Jesus' Life," and have them write notes, thoughts, and questions on the back of the page. After 15 minutes group people up by those who had the same Scripture. Give the group 10 minutes to discuss what they wrote together and to make a master page of important notes, thoughts, and questions from each of their papers. Then bring everyone together to share with the group.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 8

Sin

What is sin? What are its consequences? Are we born inherently good or inherently bad? What solution is there?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: We are born with a spiritual disease in our hearts called sin that separates us from God. If we do not clearly understand what sin is and why we are the way we are, we'll have a relationship with God that can often lead to frustration and disappointment.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: If you lived in my house for a week you might be surprised by... Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	1. What personality traits of Jesus are significant to you? Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Disclaimer: if the group is mixed male and female, remind the group that although confessing sin is healthy, confession can damage some people if not done in a healthy way. Save deeper confession for smaller, gender-specific groups.

Give the group 15-20 minutes alone to read and fill out of the section "What is Sin?"

When we define sin as "to miss the mark," the mark is the standard of perfection established by God. Viewed in that light it is clear that nobody hit's God's mark and we are all sinners.

As a part of the lesson, consider finding a clip of an injury in an athletic event that replays in slow motion a few times (Preferably no blood. Blood makes many people sick.). One example is Willis McGahee's knee injury in the 2002 NCAA football national championship. Although it is gruesome and your group may be disturbed, it will allow the group to emotionally and physically feel what we should be feeling as we read about the fall of man in Genesis 3 when things broke and became distorted from how they were designed to be.

Toward the end consider discussing the benefit of confessing sin to God and to trustworthy Christian friends (see James 5:16 and Psalm 32:5). Silence about our sin is a tool that Satan can use because when we stay silent, wounds fester. Silence about sin leads to isolation, destruction, and pain. Not confessing will lead to far greater pain than the pain of confession.

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 9

The Cross | Part I

*What were the events that happened in the hours leading up to the cross?
What is the spiritual formula that took place on the cross?*

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Learning the historical events that led up to the cross help us better understand the spiritual significance of the cross.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: Why is one of the most memorable conversations you've ever had?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. How would you describe sin?
2. Are we innocent or sinful when we're born?
3. What evidence of sin do you see in the world? What evidence of sin do you see in yourself?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Divide the group into four smaller groups and designate each group a certain portion of the timeline of the cross. They'll have 30+ minutes to read the Scripture together and prepare to teach the rest of the group about their portion. Although there are summaries for each portion provided on the handout, encourage the groups to not read the summary yet, and to write their own summary. The provided summaries are simply for them to have to refer back to on their own in the future. After the 30+ minutes of preparation give each group a turn to share about their portion.

After groups share, discuss sections II and III of the outline.

It can seem simple to be Christlike to someone else and difficult to be Christlike to ourselves. What makes it difficult to show Christ's love - forgiveness, faithfulness, gentleness, honesty, etc. - to yourself?

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 10

The Cross | Part II

Why did Jesus die on the cross? How much does God love me? Why did Jesus' death have to be so brutal?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: If we want to see how much God loves us, we look at the cross. God loves us with such immeasurable love that he became sin and died so that we can be adopted into his family.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is the last time (or a recent time) you apologized to somebody, and why?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.* - **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)**

Be still, and know that I am God! - **Psalms 46:10a (NLT)**

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. What was Jesus like in the Garden of Gethsemane?
2. What details from last week's topic, The Cross, stand out to you?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

The gospel is equal parts intellectual and emotional. The gospel is engaged intellectually when we understand the formula of our faith; that we deserved death as a payment for our sin and Jesus paid our debt for us with his own death. The gospel is engaged emotionally when we realize that Jesus died for us because he loves us.

Have two people, preferably one male and one female, read the Isaiah passage. After reading, ask for some examples of how Jesus took our badness for us to become good.

For stealing a candy bar from a gas station a person may get a slap on the wrist and do some community service. For stealing a luxury car a person may serve some time in jail. For committing a murder a person could receive the death penalty. The punishment fits the crime. The punishment that Jesus received on our behalf was an excruciating physical death and an agonizing spiritual death more painful than we could ever imagine. This displays how severe of a crime against God sin is.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 11

The Resurrection

Why is Jesus' resurrection significant? What does the resurrection mean for me now?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Jesus died as our substitute to be a payment for our sin. He resurrected, showing that he is God, and that nothing - not even death - can ever stop him from loving us. If we respond to that love and believe in what he did for us, then we can live forever knowing how much he loves us.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is one of the hardest times you've laughed in your life? Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	1. Why did Jesus have to die? 2. Why did it have to be so brutal? Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Note that tonight's lesson will include a lot of information and reading, so encourage members to interject with thoughts and questions at any time.

There can be a tendency to simply say "Jesus died on the cross for our sins" as an explanation of our salvation. However, if Jesus died and stayed dead, the Bible says our faith would be useless. The resurrection validates everything Jesus did on the cross. Let's always speak of the resurrection when speaking of our salvation.

Why is it important that Jesus says "Peace be with you" to the disciples? This is a powerful display of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

If we want proof of how much God loves us, we look at the cross.

If we want proof that nothing can stop God's love for us, we look at the resurrection. The resurrection is evidence that God's love shown on the cross can never be stopped by anything, not even the ultimate ending - death.

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 12

Jesus Is The Only Way

Why is Jesus the only way to access God? Is there a way to be good without Jesus?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Jesus is the only way to access God. Jesus is God, and he proved it in the resurrection. God made Jesus the only way to himself as an act of love.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What's the worst injury you've ever had?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. Why did Jesus have to die?
2. What happened after he died?
3. What does the resurrection mean? (Answer: Nothing can ever stop God from loving you. And God can raise your dead heart to life.)

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Give everyone a few minutes of alone time with the first section of the handout, "Reflection Time." Bring everyone back together and discuss.

The reason for sections I, II, and III is to focus on God's nature - who God is and why he does what he does. When we focus on God's nature it makes understanding God's grace (Heaven) and justice (Hell) much more simple and clear.

Do not apologize that Jesus is the only way. Saying that there is another way to be with God simply isn't true. Telling someone (patiently, lovingly, gently) that Jesus is the only way can be the most loving thing you can do.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 13

The Church

Why does the church exist? What does it look like in Scripture? How does it affect me today? Why should I be a part?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: The Church is the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head. Being involved in a local church is a necessary part of becoming more like Jesus.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: Who was the best teacher you ever had and why?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. Do all people who do nice things go to Heaven?
2. Is it our own goodness or Jesus' goodness that gets us into Heaven?
3. What's more true: what we define as fair or what God defines as fair?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

As the leader, take creative liberty in guiding the group through the material. Insert creative questions to process the Scripture and ideas more deeply.

If someone said, "I don't need church, I just need a personal relationship with God," how would you respond? (Example response: Look at sin. Look at who we are without God. We need help.)

Discuss the necessity of like-mindedness in friendships and how spiritually-based friendships are different than those without the Holy Spirit.

Discuss the different types of churches everyone attends. (Invite members to your own church who may not have a church home.) God calls us his "body" - all different parts which make up a whole body with Christ as the head. For us to recognize we are a part of his body we need to understand that each of us is uniquely created by God (Psalm 139:16), and therefore we each have a part to play in his Church. It's just like our physical bodies: some parts are seen and others are behind the scenes, like our internal organs. It's simple to see that all parts are vital, both seen and unseen.

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 14

Telling Others About Christ

How do I tell others about Jesus? What is my part and what is God's part?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: God does not need us but he chooses to use us in his process of bringing people into his family. As we are a part of his ministry he makes us more like himself.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: When was a recent time you apologized to someone and why?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.* - **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)**

Be still, and know that I am God! - **Psalms 46:10a (NLT)**

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. Why do we need to go to church?
2. How specifically can we serve in the church?

Many people may consider themselves Christians because they go to church or live in a "Christian" nation. But going to church doesn't make you a Christian anymore than going to a garage makes you an automobile or going to a restaurant makes you a hamburger. Being a part of a local church is a gift from God and a large part of how he makes us more like himself.

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

This lesson will consist primarily of discussion of Scripture. Let Scripture be the base of all the discussion. You as the leader have full creative liberty to lead this lesson as you see fit.

Consider asking this question: Could it be possible that God calls us to ministry not because he needs us but to show us how much we need him?

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 15

Difficult Circumstances

Why do bad things happen? What do I do with my pain? How does God expect me to respond in difficult circumstances?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: There are two main points:

- 1.) Pain is one of God's primary methods to make us more like himself (Romans 8:28-29).
- 2.) Knowing that Jesus has experienced and understands our pain changes our attitude (Hebrews 4:15).

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is a regret you have? Be as honest as you're comfortable being. Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How does knowing God's sovereignty affect how we do ministry?2. How would you describe discipleship? Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

As the leader, take creative liberty in guiding the group through the material. Insert creative questions to process the Scripture and ideas more deeply.

We all experience difficult circumstances and painful failures. Jesus' death on the cross and all of the events around it were difficult circumstances and seemed like failures:

Jesus' life was full of sorrows, from his birth until the cross. When he was an infant his life was in danger from Herod and his parents had to take him and flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:19-20).

Jesus' entire ministry was characterized by sorrow. He was saddened from the hardness of peoples' hearts, from the opposition of the religious leaders, and even from the fickleness of his own disciples. He was also tempted by Satan.

The night before he was crucified he was in agony as he was preparing for the wrath and justice of God he was about to take upon himself. His agony was so great that he sweat drops of blood (Matthew 26:38).

The greatest sorrow of his life was when, on the cross, his Father separated himself from his son, causing Jesus to cry out in agony, "Why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Surely no sadness experienced by any of us compares with that of Jesus.

In all of that weakness and vulnerability the world would come to know the passionate love of God. Perhaps our pain is a way for us and others to know God more deeply.

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 16

Prayer

What does prayer look like? How am I supposed to pray? What about all my prayers that go unanswered?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: Prayer is continuing a conversation with God that he has already started with us through his word and grace.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	<p>Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is one thing most people here don't know about you?</p> <p>Your Own Notes:</p>
Invitation	<p><i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i></p> <p><i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalms 46:10a (NLT)</i></p> <p>Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.</p>
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How do we know that Jesus understands our pain?2. How has God used pain in your life to make you more like him? <p>Your Own Notes:</p>

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

As the leader, take creative liberty in guiding the group through the material. Insert creative questions to process the Scripture and ideas more deeply.

Rhetorical questions you could ask the group to think about: What's the magic number of prayers or people that need to pray in order for something to happen: 10, 20, 100? Are God's abilities dependent on human action? How often do we pray for things that will end up making us less dependent on God? Does our lack of prayer thwart God from blessing another person? Is prayer a way for us to try to control God?

As the leader, talk about your own experience in prayer (daily, short prayers, community prayer, prayer retreats, etc.).

Your Own Notes:**Illustration**

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 17

The Holy Spirit

*Who is the Holy Spirit? Why does he exist? What does he want with me?
What is the Trinity?*

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: The Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity and is invisible, life-giving, and powerful. The Holy Spirit is the power source that gives us the ability to experience God.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is a pet peeve you have?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.* - **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)**

Be still, and know that I am God! - **Psalms 46:10a (NLT)**

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to “hit the pause button” on life and focus solely on God’s truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. What did Jesus’ prayer life look like?
2. What stood out to you from Jesus’ model for prayer? (a.k.a. “The Lord’s Prayer”)

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

The introduction has multiple long passages of Scripture. Read each out loud and discuss them with the group. These passages show The Holy Spirit as a member of the Trinity, a powerful force, and a source of life.

What are some effects of wind in storms? What kind of activities can you do with wind? (Suggested answer: One of the best ways to describe wind is to do it indirectly. In other words, you can describe wind better by seeing its result rather than describing it in itself. You can experience wind, but when describing it, it may seem mysterious. Similar to The Holy Spirit.)

Read the introductory Scripture. Have people mark anything that has to do with the Holy Spirit. Afterward, discuss what words, phrases, or ideas stood out to them.

Question from the outline: How do you know if something is alive or not? What signs do you look for? (Suggested answer: You look to see if they are breathing. "Ruach," the Hebrew word for "breath" is also used to mean "Spirit.")

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 18

Studying The Bible

*Why should I study The Bible? Where do I start? How do I stick with it?
What does The Bible say about studying The Bible?*

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: The Bible is a gift from God to us. If we want to experience truth about God and ourselves, we must develop a habit of studying the Bible.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is a song or a movie that has touched you deeply?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to “hit the pause button” on life and focus solely on God’s truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. What is the Trinity?
2. What does the Holy Spirit do?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found in the handout.

Rhetorical questions you could ask the group to think about: Why do we study The Bible? Is it because it's our duty as Christians? What motivates you to study The Bible - Increasing knowledge, because you feel guilty, because you're afraid of being punished by God?

Many Christians suffer from not being spiritually nourished. Some people never feed off of Scripture and their spirit is starved. Others like to sing spiritual songs and hear good sermons but never meditate on it and apply it to their lives. They don't fill and digest their spirits with God's Word. It is like chewing food and then spitting it back out again - no nutritional value is gained.

The Bible is God's Word. It's as true as the laws of nature. We can ignore it, but we do so to our own detriment just as we would if we ignored the law of gravity.

We should read and study The Bible because God does not change and because mankind's sinful nature does not change; it is as relevant for us as when it was written.

The Bible is totally reliable and without error. It is unique among so-called "holy" books in that it doesn't just say, "trust me." Rather, we have the ability to test it by checking the hundreds of detailed prophecies that it makes by checking the historical accounts it records and by checking the scientific facts it relates. Those who say The Bible has errors simply have their ears closed to the truth. Jesus once asked which is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." Then he proved he had the ability to forgive sins (something we cannot see with our eyes) by healing the paralytic (something those around him could test with their eyes). Similarly, we are given assurance that God's Word is true when it discusses spiritual areas that we cannot test with our senses by showing itself true in those areas that we can test, like historical accuracy, scientific accuracy, and prophetic accuracy.

Different types of Bible translations:

Word-for-word translations are NASB, ESV, NIV, and others.

Paraphrase translations are The Message, The Living Bible, JB Phillips, and others.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:

THE BASICS

Week 19

Layout of The Bible | Part I

*How is The Bible structured and why is it put together the way that it is?
How can I become familiar with the Bible? What's God's big storyline?*

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: The goal of this meeting is to lay a foundation of basic knowledge about the Bible's structure. The purpose is for this knowledge to be a springboard in one's comfort with Scripture so that studying the Bible can be peaceful and non-intimidating. Simply put, those who come should feel comfortable holding and navigating a Bible.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive	Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.
Introductions	Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: If you had one song to sing at karaoke, what would it be? Your Own Notes:
Invitation	<i>Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)</i> <i>Be still, and know that I am God! - Psalm 46:10a (NLT)</i> Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.
Life Story	Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.
Review	1. If someone asked you, "Why should I read the Bible?", what would you say? 2. What habits should a person have to study their Bible? Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Start with the discussion questions found on the handout.

Remind the group that this week's topic, compared to others, is highly informational. More of a history lesson than a spiritual experience.

This outline is intended to be a resource to refer back to all year. If it seems like too much information for one meeting, don't worry, that's the way it's designed. Encourage people to refer back and study it until they're comfortable with it.

Because being comfortable with The Bible is important, go through all of the information. When preparing for the group, take time to factor in some breaks to relax and ask some questions.

If the group wants to know what make each gospel account unique, explain that The Holy Spirit wanted to give us four portraits of Jesus. Similar to holding a diamond to the light and seeing different colors reflect out of it.

Matthew: Jesus is The Promised One. He is the king from God the Jews had been waiting for.

Mark: Jesus is The Suffering Servant. He suffered for and served the people he loved.

Luke: Jesus is for everyone everywhere. He saves lost people everywhere like outcasts, prostitutes, foreigners, etc. In Acts (a.k.a. Luke Part II) the gospel goes everywhere to everyone. The book of Acts is a companion volume to the book of Luke.

John: Jesus is God. Jesus says and shows everyone that he is God's Son.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. *(Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).*

Your Own Notes:



THE BASICS

Week 20

Layout of The Bible | Part II

Does the Bible have a continuous theme? What does the Old Testament have to do with Jesus?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Main Point: The person of Jesus is interwoven throughout all of Scripture.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT

Arrive Greet and talk to everyone. Consider having music in the background. Officially start when you feel everyone has arrived and been warmly welcomed.

Introductions Going around in a circle, give everyone a chance to say their name and answer the question of the night. (Add in middle names for some extra fun.) Example: What is one of your favorite jokes?

Your Own Notes:

Invitation *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.* - **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)**

Be still, and know that I am God! - **Psalms 46:10a (NLT)**

Remind everyone that the small group is a safe place to "hit the pause button" on life and focus solely on God's truth.

Life Story Ask someone at least one day beforehand to share a five-minute version of their life story. Tell the group to think of five questions to ask at the end of their story.

Review

1. What is one thing you remember from last week's lesson?
2. Is the Bible in chronological order?
3. Do you feel more comfortable navigating a Bible? How so?

Your Own Notes:

Lesson

Don't give out the handouts yet. Do it after the lesson. Read the opening discussion questions from your own handout

If you have the book, read aloud "The Story and The Song" from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. (Also provided in the Example Illustrations section).

Divide the group into seven smaller groups, if possible. If you don't have enough people for seven groups, assign a story to individual people. If there aren't enough people to hand out seven, just select which stories you'd like to use. Give each group one "Group Handout for Story Time" to help outline their presentation.

Tell each group that their task is to read their Bible story and thoroughly discuss the questions. Then they'll need to present the story in detail to the rest of the group. The summaries on the handout are just for people to take home and study on their own afterward.

Stories to designate:

- **Adam and Eve:** Genesis 2:15-25, 3:1-13, 3:21-24
- **Noah's Ark:** Genesis 6-9
- **Tower of Babel:** Genesis 11:1-9
- **Joseph and His Brothers:** Genesis 37, 39-46 (Don't give this one out, just paraphrase the story at the end of the night.)
- **Moses and the Red Sea:** Exodus 14
- **David and Goliath:** 1 Samuel 16

After each presentation ask the whole small group what stood out to them and discuss for a minute. Ask questions like "Why did God act this way? What were the characters' attitudes? Why does this story matter?"

After all of the presentations and discussions have happened take time to read some of the explanations in the handouts of where Jesus is foreshadowed in the story.

Your Own Notes:

Illustration

End with an illustration that you see fit. (Examples provided in Example Illustrations section).

Your Own Notes:

Example Illustrations

Incorporating illustrations helps tie the lesson together and make it memorable. Feel free to be creative in choosing songs to sing or listen to, videos to watch, short articles to read, etc. Below are some examples you could use:

Week 1: Introduction to Small Group

1. Learning about God can be like a jigsaw puzzle (display a real puzzle if you'd like). Bits of truth from the Bible are like pieces to a puzzle. The more we learn about God, the fuller our understanding of him becomes. This curriculum will be like pieces to the large puzzle of knowing how deeply God loves you.

Week 2: Your Significance

1. Video: *Brennan Manning on God's Love*, a video available online.
2. Song: *Burgundy Heart Shaped Medallion* by David Wilcox. Imagine God singing this song to you.

Week 3: Sovereignty of God

1. A devotional by Brennan Manning in his book *Reflections for Ragamuffins*. Learning how big and powerful God is can give a Christian a deeper appreciation for his closeness with his followers.
On a recent five-day silent retreat I spent the entire time in John's Gospel. Whenever a sentence caused my heart to stir, I wrote it out longhand in a journal. The first of many entries was also the last: "The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus... He leaned back on Jesus' breast" (John 13:23, 25 JB). We must not hurry past this scene in search of deeper revelation or we will miss a magnificent insight. John lays his head on the heart of God, on the breast of the man whom the Council of Nicea defined as "being co-equal and consubstantial to the Father..." This passage should not be reduced to a historical memory. It can become a personal encounter, radically affecting our understanding of who God is and what our relationship with Jesus is meant to be. God allows a young Jew, reclining in the rags of his twenty-odd years, to listen to his heartbeat!
2. Read brief portions of the book of Job and discuss the role of God's sovereignty in Job's life. Knowing God is sovereign affected Job's attitude for the better.

Week 4: An Overview of The Gospel

1. Video: *G.O.S.P.E.L.*, a video by Propaganda available online. It is a spoken word poem that clearly describes the gospel in four minutes.
2. Video: *Falling Plates*, a video produced by Cru in 2012, available online.

Week 5: The Incarnation

1. In *Mortal Lessons*, a book by experienced surgeon Dr. Richard Selzer, Selzer describes a scene from his career of a husband a wife. This can help us understand the beauty of God becoming a person:
*"I (Dr. Selzer) stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face postoperative, her mouth twisted in palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed. She will be thus from now on. The surgeon had followed with religious fervor the curve of her flesh, I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had to cut the little nerve. Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private. Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry-mouth I have made, who gaze at and touch each other so generously, greedily? The young woman speaks.
"Will my mouth always be like this?" She asks.
"Yes," I say, "it will. It is because the nerve was cut."
She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles.
"I like it," he says. "It is kind of cute."*

All at once, I know who he is. I understand, and I lower my gaze. One is not bold in an encounter with a god. Unmindful [of me], he bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I am so close I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate to hers, to show that their kiss still works.

2. Consider singing a biblical Christmas song together like *The First Noel*, *O Come O Come Emmanuel*, *Silent Night*, etc.
3. Songs: *Welcome to Our World* by Chris Rice or *Oh Holy Night* by a number of artists. The group could listen to the song together. Lyrical videos are available online.

Week 6: Who is Jesus? | Part I

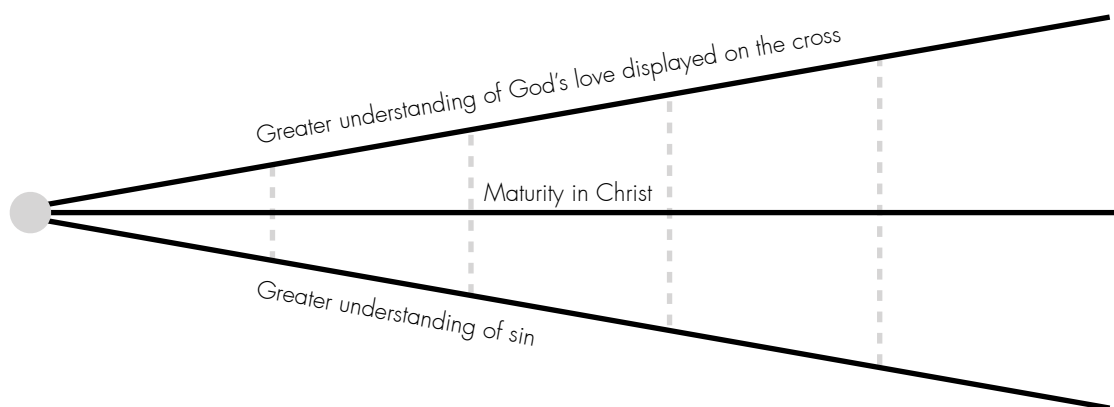
1. Video: *That's My King*, a portion of a sermon by Dr. S.M. Lockridge. Lyrical videos available online.
2. Video: There are great clips from the series *The Chosen* online. Pick one that your group may connect well with.

Week 7: Who is Jesus? | Part II

1. Discuss how Jesus' example affects our personal life and ministry.
2. Song: *Behold the Lamb of God* by Andrew Peterson. A beautiful song based on John The Baptist's words when he first saw Jesus. The group could listen to the song together.

Week 8: Sin

1. Explain the dilemma that occurs in many math textbooks. Often the answers to many questions are in the back of the textbook. Any young student would be clever enough to look in the back of the book for a lot of answers. However, the student never truly understands the problem nor how it is solved; they can just get credit for knowing the answer. This problem can occur in people familiar with Christian environments. A person can quickly say "Jesus died for my sins" without sincerely understanding the cause and effects of sin. When a person takes time to understand sin, their appreciation for what Jesus did on the cross deepens because they know how great the sacrifice was.
2. Below is an illustration of maturity in Christ. The deeper a Christian understands their depravity in sin, the greater they understand God's love displayed on the cross.



3. Song: *Terminal* by Jon Foreman
4. Song: *Cure for the Pain* by Jon Foreman

Week 9: The Cross | Part I

1. The end of Chapter 4 in *Discovery*, a Bible study by Will Wyatt, details Jesus' separation from God. Consider reading it with the group:

[The Bible] reveals to us the substitutionary act that had to happen for us to receive God's righteousness. I cannot even begin to understand what it means that Jesus, who was fully God, perfect and holy, could become sin, but that is what Scripture says. He became who we were so that we could become who He is. This was Jesus' "cup." He was in such agony at this prospect that His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). Because sin is easy and

natural for us, we cannot begin to understand Jesus' abhorrence of it. The perfect and holy Son of God was agonizing over the thought of becoming sin and being separated from the father. Yet Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to be your substitute and become sin - everything that was opposite of His nature. Perhaps one way to understand, to a small degree, is to take some attributes of Jesus and consider their opposites.

We know that Jesus is love. On the cross He experienced complete, consuming hatred. He was despised and rejected.

Jesus is the "Light of the World," yet on the cross He experienced total darkness, a lack of understanding, and everything associated with sin and evil.

Scripture tells us that Jesus is peace, even the "Prince of Peace." On the cross, the exact opposite of peace consumed Him: total frustration, anxiety, fear, hopelessness, desperation.

Jesus Christ is Truth. On the cross, everything became confusing, inconsistent, and illogical. Nothing made sense.

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." Yet on the cross He experienced emotional and spiritual hunger: longing, craving, yearning, complete dissatisfaction.

Jesus said, "I am The Way." On the cross He felt frustratingly lost, with no direction. He was uncertain, perplexed, bewildered, full of doubts, empty, and confused.

Christ is our security, yet on the cross He was consumed with fear, insecurity, and overwhelming loneliness. We all have felt lonely at times, but He was lonely to a degree we cannot even imagine. Jesus Christ, who had experienced the completeness of a perfect relationship with the Trinity, was totally forsaken and alone.

Jesus Christ is mercy. In becoming sin for us, He suffered the ultimate in abuse, oppression, and torture. Any cruelty ever devised or imagined by man, He endured on the cross.

Jesus Christ is just. On the cross He endured unfairness, corruption, dishonesty, and all the emotions that go along with receiving unjust treatment. If the Roman trial had been handled fairly, Christ would have been freed. He did not deserve the cross, but He wanted to be there because he chose to stand in our place. Isaiah says He was like a lamb led to slaughter, not uttering a sound. Perhaps Jesus was silent on the cross because had He even hinted for help, all of heaven would have responded.

On the cross Jesus endured incredible pain. Crucifixion was a brutal means of execution, deliberately slow and painful. Every joint was pulled out of its socket from the weight of the body. Jesus' physical pain and death fulfilled prophecy and were part of God's plan to bring us salvation. But more important than His physical death was that Jesus died spiritually when He was separated from His father. His physical pain on the cross is a stark visual picture that helps us understand, to a small degree, the dreadfulness of spiritual death. (One purpose for the pain we personally experience may be to give us a glimpse of what He went through on the cross as He died for us, both physically and spiritually. Our pain should remind us of His great love for us.)

While taking our place on the cross, Jesus, because of His complete separation from His father, cried "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This is the only time Jesus ever called His father "God," because at this point God was not in the role of Father, but of righteous judge. As judge, He placed in Jesus the sins of every one of us - every sin and act of rebellion we have ever committed or ever will commit. Because Jesus Christ on the cross called His father "God," we can now call God our "Father." What amazing grace!"

2. There is much Christian symbolism in The Chronicles of Narnia series by C.S. Lewis. The following is a scene with rich Christlike imagery. Edmund had betrayed his siblings and deserved to die for his actions. Aslan the lion gives up his own life so that Edmund can live.

"Bind him (Aslan, the lion), I say!" repeated the White Witch. The Hags made a dart at him and shrieked with triumph when they found that he made no resistance at all. Then others - evil dwarfs and apes - rushed in to help them, and between them they rolled the huge Lion over on his back and tied all his four paws together, shouting and cheering as if they had done something brave, though,

had the Lion chosen, one of those paws could have been the death of them all. But he made no noise, even when the enemies, straining and tugging, pulled the cords so tight that they cut into his flesh. Then they began to drag him toward the Stone Table." - **C.S. Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe***

Week 10: The Cross | Part II

1. Song: *How Deep the Father's Love For Us* by Stuart Townend. Consider singing it together as a group or watching a lyrical video online.
2. Video: *Most* (Titled *The Bridge* in some countries), a Czech short film made in 2003 (approx. 30 mins). The film is about a father who works as a railroad drawbridge operator and his son whom he sacrifices to save a train full of people. There are shorter clips online if the original film is too long.

Week 11: The Resurrection

1. Read Romans 8:31-39 and emphasize that nothing can ever stop God from loving us.
2. Lee Strobel was a journalist for the Chicago Tribune and an atheist when he began investigating the biblical claims about Christ after his wife's conversion. After his investigation he became a Christian at the age of 29. In his book *A Case for Christ* he interviews 13 biblical scholars to defend their views on Christianity. Below is an excerpt from his conversation with Gary Habermas, a distinguished professor at Liberty University:

Before I left Habermas' office, however, I had one more question. Frankly, I hesitated to ask it, because it was a bit too predictable and I thought I'd get an answer that was a little too pat.

The question concerned the importance of the Resurrection. I figured if I asked Habermas about that, he'd give the standard reply about it being at the center of the Christian doctrine, the axis around which the Christian faith turned. And I was right - he did give a stock answer like that.

But what surprised me was that this wasn't all he said. This nuts-and-bolts scholar, this burly and straight shooting debater, this combat-ready defender of the faith, allowed me to peer into his soul as he gave an answer that grew out of the deepest valley of despair he had ever walked through.

Habermas rubbed his graying beard. The quick-fire cadence and debater's edge to his voice were gone. No more quoting of scholars, no more citing of Scripture, no more building a case. I had asked about the importance of the Resurrection, and Habermas decided to take a risk by harkening back to 1995, when his wife, Debbie, slowly died of stomach cancer. Caught off guard by the tenderness of the moment, all I could do was listen.

"I sat on our porch," he began, looking off to the side at nothing in particular. He sighed deeply, then went on. "My wife was upstairs dying. Except for a few weeks, she was home through it all. It was an awful time. This was the worst thing that could possibly happen."

He turned and looked straight at me. "But do you know what was amazing? My students would call me - not just one but several of them - and say, 'At a time like this, aren't you glad about the Resurrection?' As sober as those circumstances were, I had to smile for two reasons. First, my students were trying to cheer me up with my own teaching. And second, it worked.

"As I would sit there, I'd picture Job, who went through all that terrible stuff and asked questions of God, but then God turned the tables and asked him a few questions.

"I knew if God were to come to me, I'd ask only one question: 'Lord, why is Debbie up there in bed?' And I think God would respond by asking gently, 'Gary, did I raise my Son from the dead?'

"I'd say, 'Come on, Lord, I've written seven books on that topic! Of course he was raised from the dead. But I want to know about Debbie!'

"I think he'd keep coming back to the same question - Did I raise my Son from the dead?' 'Did I raise my Son from the dead?' - until I got his point: the Resurrection says that if Jesus was raised two thousand years ago, there's an answer to Debbie's death in 1995. And do you know what? It worked for me while I was sitting on the porch, and it still works today.

It was a horribly emotional time for me, but I couldn't get around the fact that the Resurrection is the answer for her suffering. I still worried; I still wondered what I'd do raising four kids alone. But there wasn't a time when that truth didn't comfort me.

"Losing my wife was the most painful experience I've ever had to face, but if the Resurrection could get me through that, it can get me through anything. It was good for 30 A.D., it's good for 1995, it's good for 1998, and it's good beyond that."

Habermas looked eyes with mine. "That's not some sermon," he said quietly. "I believe that with all my heart. If there's a resurrection, there's a heaven. If Jesus was raised, Debbie was raised. And I will be someday, too.

"Then I'll see them both."

3. In C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Susan and Lucy are devastated after Aslan's death.

They looked round. There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself.

"Oh, Aslan!" cried both the children, staring up at him, almost as much frightened as they were glad.

"Aren't you dead then, dear Aslan?" said Lucy.

"Not now," said Aslan.

"You're not - not a - ?" asked Susan in a shaky voice. She couldn't bring herself to say the word ghost.

Aslan stooped his golden head and licked her forehead. The warmth of his breath and a rich sort of smell that seemed to hang about his hair came all over her.

"Do I look it?" he said.

"Oh, you're real, you're real! Oh, Aslan!" cried Lucy, and both girls flung themselves upon him and covered him with kisses.

"But what does it all mean?" asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer.

"It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew of the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know: Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards. And now - "

"Oh yes. Now?" said Lucy, jumping up and clapping her hands.

"Oh children," said the Lion, "I feel my strength coming back to me. Oh, children, catch me if you can!" He stood for a second, his eyes very bright, his limbs quivering, lashing himself with his tail. Then he made a leap high over their heads and landed on the other side of the Table. Laughing, though she didn't know why, Lucy scrambled over it to reach him. Aslan leaped again. A mad chase began. Round and round the hill-top he led them, now hopelessly out of their reach, now letting them almost catch his tail, now diving between them, now tossing them in the air with his huge and beautifully velvety paws and catching them again, and now stopping unexpectedly so that all three of them rolled over together in a happy laughing heap of fur and arms and legs. It was such a romp as no one has ever had except in Narnia; and whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or playing with a kitten, Lucy could never make up her mind. And the funny thing was that when all three finally lay together panting in the sun the girls no longer felt in the least tired or hungry or thirsty.

- C.S. Lewis in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*

Week 12: Jesus is The Only Way

1. Below is an excerpt of an article written in 1997 by Philip Yancey for *Christianity Today* titled "What's So Amazing About Grace?":

During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world were discussing whether any one belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating

possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. In his forthright manner Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eightfold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and the Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

2. Below is a portion of *The Silver Chair* by C.S. Lewis. The character Jill is thirst and searching for water:

And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the lion of only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first.

"If you're thirst, you may drink." . . .

For a second she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said again, "If you are thirsty, come and drink." . . .

It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. . . .

"Are you thirsty?" Said the Lion.

"I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

"May I - could I - would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. . . . The delicious ripping noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic. . . .

"Do you eat girls?" she asked fearfully.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.

3. It's important to discuss where good works fit in with faith. Imagine a tree with roots beneath the ground and fruit on its branches. Many people incorrectly think that good works are the roots that produce our salvation, or the fruit. (Works + Faith = Salvation). But the Bible teaches that good works are not the root, they're the fruit. The root system of a Christian is their faith that then produces fruit of good works (Faith = Salvation + Works). Works don't save us. Works are a byproduct of faith.

Week 13: The Church

1. In an age where sermons can be watched online from the comfort of our home, based on what we've learned, discuss specific reasons why it's important to be a consistent part of a local church.

Week 14: Telling Others About Christ

1. Speak on your own experience in Christian ministry. Tell a personal story of how you've seen God bring someone to himself.
2. Movie: *The King's Speech* (Disclaimer: there is profanity in some of the scenes.). Many clips can be found online. Lionel Logue can be viewed as the model Christian practicing patience, authenticity, and faithfulness to Prince Albert. You can also read this summary of the movie and it's Christian imagery:

It's the late 1930s in England. Prince Albert has a severe speech impediment and sees countless therapists with countless methods, all to no avail. His wife visits an Australian speech therapist named Lionel Logue as a last resort.

Logue is surprisingly authentic and insists that he be called by his first name to keep things informal. he assures that his methods are "unorthodox and controversial."

In their first session together, Logue asks Prince Albert ("Bertie" as Logue calls him) if he knows any jokes and if he would like a cup of tea. Prince Albert asks, "Aren't you going to start treating me?"

Logue responds, "One has to want to be treated... in here, it's better if we're equals... what was your earliest memory?"

Prince Albert angrily insists that he's "not here to discuss personal matters."

In their second session together, Prince Albert insists that the meetings will consist of "business only" and they'll meet once per week.

Logue responds by saying, "What you're looking for us only fixing the surface of the problem... I shall see you every day."

They spend time together every day, engaging in Logue's unorthodox methods.

After Bertie's father, the king, dies, Bertie shows up unexpectedly to meet with Logue. Bertie opens up about his family. He admits that he was teased as a boy, was afraid of his father, and says that Logue is the first ordinary man he's ever really spoken to. Logue says, "What are friends for?" Bertie responds, "I wouldn't know."

After Bertie confronts his scandalous older brother on his behavior, he meets with Logue and ends up screaming and swearing angrily around the room. Logue encourages it because he's relieved that Bertie is finally opening up and experiencing freedom.

The two go for a walk outside and Bertie becomes angry and defensive. Logue says, "Why are you so upset? You need not to be governed by fear."

Bertie, frustrated, says "these sessions are over." Soon after, he hears that his older brother has resigned as next-in-line for the throne, and Bertie is set to become the new king. With his wife comforting him he starts to break down emotionally saying, "I'm not a king. I'm not a king"

Bertie and his wife show up to Lionel Logue's house to apologize, and Logue says, "You don't need to be afraid of the things you were afraid of when you were five."

As they prepare for the coronation ceremony, which will be televised and broadcasted on the radio, Bertie discovers that Logue was never professionally trained and is not even a licensed doctor. He angrily confronts Logue and feels betrayed.

Logue says that he never pretended to be anything he wasn't. He was trained through experience by helping soldiers with PTSD speak well again after being traumatized in World War I.

In Bertie's final speech of the movie, a radio broadcast to all of Great Britain, Logue is in the room guiding Bertie through his speech as he officially announces Britain's entrance into World War II against the Nazi regime. He delivers the historic speech smoothly and keeps Logue on his personal staff for the remainder of his kingship.

Symbolism: In this award-winning film Lionel Logue displays patience, loyalty, unorthodox ideology, and sincere compassion. He embodies biblical characteristics of Christian ministry. Logue is not afraid of Prince Albert's filthy mouth nor discouraged at a lack of immediate progress. Although Logue has no formal training, he learns diligently, listens intently, and loves his friend Albert dearly. His friendship with Prince Albert (later known as King George IV) is certain to have had a tremendous impact on the world.

Week 15: Difficult Circumstances

1. Imagine a dad taking his three-year-old child to go get shots at the doctor. The child is old enough to remember how much the needles hurt, but not old enough yet to understand why her daddy is letting her get poked with needles. The child may not understand the father's explanation of why the shots are necessary. The child. May scream and try to run away from the doctor's office. The father looks the child in the eyes and says "I've gotten shots too. I understand the pain of getting shots because I've gotten them here," as he

points to where he's received shots before, "here, and here." The child is comforted after knowing that Daddy has been through the same thing.

2. Song: *Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul*, written by Anne Steele in the 1700s, performed by Indelible Grace. Consider listening to the song together while reading the lyrics.

Anne Steele was born in England. Her mother died when Anne was three years old, and by 14, she was bothered by chronic recurring malaria which took a progressive toll on her health. She also had painful stomach problems and severe teeth pain. She was thrown from a horse and severely injured when she was 19. When she was 21 she was engaged to Robert Elcomb, but the day before the wedding he drowned while bathing in a river. She was one who suffered greatly. Many of her 144 hymns reveal that her health problems also provoked great spiritual struggles and she often wrestled with doubts and assurance of salvation.

3. Jonathan Gibson is a pastor and professor. He wrote a children's book called "The Moon is Always Round" about trusting God's goodness even when life is dark. In the back of the book he includes a note for parents: The Story behind This Book:

When our son Benjamin was about three-years old, I held him up to the window one evening and he pointed to the moon. "Look. The moon!" he said. It was a crescent moon. I explained to him that the moon could appear in different shapes, but the moon was always round. From that, I developed a simple catechism for him.

Q: Ben, what shape is the moon tonight?

A: The moon is a crescent moon, or a half-moon, or a gibbous moon, or a full moon.

Q: What shape is the moon always?

A: The moon is always round.

Q: What does that mean?

A: God is always good.

Little did I know that, even as a three-year old, the catechism would soon become so very important in his life. Sometime later, on March 13, 2016, his younger sister, Leila Judith Grace, died at 39 weeks in her mother's womb. Four days later, she was stillborn at 10:25am on March, 17, 2016. Ben came to meet her in the hospital later that afternoon. He gave her "Bazza" the giraffe as a gift. He held her, and then a few hours later, he said goodbye to her.

As I drove him home that night, he asked, "Daddy, will mummy ever grow a baby that wakes up?" I told him I didn't know.

He asked, "Why isn't Leila coming home with us?"

I told him because she's gone to be with Jesus.

He asked, "Why has she gone to be with Jesus?"

I told him because Jesus called her name and she went to him.

He asked, "Will Leila come to us after a day with Jesus in heaven?"

I told him that when you meet Jesus, you don't want to go anywhere else.

He asked, "Why?" I told him because he is such a wonderful person.

He asked, "Does Leila not like us?"

I told him that she does like us, she just likes Jesus more.

He asked again, "But why is Leila not coming home with us?"

I said, "Ben, I don't really know why."

And then I recalled our catechism, so I started to talk to him about the moon. We talked about how sometimes when we look up at the moon, we can only see a crescent moon or a half-moon or a gibbous moon.

And then I asked him, "What shape is the moon, Ben?"

'The moon is always round,' he replied.

I said, "What does that mean?"

He said, "God is always good."

'That's right," I replied, and drove on in silence, tears streaming down my face.

That night after I tucked Ben into bed and left him under the care of a close friend, I went back to the hospital to be with Jackie and Leila. Just before I got into the car, I looked up to see if there was a moon in the night sky. There was a half-moon! That captured exactly how Jackie and I felt. We couldn't see the whole of God's goodness because Leila was dead. But we knew that the moon was round, even though we couldn't see all of it. The moon is always round.

A few weeks later we held a funeral service for Leila. I gave a eulogy for her, and at the end I addressed Ben. I told him that as he grows up, he may have questions about why Leila died, but I wanted him to remember what he had learnt about the moon.

I asked him again in the service, "What shape is the moon, Ben?"

"The moon is always round," he replied.

I said, "What does that mean?"

He said, "God is always good."

Out of the mouth of babes and infants God has ordained praise (Psalm 8:2).

Week 16: Prayer

1. Author and evangelist Brennan Manning gave this story in a sermon:

Once a woman asked me to come and pray with her father, who was dying of cancer. When I arrived, I found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed.

I assumed the old fellow had been informed of my visit. "I guess you were expecting me," I said.

"No, who are you?"

"I'm the new associate at your parish," I replied. "When I saw the empty chair I figured you knew I was going to show up."

"Oh yeah, the chair," said the bed-ridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?"

Puzzled, I shut the door.

"I've never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man, "but all my life I have never known how to pray. At the Sunday Mass I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer but it always went right over my head. I abandoned any attempt at prayer," he continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, 'Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here's what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised, 'I will be with you always.' Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you're doing with me right now.

"So, Padre, I tried it, and I like it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful through. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair she'd send me off to the funny farm."

I was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue the journey. Then I prayed with him, anointed him with oil, and returned to the rectory.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell me that her daddy had died that afternoon.

"Did he seem to die in peace?" I asked.

"Yes, but there was something strange. In fact, beyond strange - kind of weird. Apparently just before Daddy died he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside his bed."

Week 17: The Holy Spirit

1. Tell the group a specific example from your own life where you've experienced the Holy Spirit prompting you to or restraining you from something. What was the short-term and long-term outcome?
2. Get a latex glove, like one used in food service or medicine. Describe the fragility of the glove and its

