

Encountering Jesus in the Gospel of John

Two Studies: A Seven-Week Bible Study + A Six-Week Study

Both Studies Use the CASE Model

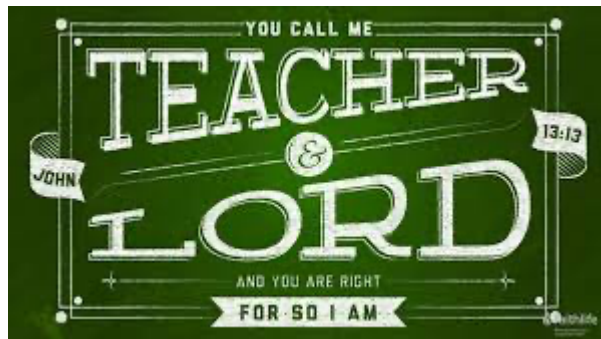
Jesus for me – Jesus in me – Jesus through me

by **Bill Cullen**

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Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).
Participants are welcome to follow along in their preferred translation.

Part I: John 1–12, 18–21 † Part II: John 13–17

Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to a journey through the Gospel of John — a journey designed to help you encounter Jesus in a way that is personal, honest, and transformative. This study unfolds in **two complementary parts**, each with its own focus, rhythm, and spiritual invitation, yet both united by a single thread:

Jesus for me. Jesus in me. Jesus through me.

Together, these two studies form a complete pathway of discipleship — from first encounter to deep abiding, from revelation to relationship, from belief to mission.

Part I — The Gospel of John: Signs, Encounters, and the Mission of Jesus

(Seven Weeks: John 1–12, 18–21)

Part I walks with Jesus through His **public ministry** — the signs He performs, the people He meets, the claims He makes, and the life He offers. John writes with a clear purpose: *“that you may believe... and that by believing you may have life in His name”* (Jn. 20:31).

In these chapters, Jesus reveals Himself as:

- the eternal Word made flesh
- the Lamb of God
- the giver of new birth
- the living water
- the bread of life
- the light of the world
- the resurrection and the life

You will meet Nicodemus in the night, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, and grieving sisters at a tomb. You will witness signs that point beyond themselves to the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

Part I lays the **theological foundation** and **narrative arc** that prepare us for the Upper Room. It is the story of Jesus **for us** — revealing, teaching, healing, calling, and ultimately laying down His life and rising again.

Part II — The Upper Room: Jesus’ Legacy of Love, Spirit, and Mission

(Six Weeks: John 13–17)

Part II slows the pace dramatically. Here we enter the Upper Room — the most intimate teaching Jesus gives anywhere in Scripture. These chapters are His **final words**, His **last will and testament**, His **legacy of love**.

If Part I shows us who Jesus is, **Part II shows us what it means to belong to Him**.

In these chapters, Jesus:

- washes His disciples' feet
- gives the new commandment
- comforts troubled hearts
- reveals Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- promises the Holy Spirit
- teaches us to abide in Him as the true Vine
- prays for His disciples — and for us

This is Jesus **in us** and **through us** — forming a community of love, unity, and mission, empowered by the Spirit to carry His presence into the world.

Why These Two Studies Belong Together

John's Gospel has a natural two-movement structure:

1. **Revelation** — Jesus before the world (John 1–12)
2. **Formation** — Jesus with His own (John 13–17)

These two studies mirror.

Part I helps us **see** Jesus. Part II helps us **abide** in Jesus. Together, they help us **follow** Jesus.

Both studies use the **CASE model** — Know, Convict, Assure, Stretch, Empower, Apply — a rhythm that reflects the heartbeat of Scripture itself. Across thirteen weeks, this pattern becomes not just a study method but a spiritual habit: listening to the Word, being convicted by the Word, receiving grace, growing in faith, and living out what we have received.

- Bring your Bible and an open heart.
- Read the assigned passage each week.
- Reflect on the questions before or after the session.
- Share honestly and listen generously.
- Pray for your group members.
- Expect the Holy Spirit to meet you in the Word.

At the start of each session, your leader will ask:

1. *What did you learn from the preparatory readings?*
2. *How has your "Apply" been going this week?*

These simple questions help us grow in accountability, encouragement, and shared discipleship.

A Journey with Jesus — For You, In You, Through You

Across these two parts, you will encounter:

- Jesus. the eternal Word
- Jesus, the miracle-worker
- Jesus, the teacher of new birth
- Jesus. the pursuer of the outsider
- Jesus, the great “I AM”
- Jesus, the servant King
- Jesus. the giver of the Spirit
- Jesus. the High Priest who prays for His people
- Jesus, the crucified Lamb
- Jesus, the risen Lord, who sends His disciples

Our prayer is that you will come to know Him more deeply — **for you, in you, and through you.**

We are grateful to walk this journey with you and to have you walking it with us.

Part I – Studies in the Gospel of John

(minus Maundy-Thursday)

(Maundy Thursday – John 13-17 – is being covered in a special six-week study of its own)

A Seven-Week Bible Study Using the CASE Model

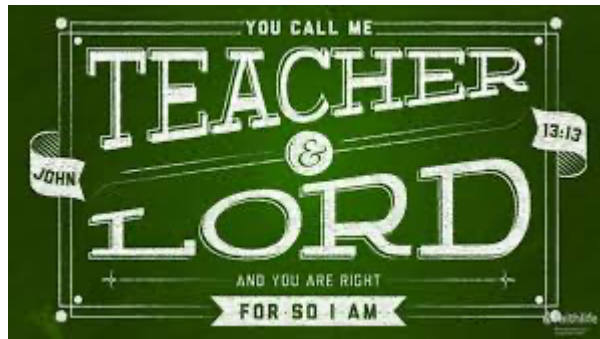
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Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to the Gospel of John Study

Over the next seven weeks, we will walk together through some of the most beautiful, revealing, and life-shaping passages in all of Scripture. John's Gospel is written with a clear purpose: *"that you may believe... and that by believing you may have life in His name"* (Jn. 20:31). This study is designed to help you encounter Jesus in a way that is personal, honest, and transformative.

What You Can Expect

Each session follows a simple, meaningful rhythm called the CASE Model:

- **Know** — We begin by listening carefully to the text. What does it say? What is happening? What is John showing us about Jesus?
- **Convict** — God's Word holds up a mirror. Where does it challenge us, correct us, or reveal what we'd rather ignore?
- **Assure** — The Gospel speaks louder than our failures. Jesus meets us with grace, forgiveness, and promise.
- **Stretch** — From grace flows growth. How is Jesus inviting you into deeper trust, new understanding, or courageous obedience?
- **Empower** — The Holy Spirit equips you with everything needed for life and faith. You are not sent out alone.
- **Apply** — Each week ends with one concrete step you can take to live out what you've received.

This pattern reflects the heartbeat of Scripture itself — moving from truth to grace, from grace to transformation, and from transformation to mission.

How to Prepare Each Week

You'll get the most out of this study if you:

- Read the assigned Scripture passage ahead of time.
- Reflect on the Personal Reflection & Discussion questions (either before or after the group meets).
- Bring your Bible, a pen, and a willingness to engage.
- Pray for an open heart and for your group members.

At the start of each session, your leader will ask two simple questions:

1. What did you learn from the preparatory readings?
2. How has your "Apply" been going this week?

These questions help us grow in accountability, encouragement, and shared discipleship.

A Community of Grace

This study is not about having the "right answers." It's about meeting Jesus — the Word made flesh — and allowing His light, truth, and love to shape us. We will listen to one another, pray for one another, and walk with one another. At the back of this guide, you'll find an optional Group Covenant designed to help us support each other well.

A Journey with Jesus

Across these seven weeks, you will encounter:

- Jesus the eternal Word
- Jesus the miracle-worker
- Jesus the teacher of new birth
- Jesus the pursuer of the outsider
- Jesus the great “I AM”
- Jesus the crucified Lamb
- Jesus the risen Lord who sends His people

Our prayer is that you will come to know Him more deeply — for you, in you, and through you.

Welcome to the journey.

We’re grateful to walk it with you.

Sessions:

1. John’s Prologue..... Page 10

John 1:1-18

2. Miraculous Signs..... Page 16

John 2:1-11; John 4:46-54; John 5:2-15; John 6:5-13; John 6:16-21; John 9:1-38; John 11:1-44

3. Nicodemus..... Page 23

John 3:1-21

4. Samaritan Woman at the Well..... Page 29

John 4:1-42

5. “I AM Statements”..... Page 34

John 6:35; John 8:12; John 10:7; John 10:11; John 11:25; Jn. 14:6; John 15:1

6. Good Friday..... Page 40

John 18-19

7. Easter and Beyond..... Page 45

John 20-21

The CASE Model — A Participant's Guide

Each session in this study follows the same rhythm. We call it the **CASE model** as God in Scripture makes His CASE. Once you learn the pattern, you will find that it mirrors the way God's Word has always worked — moving us from understanding to conviction, from grace to growth, and from empowerment to action.

Here is how each session flows:

KNOW

We begin by grounding ourselves in the text. *What does the passage actually say?* We look at context, key details, cultural background, and the story Jesus is telling. Before the Word can work on us, we need to understand it on its own terms.

C — CONVICT

The text holds up a mirror. Where does it challenge our assumptions, habits, or blind spots? Where does the Law do its work — exposing our need, our self-sufficiency, our distance from God's design? *Conviction is not condemnation*; it is the honest recognition that we need a Savior.

A — ASSURE

The Gospel speaks. Where does this passage anchor us in God's grace, Christ's finished work, and the Father's love? This is the heart of Christian theology, particularly Lutheran theology: **assurance rests not in our performance but in Christ's promise and grace**. Here we hear the good news that silences the accuser and sets the captive free.

S — STRETCH

Now the text invites growth. How does it push us beyond our comfort zone into deeper trust, bolder faith, or new understanding? Stretching is not about guilt — it is about possibility and opportunity. The God who assures us also calls us forward.

E — EMPOWER

The Holy Spirit equips. What resources — the Word, the Sacraments, the community of faith, the Comforter Himself — does Jesus provide to sustain us? We are never sent out empty-handed. Empowerment is God's provision for everything He asks.

APPLY

We move from the Upper Room into the world. What concrete, specific step will you take this week to live out what you have received? Application makes the study personal and practical — faith taking shape in daily life as Jesus, through His Spirit, is formed in us.

A Note on the Pattern: The CASE movement — **Convict** → **Assure** → **Stretch** → **Empower** — follows the ancient rhythm of **Law and Gospel**. The Law convicts us of our sin and need; the Gospel assures us of Christ's grace and mercy. From that assurance, we are stretched toward maturity and empowered for mission. **Know** and **Apply** bookends this movement, grounding each session in Scripture and sending participants into their daily lives. This is not a formula — it is the heartbeat of how God's Word has always worked.

For Personal Reflection and Discussion: The front half of each lesson includes commentary and discussion questions. However, after the closing prayer and the Looking Ahead thought, there is a section entitled “*For Personal Reflection and Discussion.*” This section can be used in a couple of different ways: (1) It can be used for individual reflection on the lesson during the week, either (a) prior to the group meetings in preparation for the upcoming group meeting/discussion, or (b) it can be used for individual reflection during the week following the group meeting/discussion.

(2) A second option, the questions can be a replacement for the front half with the commentary. This option allows the discussion to be less prompted and guided by commentary and more by the individual thoughts of those in the group.

Either way, the study guide uses the CASE model:

Know – Convict – Assure – Stretch – Empower – Apply

Note: The author’s preference would be for groups to choose “1 (a)” above. “1 (b)” would then serve as preparation for the group discussion of “1 (a).” As the author, to encourage accountability, I would further suggest that following the opening prayer, the group leader begin each lesson by asking two questions: (1) “What did you learn from the preparatory readings during the week?” And (2) “How has your 'Apply' been going during the week?”

Group Covenant

At the back of this study guide is a “Group Covenant” that group members may choose to make with one another. This covenant is not being made with God with Divine consequences. It is a group covenant (agreement/pledge) between group members for a period of seven weeks. The intention of the covenant is to encourage members to support each other (both during group meetings and outside them) and to establish accountability to and for each other.

SPECIAL NOTE TO LEADERS: These lesson plans are guides. They are not set in concrete. Leaders should feel free to modify, delete, or add questions in a given lesson. Groups should also feel free to cover a lesson in multiple weeks if desired. The two things that leaders and groups want to maintain are: (1) dependence upon and faithfulness to the Biblical texts, and (2) the flow of (a) know, (b) convict, (c) assure, (d) stretch, (e) empower, and (f) apply. If groups cover a given lesson across multiple sessions, each session need not include all six elements; however, the lesson as a whole should include all six elements.

THE SEVEN WEEKLY SESSIONS

Week 1: John's Prologue

Scripture: John 1:1-18

Theme: Jesus (The WORD) became flesh, revealing God and bringing light, life, grace, and truth.

KNOW

John 1:1-18 is commonly referred to as “John’s Prologue” to his Gospel. The purpose of a prologue, by definition, is to “Establish the setting, introduce themes, or provide crucial backstory that doesn't fit in the first chapter.” A prologue is meant to set the stage for what is to come.

In these opening verses, John introduces concepts he will further develop throughout his gospel and first epistle. In these opening verses, the WORD (Λόγος / *Logos*) becomes flesh to dwell/live among us (**Jn. 1:14**). The WORD / *Logos* that spoke creation into being was none other than the preincarnate Christ (**Gen. 1; Jn. 1:1-3**). As this WORD / *Logos*, the great “I AM” (**Ex. 3:14**; see also: **Jn. 6:35; Jn. 8:12; Jn. 10:7; Jn. 10:11; Jn. 11:25; Jn. 14:6; Jn. 15:1**), becomes incarnate as a human being, we know God in the flesh. We, having light and being enlightened, see and know grace, truth, and life. We see and know GOD.

1. Circle the three words/phrases below that you most associate with Jesus.

Light	Deceit	Alpha & Omega
Darkness	Creator	Fulfiller of the Law
Life	Destroyer	Friend
Death	Salvation	Word Made Flesh
Grace	Condemnation	Shepherd
Judgement	Sacrifice	Other_____
Truth	Lamb of God	Other_____

2. Now, from the same list, put a line through the three words/phrases you least associate with Jesus.
3. Which of the above words are found in John 1:1-18? *Note: Some of the words above are not found in John 1:1-18, but are found later in John’s Gospel, and one is found in his Revelation.
4. What is one “truth” about God you see in Jesus? What does it help you understand about God?

C — CONVICT

John 1:9-11 (see also 1 Jn. 1:7-10) – Jesus came as a revealing light, revealing truth, and exposing falsehood and sinful/errant thoughts, words, and deeds.

5. What Biblical truths tend to be outright rejected, overlooked, or simply ignored by society? ...in the church? ...by you?
6. Make two lists: one Commendation, the other Condemnation. As the light of God’s truth shines upon our society, what are some things that get commendation and what get condemnation? Think of things in our country? ...in our community? ...in our places of work? ...in our schools? ...in our families? ...in ourselves?

7. Where do “we” stand convicted by Jesus, the Living WORD? ...where are you personally being convicted? Consider the Ten Commandments? ...the Two Great Commandments? ...Jesus’ New Commandment?
 - You shall have no other gods.
 - You shall not misuse the name of the Lord, your God.
 - Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.
 - Honor those in authority.
 - Don’t murder.
 - Don’t commit adultery.
 - Don’t steal.
 - Don’t bear false witness.
 - Don’t covet your neighbor’s house.
 - Don’t covet your neighbor’s wife, manservant, maidservant, fields, cattle, or anything belonging to your neighbor.
 - Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.
 - Love your neighbor as you love yourself.
 - Love your neighbor as Jesus has loved you.
 - Remember also, Jas. 4:17: “Anyone who knows the good s/he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”
8. Reflecting on the Ten Commandments, the Two Great Commandments, and Jesus’ New Commandment, spend a moment in silent, personal confession.
9. Write the sins that burden you the most on a piece of paper. Fold the paper so no one sees what you have written, then everyone is to put their paper into a non-burnable container. (This will become a ritual we do each week, this week and for the next six weeks of our study together.)

A — ASSURE

Jesus and His revealing light expose more than our sin. They also expose or reveal God’s amazing love and Jesus’ atoning sacrifice.

10. Read aloud the following Bible passage. (For the readers, it is suggested that you either read them together as a choir, or you take turns reading them, first, one person reads, then the next person, and so on, until either all the passages have been read or everyone present has read a passage. If you are taking turns reading the passages, you might also consider having the reader turn to the person on their right or left and read the passage directly to that person. **(NOTE: NOT ALL the PASSAGES NEED to BE READ!** The leader, each week, should decide ahead of time whether or not all the verses will be read, and, if not all, which verses will be read.)
11. Once all the passages you are going to read have been read, burn the sin papers in the container and either scatter the ashes to the wind or bury them.

Ps. 103:12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Jn. 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”

Ro. 3:23-25 “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

Ro. 6:10 “...the death he died he died to sin, once for all.”

Gal. 2:16 “...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.”

Eph. 2:4-5 “ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Eph. 2:8-9 “...by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

1 Tim. 2:3-6 “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all.”

Tit. 3:4-5 “...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,”

Heb. 9:28 “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

1 Jn. 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S — STRETCH.

John 1:16 says we have received “grace (χάρις) upon grace. (χάριτος)”

Jn. 1:13 “who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” We are people who have been born or reborn of God.

Jesus became incarnate some 2000 years ago to live and die FOR us. Being born of God, Jesus continues to be incarnate today through His Body, the Church, of which every Christian is a part.

Jn. 2:3,5-6 “Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God....Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Jesus “graces” us, not only through His atoning sacrifices to make satisfaction for our sins (Ro. 3:24-25; 1 Jn. 2:2); He also graces us with His indwelling presence (Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:27) so that we might

be fruitful in His service for the advancement of His Kingdom of love (Jn. 15:4-5,16-17; 1 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:16).

1 Jn. 4:7-8,11-12 “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love....¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

12. What three manifestations/fruits of Jesus’ indwelling presence through His Spirit are most evident in your life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control?
13. In what three manifestations/fruits of Jesus’ indwelling presence are you most needing to grow?

E — EMPOWER

Jesus never sends His disciples/followers/apprentices to work “for” Him. He sends us that He might work through us. We are not only “saved” by Jesus. We are also empowered by Jesus (see Mt. 28:19-20; Jn. 15:4-5; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:29; 2 Pe. 1:3-4).

14. God provides the ingredients for us to have a healthy Spiritual diet through which Jesus is nurtured in us. A healthy diet consists of Scripture, the Sacraments, Prayer, Christian Fellowship, and Exercise through Service.
 - Which of the above are regularly a part of your Spiritual diet?
 - Which, if any, are most missing in your Spiritual diet?
15. What opportunities has God provided that could improve your Spiritual diet?

APPLY

16. Make a Spiritual diet plan for the next month.
 - Make sure you include all the ingredients for a healthy diet: Scripture, the Sacraments, Prayer, Christian Fellowship, and Exercise through Service.
 - It is recommended that you review the plan regularly and make adjustments as necessary.
 - It is also recommended that you have an accountability partner from within your group for mutual encouragement and accountability.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Word made flesh,

We thank You for drawing us into the mystery and majesty of Your coming among us. In the beginning, You were with God, and You *are* God — the Light that no darkness can overcome. Today, Your Word has reminded us who You are and who we are in You.

Shine Your light into every shadowed place within us. Expose what is false, heal what is broken, forgive what is sinful, and lift what is burdened. Where Your truth convicts us, let Your grace assure us even more. Let the promise of Your cross and the power of Your resurrection quiet every fear and silence every accusation.

You have given us “grace upon grace.” Help us receive it deeply. Help us trust it fully. Help us rest in it joyfully.

And now, Lord, stretch us. Form Your life within us. Make us people who walk in the light, who speak truth with love, who bear the fruit of Your Spirit, and who reflect Your heart to a world longing for hope. Empower us by Your Spirit — through Your Word, through prayer, through fellowship, through the gifts of Your Church — so that in the days ahead, Your life may be seen in ours. Let Your light shine *through* us in our homes, workplaces, friendships, and community.

As we leave this time of study, send us out with confidence that we are Your children — born not of human will, but born of God. Keep us in Your grace until we gather again.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in John 1:1-18?

2. How is Jesus described? What in John's description of Jesus is most powerful for you?

3. What questions do you have?

4. As Jesus' light shines (v. 5), what do we come to see in and about ourselves and in and about God (see 1 Jn. 1:7-9)?

5. How is a person born of God (vv. 12-13; see also Jn. 3:3-6; Ro. 3:3-4; Ro. 10:17; 1 Cor. 12:3)

CONVICT

1. Where is your life filled more with darkness than with light?

2. _____
3. What specifically does Jesus' revealing light reveal to you about you (share this publicly only to the extent you are comfortable in doing so).

4. What needs to change in your life?

ASSURE

1. What are three things God wants to assure us in this passage

2. Jesus is full of GRACE and TRUTH (v. 14). An acrostic for GRACE is **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense. What thoughts and what feelings does this awaken in you?

3. Where do you need to receive His grace today?

Truth: My place with Jesus is received, not earned.

STRETCH

1. When and where do you resist walking in the light and/or hearing the truth?

2. What “truths” make you uncomfortable?

3. What change(s) might you make if you allowed Jesus to enlighten your path more?

4. What is one truth you believe Jesus is inviting you to embrace more fully?

5. What fears keep you from walking in Jesus’ light?

EMPOWER

1. Where do you need Jesus’ help this week?

2. Which of these verses do you find most empowering at this time: Jn. 1:12-13; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:13; 2 Pe. 1:3-4?

APPLY

1. What is one area of your life you will expose to God’s light and one truth you will more firmly embrace and take to heart?

2. What lie or half-truth will you let go?

Week 2: Miraculous Signs (Considering all seven miracles could be a lot for one Lesson. Your group may want to divide this lesson into two or even three lessons.)

Scripture: – John 2:1-11; John 4:46-54; John 5:2-15; John 6:5-13; John 6:16-21; John 9:1-38; John 11:1-44

Theme: Jesus' miracles were more than incidental events. They reveal Jesus is God incarnate, and they invite faith, that in believing, people might have life in His name (Jn. 20:31)

KNOW

Jesus in John's Gospel, You perform seven miracles before Your crucifixion. John calls these miracles "miraculous signs" as they have a purpose beyond their immediate context. John sums up this purpose in John 20:31 where he writes, "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Each of these miracles could be a Bible study in itself. Rather than try to exhaust everything the miracle does or reveals about You, I (as the author of the study) will direct participants' attention to just a few things that will serve as a basis for the questions you will be asked.

1. Have participants individually read John's account of the seven miracles. Then, as a group, read the author's short commentary for each of the seven miracles. Suggest having a different reader for each miracle.
 - As the Biblical text and the commentary are read, underline or highlight things that catch your attention and/or things you want to come back to.
- **Miracle # 1** – Jesus turns water into wine – John 2:1-11
 - In the grand scheme of things, the momentary embarrassment of running out of wine at a wedding may seem small, but Jesus cares about little things, everyday things, as well as the big things (see Phil. 4:6).
 - Mary wants Jesus to take care of the issue by showing His glory through a demonstration of power. Jesus replies to her request, "My hour has not yet come" (v. 4). This phrase or something similar, John will use three more times in His Gospel (Jn. 7:6; Jn. 7:30; and Jn. 8:20). Finally, in John 12:23, Jesus states, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified," and then in verses 24-33, Jesus proceeds to talk about his death. Jesus' mother and brothers were expecting Jesus to demonstrate His glory in power. John suggests that Jesus' glory did not come in a demonstration of power, but in a demonstration of His love. For John, Good Friday, not Easter Sunday, is the most glorious day of the Church Year. Easter demonstrates Jesus power where not even death could defeat Him. Good Friday and Easter Sunday go together. Without His power, Jesus' love is impotent. Without His love, His power is scary. (See also Jn. 7:39 and Jn. 13:1)
- **Miracle #2** – Jesus heals an official's son – John 4:46-54
 - For me, this miracle demonstrates four stages of faith. Jesus does not criticize the man for any of his "current" stages of faith; Jesus just helps him move to the next. The first stage of faith is a "Hearsay" faith or a "Curious" faith. John. 4:46 tells us Jesus was traveling in the region of Cana, where He had turned water into wine. The official had heard about this miracle; it probably raised his curiosity, and he thought he would need to check it out sometime. At this point, he had no personal investment or experience. The second stage is a "Desperate" faith.

The official's son is sick, and he has probably seen all the doctors. None of them can help. He remembers hearing about this guy who supposedly turned water into wine. In desperation, he seeks Jesus out. The third stage is a "*Hopeful*" faith. The official found Jesus, told Jesus his problem, and Jesus told him to go home, that his son had been made well. The official starts home, hoping it is true, but has no evidence yet. The final stage is an "*Experienced*" faith or a "*Proven*" faith. Halfway home, his servant meets the official and tells him his son is indeed well, and it all happened at the very time Jesus spoke. Our faith tends to fluctuate between these four stages, but prayerfully, each time Jesus is proven faithful, our faith gets a little stronger.

- **Miracle #3** – Jesus heals a lame man by a pool – John 5:2-15
 - This next miraculous sign shows me how some people respond to Jesus in less than fully positive ways. I may be being unfair to the lame man. If I am, I apologize, but I see this lame man being an "excuse maker" and a "tatter." First, an "excuse maker." Jesus asks him, "Do you want to get well?" and the man offers an excuse for why it seems impossible. After he is made well, the Jewish leaders ask him why he is carrying his mat on the to. The man responds by telling them that some stranger had told him to (he hadn't even bothered to inquire about Jesus' name). Later, after Jesus met the man in the temple and the man learned Jesus' name, the man found the Jewish leader and tattled on Jesus. With wellness comes response-ability. This man was not ready for the response-ability he had in being well.
- **Miracle #4** – Jesus feeds 5000 men + women and children – John 6:5-13
 - Other than Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels.
 - From this miracle, we get what I call "God's Math." "me + Jesus = more than enough." This equation is one time it is important to frame it with "me" coming before Jesus. I add very little, if anything, to the equation, but if Jesus is added (+ Jesus), the answer is always going to be "more than enough." Adding is more than merely saying "in Jesus name. Amen." Adding Jesus requires listening to God and aligning ourselves with His will. Adding Jesus also means listening to Jesus and allowing Him to be the supervisor, guiding the process. When Jesus is added, He is not a spectator in our lives. He is the mind that guides and the heart that motivates. We then become His hands, His feet, His voice (Jn. 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:29).
- **Miracle #5** – Jesus walks on water – John 6:16-21
 - Matthew in Matthew 14:25-33 provides us with a fuller account of this event, as in Matthew's accounting, Jesus invites Peter to come walk in the water with Him. I encourage you to read the account in Matthew.
 - A miracle is basically the operation of a transcending power. In this miracle, Jesus transcends nature and the power of gravity.
 - As we read Matthew's account, we see that when Jesus' transcending power is "added" to Peter's life (being aligned with Jesus' will and allowing Jesus to supervise/guide the process), Peter is able to transcend nature as well (Mt. 19:26; Jn. 14:12-14; Eph. 3:20; 1 Jn. 5:14-15).
 - The key is "Fixing our eyes on Jesus" (Heb. 12:) Peter was fine as long as his focus was on Jesus and not on the problem (the wind and the waves). When Peter lost focus on Jesus, he no longer had the ability to transcend, to rise above the problem.
 - If Peter had kept his eyes on Jesus, the wind and waves probably would not have magically disappeared. The waves would have splashed Peter and given him a good bath, but they would have lost their power over Peter. He would have transcended. When we keep our eyes on Jesus

and stay in alignment with Him supervising, Satan and problems lose their power to overwhelm and defeat us.

- **Miracle #6** – Jesus heals a man born blind – John 9:1-38
 - Note the difference between how this formerly blind man reacted to being confronted by the Jewish leaders (vv. 17,25-27,30-33) and how the formerly lame man in John 5 reacted.
 - This formerly blind man spoke with humility but with conviction (v. 25). As the Jewish leaders continue their confrontation, the man seems to gain boldness in his response (vv. 30-33). Does this surprise you?
 - The man was thrown out; it cost him. However, his experience with Jesus was such that he
 - came to believe (vv. 37-38)
 - **Miracle #7** – Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead – John 11:1-44
 - Jesus intentionally delays going to visit Lazarus until there is no doubt he is dead (v. 14)
 - Thomas' love for and commitment to Jesus leads him to encourage the disciples to accompany Jesus as He goes to Bethany, although he expects it will cost them all their lives (v. 16).
 - Martha seems to exhibit a stronger faith than her sister Mary (vv. 21-22,24,27,32).
 - V. 35 – Since Jesus knows He is going to raise Lazarus, theologians debate why Jesus wept.
 - Is He weeping because, for the past four days, Mary, Martha, and friends have been in sorrow because Lazarus had died?
 - Is He weeping because He is going to bring Lazarus back, separating Lazarus from being face-to-face with God, and He feels bad about bringing Lazarus back to a sinful world?
 - Other?
2. As you ponder these seven miraculous signs, what observation do you note?
- What questions do any of them raise?
 - Which miracle speaks to you most strongly?
 - Individually and collectively, what do they tell/show you about Jesus?

C — CONVICT

3. As you ponder these miracles, where/how are you convicted? Confess as is appropriate.
- Wedding of Cana – where and in what do you look for Jesus' glory? ...your glory?
 - Official's Son – How would you describe your faith: Hearsay? ...Desperate? ...Hopeful? ...Proven? Where is the prayer "Lord, I believe. Help me in my unbelief" an appropriate prayer in your life at this time?
 - Lame Man – For what in your life are you failing to respond appropriately with the ability/grace God has given you? For what are you making excuses and/or blaming others?
 - Feeding of the 5000 – Where are you leaving Jesus out of the equation in your life?
 - Walking on Water – Where have you taken your eyes off Jesus and put them on the wind and waves of your life?
 - Where are you acting as one who is spiritually blind, shutting your eyes to the truth and/or refusing to acknowledge it?

- What is dead in your life and needs resurrection?
4. Confess these sins by writing them on a piece of paper to be burned.

A — ASSURE

5. Read aloud the following Bible passage. (For the readers, it is suggested that you either read them together as a choir, or you take turns reading them, first, one person reads, then the next person, and so on, until either all the passages have been read or everyone present has read a passage. If you are taking turns reading the passages, you might also consider having the reader turn to the person on their right or left and read the passage directly to that person. **(NOTE: NOT ALL the PASSAGES NEED to BE READ!** The leader, each week, should decide ahead of time whether or not all the verses will be read, and, if not all, which verses will be read.)
6. Once all the passages you are going to read have been read, burn the sin papers in the container and either scatter the ashes to the wind or bury them.

Ps. 103:12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Jn. 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”

Ro. 3:23-25 “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

Ro. 6:10 “...the death he died he died to sin, once for all.”

Gal. 2:16 “...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.”

Eph. 2:4-5 “ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Eph. 2:8-9 “...by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

1 Tim. 2:3-6 “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all.”

Tit. 3:4-5 “...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,”

Heb. 9:28 “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

1 Jn. 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S — STRETCH

Miracles bring or deliver blessings from God. With blessings, we now have. As we have, we are now capable of responding—with our blessings to God and to others—thereby we have response-ability. Our response-abilities are meant to do at least two things: (1) stretch us/grow us, and (2) bless others.

7. Which of the seven miraculous signs in John’s Gospel speaks to you the most or the loudest at this time, **OR** with which do you most identify:

- (1) the wedding – a rescue in an embarrassing situation,
- (2) the official’s son – a healing/moving through stages of faith,
- (3) the lame man – dropping excuses and assuming response-ability,
- (4) feeding 5000 - making an abundance out of a little,
- (5) walking on water – defying nature and taking a step of pure faith,
- (6) man born blind – boldly sharing “truth,” regardless of consequences,
- (7) raising of Lazarus – being given new life, a new beginning, another day?

- How is God seeking to stretch you, grow you at this time through this miracle?
- What opportunity(s) do you see in, with, through this miracle?
- What “step of faith” is God inviting you to take/the Spirit nudging you to take?
- Are you ready and willing to take it? If yes, what help, assistance, resources do you need? If no, what is hindering you or stopping you from responding with your blessings and taking the step of faith to which God is inviting you?

E — Empowerment

Jesus never asks us to do ministry “for” Him. He seeks to do ministry through us (Jn. 15:4-5). In Acts 1, Jesus tells His followers to wait for the Holy Spirit’s empowerment. In our baptisms (Spiritual rebirth—Jn. 3:5-6; Tit. 3:5-6), we have received the Spirit—a Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7). As each of us is not Jesus’ whole Body, but simply a member/part of His Body, He gives us one another us well for encouragement, discernment, and support in accomplishment of His work for which we have been blessed (Ro. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:1,11-13,16; Heb. 10:24-25).

8. As a group, brainstorm and list resources God has placed at your disposal. List by the categories of:

People/skills/time Church Facilities Material & Financial Time/Availability

9. As you think of God’s invitation and prodding to be a blessing, how can you individually and corporately be a good steward? What *miracle(s)* do you still need to respond to the Spirit’s invitation and prodding to be a blessing and a good steward?

APPLY

10. Spend some time together, prayerfully listening and seeking God’s discernment (for a listening and discerning heart and mind (1 Sam. 3:10; Ps. 46:10; Mk. 4:9; 1 Cor. 2:10-16). Pray for a miracle. Ask God to open your eyes to see His presence and the miracle He is working among us (Mt. 6:10; Mk. 9:24; 1 Jn. 5:14-15)

11. Individually and/or as a group set a goal and make a three-month, a six-month, and a year-long plan (action steps) for accomplishing the goal. Revisit the plan regularly and make adjustments and revisions as the Spirit prompts.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the One who turns water into wine, who speaks life into dying bodies, who opens blind eyes, who feeds the hungry, who calms the storm, and who calls the dead to rise. Your signs are not mere wonders — they are windows into Your heart. Through them, You reveal Your compassion, Your authority, and Your desire that all may believe and have life in Your name.

As we have reflected on Your miraculous signs, deepen our faith. Move us from curiosity to trust, from desperation to hope, from hope to confidence, and from confidence to joyful obedience. Where our faith is weak, strengthen it. Where our vision is clouded, clarify it. Where our hearts are fearful, steady them with Your presence.

Let the signs You performed long ago continue to perform their work in us today — pointing us to Your cross, Your love, and Your power. And as You work in us, work through us, that others may see Your life in ours.

We entrust ourselves to You, the Lord of every moment, the Master of every need, the Giver of every good

gift.

Amen.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What are the seven pre-resurrection miracles in John's Gospel: John 2:1-11; John 4:46-54; John 5:2-15; John 6:5-13; John 6:16-21 (see also Mt. 14:25-33); John 9:1-38; John 11:1-44?

2. How is Jesus described/portrayed? In each story, what is a characteristic of Jesus that stands out the most to you?

3. What questions do you have for John as the writer? ...for Jesus as the miracle performer?

CONVICT

4. What is your general reaction to miracle stories in the Bible? ...to miracle stories today?

5. How tempted are you to attribute "miracles" to other causes, to natural causes?

6. Many Christians do not have a problem doubting God can; they just doubt that He will. Where are you doubting that God will?

7. What stops or hinders you from stepping out in faith?

8. How would your life be different if you believed more in miracles?

ASSURE

9. What is one thing that God wants to assure us in each of these miracles?

10. Which of the seven miracles speaks the most to you at this time? Of what does it assure you or seek to assure you?

11. Gideon put a fleece out before God (Judg. 6:36-40), Zechariah asked for a sign (Lk. 1:11-20), Thomas said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." What assurance(s) are you wanting/needing from God?

Truth: Jesus is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or can imagine.

STRETCH

12. What is a miracle you feel you need, but you are uncomfortable asking God for it?

13. With miracles (blessing) come response-ability. We are blessed to be a blessing. How do you intend to respond to the blessing that comes with God providing a miracle?

EMPOWER

14. God's Math is: "me + Jesus = more than enough" (think of the feeding of the 5000). Which of these verses do you find most empowering at this time: 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:13; 2 Pe. 1:3-4?

APPLY

15. Identify a miracle in your life. How are you/can you use that miracle/blessing of God to be a blessing, to be a miracle for someone? Develop a plan. What is your first step? Next step?

Week 3 - Nicodemus

Scripture: – John 3:1-21

Themes: “Born of water and the Spirit” and “For God so loved He gave....”

KNOW

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He knew the Torah (written Law) well. He believed it and valued it. He also knew and valued the oral Law/traditions and applications of the Torah. These oral Laws were compiled in writing around 200 AD and became the Mishnah (shortly after, the Talmud (rabbinical discussions and debate on the Torah and Mishnah) began to be compiled). Unlike many Pharisees, Nicodemus, while knowing, valuing, and believing the oral traditions, was open to questioning oral Law in pursuit of God’s TRUTH. He saw Jesus as a rabbi, but with a different, somewhat unorthodox take on the Torah (both Nicodemus and Jesus believed in and valued the Torah). Nicodemus came to Jesus, seeking to better understand how Jesus understood the Torah.

Before Nicodemus even asks a question, Jesus takes charge of the conversation, stating, “Unless a person is born, the person cannot enter or be a part of God’s kingdom” (Jn. 3:3). Jesus will go on to say, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:5-6).

1. What do you understand Jesus to be saying in these three verses (see also Jn. 1:12-13; Mt. 3:11; Acts 19:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Th. 2:13-14; Tit. 3:5)

Nicodemus struggles to distinguish between physical birth (“that which is born of flesh is flesh”) and a spiritual birth (and “that which is born of Spirit is spirit”).

2. What is your understanding of “physical birth” versus that of “spiritual birth”? ...of the “baptism of John” and the “baptism of Jesus” (Mt. 3:11; Acts 19:3-5)?
 - Can a baptism of the spirit, spiritual birth, the baptism of Jesus happen separate from a baptism with water? (Lk. 23:40-43; Jn. 3:16; Acts 10:44-47; Acts 16:30-33; Ro. 10:17; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 Jn. 2:2)
 - Does spiritual birth always accompany a baptism with water? Is the Word received every time it is preached? (Mt. 12:31-32; Mk. 4:9; Eph. 4:30; 1 Th. 5:19)

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” is perhaps the best-known verse of Scripture. It has been called “the Gospel in a nutshell.”

3. What is your understanding of this passage?
 - Why is it called “the Gospel in a nutshell”?
 - According to this verse, what is the sole condition for salvation? (see Acts 4:12; Ro. 1:16; Ro. 3:23-25; Ro. 6:10; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 Jn. 2:2)
 - Why are “Word and Sacrament” called “means of grace”?

John writes in the next verse, John 3:17, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (see also Jn. 12:47)

4. What does John 3:17 suggest to Christians as we seek to share the gospel and fulfill the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20)?

- What is the difference between Law and Gospel, and what is the role of each in Christian witness? (See Ro. 7:7-13, Ro. 8:1-4; Gal. 2:16)
- How might the Gospel be likened to a magnet? Consider: Mt. 3:2; Mt. 4:17; Acts 29:23,30-33; Ro. 1:16; Ro. 3:23-25; Col. 4:5-6; 2 Th. 2:14; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 Jn. 2:2.
- C.F.W. Walther¹ 25th thesis, of his: *25 Thesis on the Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, states: “The Word of God is not properly divided: if the Gospel does not generally predominate in one's teaching.”
- Discuss the statement: “The Gospel does not ignore, overlook, or excuse one from the Law, but the Law MUST NEVER overshadow the GOSPEL.” (Bill Cullen)

C — CONVICT

5. With what teaching(s) of Jesus do you struggle to believe and/or accept?
6. If you are a Christian (a believer in Jesus’ salvific work), you have been born again and possess Jesus’ DNA (Ro. 6:3-4,11,13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; 2 Pe. 1:3-4). In what areas of your life, or what practices and habits do you exhibit that emanate from your old nature whose identity is rooted in Adam, than your new nature in Jesus?
7. When, where, and with whom do you tend to be more Law-oriented than Gospel-oriented? Toward whom are you judgmental and condemning, rather than being an ambassador of God’s grace?
8. Confess these sins by writing them on a piece of paper to be burned.

A — ASSURE

9. Read aloud the following Bible passage. (For the readers, it is suggested that you either read them together as a choir, or you take turns reading them, first, one person reads, then the next person, and so on, until either all the passages have been read or everyone present has read a passage. If you are taking turns reading the passages, you might also consider having the reader turn to the person on their right or left and read the passage directly to that person. **(NOTE: NOT ALL the PASSAGES NEED to BE READ!** The leader, each week, should decide ahead of time whether or not all the verses will be read, and, if not all, which verses will be read.)
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Jn. 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”

¹ C.F.W. Walther was the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He was also the first president and teacher of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Probably what he is most remembered for (which many consider his greatest contribution to the Church is his book *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*. Between 1884 and 1885, Walther, in a series of 39 lectures, presented the church with 25 Thesis. In 1929, these lectures were compiled into a book and published by Concordia Publishing House.

Ro. 3:23-25 “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

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1 Jn. 2:2 “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S — STRETCH

11. What is a Biblical truth that is a stretch for you to fully accept or believe, a truth you struggle to fully believe and embrace with confidence?

- What is it about this truth that makes it hard to fully believe?
- What would make it easier to more fully believe this truth?
- Mk. 9:24 – What is one thing you could do to embrace this truth more fully?

12. Think of a person you tend to judge and/or to condemn.

- Read Jn. 8:7-11.
- Remember the sins you confessed in writing and then that were burned. God has not judged or condemned you. You are unconditionally and fully forgiven. – Eph. 4:42

E — Empowerment

13. Which of the verses below do you find most empowering? Explain.

Mt. 19:26 “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Gal. 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Jn. 3:17 “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Eph. 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

14. Discuss and consider trying the following:

When I have a hard time loving (forgiving, not judging, etc.) someone, I ask myself three questions, each with an obvious answer:

- Does Jesus love (or whatever the issue is) this person? Obviously, the answer is “yes.”
- Does Jesus live in me? By the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit, the answer again is “yes.”
- Finally, does the Jesus in me love (or whatever the issue) this person? Again, the answer is “yes, the JESUS in me loves (or whatever) this person.

Solution: Get out of the way, “Bill,” and let the JESUS in me do His thing.

APPLY

15. Memorize Matthew 19:26, Galatians 3:27, John 3:17, and Ephesians 4:32.

16. Post these verses on a mirror or in a place you will be reminded of them regularly.

17. Whenever you are tempted to doubt a Biblical truth or to judge or condemn someone, silently or out loud, repeat the appropriate memorized verse(s).

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You met Nicodemus in the quiet of night, speaking truth that awakens the heart and light that scatters the darkness. You revealed the mystery of new birth — not by human effort, but by the Spirit’s gracious work. You declared the Father’s love, a love so deep that He gave His only Son for the life of the world.

As we leave this study, let Your words echo within us: “*You must be born again.*” Renew us by Your Spirit. Breathe fresh life into weary places. Replace confusion with clarity, fear with faith, and darkness with Your radiant light.

Where we cling to old ways, loosen our grip. Where we resist Your truth, soften our hearts. Where we doubt Your love, assure us again that You came not to condemn but to save.

Send us out as people reborn — living in Your light, trusting in Your promise, and bearing witness to Your grace.

Amen.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in John 3:1-21?

2. How would you describe Jesus in the passage? How would you describe Nicodemus?

3. Jesus' words caught Nicodemus by surprise, perhaps even shock? Is there anything in these verses you find surprising, shocking, and/or disturbing?

4. What does it mean to "be born again"? How/when is a person "born again"? (see Jn. 1:12-13; Ro. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:31)

5. How is a person born of God (vv. 12-13; see also Jn. 3:3-6; Ro. 3:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17)

6. How would you describe love as it is mentioned in v. 16? (see Jer. 31:3; Ro. 5:7-8; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 Jn. 2:2)

7. What was Jesus' demeanor towards people/sinners? What did He not come to do? (see Jn. 8:11; Jn. 12:47)

8. V. 21 – What do we see when or as we walk in the light? (see 1 Jn. 1:7-10)

CONVICT

9. What teaching(s) of Jesus do you not understand? ...question? ...modify in order to make it/them more palatable to your thinking and reasoning?

10. While we are to judge and condemn behaviors (Gal. 6:1; Eph. 5:11), we are never to judge or condemn people (Mt. 7:1). Who do you tend to judge and condemn?

11. What needs to change in your attitude and behaviors toward people whose values and beliefs are different from your own?

ASSURE

12. Of what does God assure you in v. 6? ...verse 16? ...verse 17?

13. V. 21 – Why is walking in God's revealing light freeing rather than scary? What two things do we see or learn? (see 1 Jn. 1:7-9)

14. Where is God wanting you to hear today the words, "Neither do I condemn you" (Jn. 8:11)?

Truth: Jesus has made full atonement for my sins.

STRETCH

6. Where in your life do you need to see yourself as “born again” and “a new creation)?

7. What makes this challenging?

8. Who do you need to value rather than to judge and condemn?

9. What needs to change in your thinking for this to happen?

10. What fears keep you from walking in Jesus’ light?

EMPOWER

Nicodemus will appear in John’s Gospel on two more occasions (Jn. 7:50-52 and Jn. 19:39-42). While Scripture does not give Nicodemus an active role in Jesus’ life or ministry, it does present him as being supportive of Jesus.

11. Do you think Nicodemus found his conversation with Jesus in Jn. 3:1-21 empowering? Explain.

12. What empowers you in your relationship with Jesus and your giving witness of Him to others?

APPLY

13. Identify a faith question you have. Search the Scriptures and the opinion of at least two Biblically knowledgeable Christians whom you respect regarding your question.

14. Identify two people whom you have tended to judge and condemn. Prayerfully and humbly work at valuing these people this week.

WEEK 4 – Samaritan Woman at the Well

Scripture: John 4:1–42

Theme: Jesus loves and came for “outsiders” as well as the “insiders.”

KNOW

John 4:1-42 – Jesus and His disciples are traveling through Samaria (a region full of people, a good Jew would tend to disrespect and avoid, if not outwardly despise or even hate. Upon coming to Sychar (a small town in Samaria), Jesus sent His disciples to get food while He stayed by a well on the outskirts of town.

1. What information does the text provide us regarding this Samaritan woman?
 - What assumptions can we pretty safely make about her?
 - How does the woman self-identify (vv. 6 & 12)?
 - What is the woman’s understanding of the Messiah?
2. The woman came to the well around the sixth hour (hour) when she thought no one would be there. Do you find it surprising that she is willing to engage Jesus in conversation even after He reveals that He is aware of her sinful lifestyle?
 - Do you find it surprising that she returns to town to tell the people she usually avoids about her experience?
 - Do you find it surprising that the people actually listen to this woman, whom they usually gossip about?
3. Vv. 39-42 – What is the difference between telling people about Jesus and introducing people to Jesus? (see Jn. 1:35-39,41-42)?

C — CONVICT

4. Which describes you more: (a) one who gossips, or (b) one who gets gossiped about?
5. How do you most commonly relate to or interact with people whose lifestyle and behaviors you disapprove: (a) ignore and avoid, (b) gossip and belittle, (c) befriend and assist?
6. As Christians, we have been commissioned to be fishers of men, women, and children (Mt. 4:19) and to make disciples of everyone we can (Mt.28:19-2), to tell our family, friends, and neighbors of all Jesus has done for us (Mk. 5:19).
 - What opportunities to give witness have you recently overlooked or ignored (Jas. 4:17)?
7. Write the sins that burden you on a piece of paper (particularly confess your sins of omission). Fold the paper so no one sees what you have written, then everyone is to put their paper into a non-burnable container. (This will become a ritual we do each week, this week and for the next six weeks of our study together.)

A — ASSURE

8. Read aloud the following Bible passage. (For the readers, it is suggested that you either read them together as a choir, or you take turns reading them, first, one person reads, then the next person, and so on, until either all the passages have been read or everyone present has read a passage. If you are taking turns reading the passages, you might also consider having the reader turn to the person on their right or left and read the passage directly to that person.

(NOTE: NOT ALL the PASSAGES NEED to BE READ! The leader, each week, should decide ahead of time whether or not all the verses will be read, and, if not all, which verses will be read.)

9. Once all the passages you are going to read have been read, burn the sin papers in the container and either scatter the ashes to the wind or bury them.

Ps. 103:12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Jn. 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”

Ro. 3:23-25 “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

Ro. 6:10 “...the death he died he died to sin, once for all.”

Gal. 2:16 “...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.”

Eph. 2:4-5 “ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Eph. 2:8-9 “...by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

1 Tim. 2:3-6 “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all.”

Tit. 3:4-5 “...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,”

Heb. 9:28 “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

1 Jn. 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S — STRETCH and E — EMPOWER

10. Read the verses below. After marking the verses, share one verse you marked “S,” one you marked “E,” and any you marked “B.”

- If you feel the verse stretching or seeking to stretch you, mark it “S.”
- If you feel the verse empowering you, mark it “E.”
- If you feel the verse doing both, mark it “B.”

___ **Mt. 4:19** “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

___ **Mt. 10:19-20** “When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

___ **Mt. 28:19-20** “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

___ **Mk. 5:19** “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

___ **Acts 1:8** “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

___ **2 Cor. 5:17-19** “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

___ **Gal. 5:9-10** “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone.”

___ **2 Tim. 1:6-7** “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

___ **1 Pe. 3:15** “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

___ **1 Jn. 1:1-3** “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

APPLY

11. Begin establishing “5 Point Friendships” with your unchurched friends: (1) Pray for your friend daily. (2) Be in contact (in person, phone, text, email, etc.) with your friend at least every other week. (3) Socialize, in some fashion, with your friend at least quarterly. (4) Serve in some way or serve with your friend at least a couple of times a year. (5) As opportunities present themselves (without being pushy or preachy), articulate your faith, highlighting the gospel (good news).
12. Practice asking “wondering” and “what do you think” questions.

Closing Prayer

Gracious Lord,

You met a weary woman at a well and offered her living water — water that heals shame, restores dignity, and overflows into witness. You crossed boundaries, broke barriers, and revealed Yourself as the Messiah who knows us fully and loves us completely.

As we conclude this time of study, meet us at our own wells — in our thirst, our questions, our wounds, and our longings. Speak truth that frees us. Pour grace that cleanses us. Give us living water that becomes a spring within us.

Where we hide, draw us out. Where we feel unworthy, remind us of Your welcome. Where we feel empty, fill us with Your Spirit. And like the woman who ran back to her village, send us out with joy to share what You have done.

Let our lives become invitations — simple, honest testimonies that say, “Come, see the One who knows me and loves me.”

Amen.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What are three things that stand out to you in John 4:1-42?

2. What three words would you use to describe Jesus as He relates to the woman? ...with His disciples?

3. What three words would you use to describe the woman? ...Jesus’ disciples? ...the town people?

4. Do you think Jesus was being strategic in conversation with the woman? If so, describe His strategy as best you can.

5. Note: Jesus let her know He is aware of her sinful lifestyle, yet she doesn’t appear to have felt judged or condemned by His knowledge (see Jn. 3:17; Jn. 8:11; Jn. 12:47).
 - What do you think was going on? What was it about Jesus and His manner that the woman didn’t feel a need to flee?_____
6. Do you find it surprising that this Samaritan woman identifies herself as a descendant of Jacob and was awaiting the coming of the Messiah?

7. Do you find it surprising that the woman ends up sharing with/witnessing to the people she usually avoids?

8. How do you think the town people’s belief/faith was different after they met Jesus for themselves?

CONVICT

9. How much of a gossip are you? How do you relate to people who operate with a different set of beliefs and values than you have?

10. Are there people who feel judged and condemned by you, or to what extent do people feel judged, condemned, or devalued by you?

11. What needs to change in your attitude and behaviors toward people whose values and beliefs are different from your own?

ASSURE

12. Of what does this story assure you, or how does this story assure you? (see Jn. 3:17; Jn. 8:11; Jn. 12:47; 1 Tim. 2:3-6)

13. Where is God wanting you to hear today the words, “Neither do I condemn you” (Jn. 8:11)?

Truth: Jesus died once for ALL.

STRETCH

15. Who is the Holy Spirit nudging you to reach out to without judgment or condemnation?

16. With whom is the Spirit nudging you to share your faith?

17. What is hindering that from happening? What do you need to overcome for that to happen?

EMPOWER

18. What do you think empowered or was empowering for the woman to share with and give witness to the town’s people?

19. Practice giving a testimony with one or two other Christians.

APPLY

20. Begin establishing “5 Point Friendships” with your unchurched friends: (1) Pray for your friend daily. (2) Be in contact (in person, phone, text, email, etc.) with your friend at least every other week. (3) Socialize, in some fashion, with your friend at least quarterly. (4) Serve in some way or serve with your friend at least a couple of times a year. (5) As opportunities present themselves (without being pushy or preachy), articulate your faith, highlighting the gospel (good news).

WEEK 5 – Jesus’ “I AM” Statements

Scripture: John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1

Theme: Jesus is YAHWEH – I AM...

KNOW

In Exodus 3:14, God identifies Himself as “I AM WHO I AM.” This “I AM” is limitless. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6). He is the God who brought the Children up out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (Ex. 20:2). I AM allows for an infinite number of descriptors for an infinite God.

- *El Shaddai* – God Almighty (Gen. 17:1)
- *El Elyon* – God Most High (Gen. 14:18–20)
- *El Olam* – Everlasting God (Gen 21:33)
- *El Roi* – The God Who Sees Me (Gen. 16:13)
- *El Gibbor* – Mighty God (Is. 9:6)
- *Yahweh-Jireh* – The LORD Will Provide (Gen. 22:14)
- *Yahweh-Rapha* – The LORD Who Heals (Ex. 15:26)
- *Yahweh-Nissi* – The LORD Is My Banner (Ex. 17:15)
- *Yahweh-Shalom* – The LORD Is Peace (Jdg. 6:24)
- *Yahweh-Rohi* – The LORD Is My Shepherd (Ps. 23)
- *Yahweh-Tsidkenu* – The LORD Our Righteousness (Jer 23:6)
- *Yahweh-Shammah* – The LORD Is There (Ek. 48:35)
- *Yahweh-Sabaoth* – The LORD of Hosts / Armies (used over 250 times)

Jesus, in John’s Gospel, gives us seven more descriptors:

- **John 6:35** Then Jesus declared, “***I am the bread of life.*** He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”
 - **John 8:12** When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “***I am the light of the world.*** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
 - **John 10:7** Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, ***I am the gate*** for the sheep.”
 - **John 10:11** “***I am the good shepherd.*** The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”
 - **John 11:25** Jesus said to her, “***I am the resurrection and the life.*** He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;”
 - **John 14:6** Jesus answered, “***I am the way and the truth and the life.*** No one comes to the Father except through me.”
 - **John 15:1** “***I am the true vine,*** and my Father is the gardener.”
1. How does each statement meet a deep human need (hunger, direction, safety, life, truth, connection)?
 2. How do these statements connect Jesus directly to the God of Exodus 3?
 - How do these statements expand our understanding of God and His limitless nature?
 3. Which “I AM” statement challenges you the most? ...comforts and/or assures you the most?
 4. Which of Jesus’ “I AM” statements is most meaningful to you at this time? Why?

C — CONVICT

J.B. Phillips wrote a book entitled *Your God Is Too Small*.

Paul Tillich, in his book *Dynamics of Faith*, writes that, in a sense, to even call God “God” is idolatry. What Tillich meant is that God is more than anything we can or do imagine when we use the word “God”. For Tillich, God isn’t another “being” among “beings.” For Tillich, that would make God finite with boundaries. For Tillich, God is “being” itself. Sighting passages like Exodus 3:14 and Acts 17:28, Tillich talks of God being the “Ground of all being” and of being “Being-itself.”

5. How do or can people diminish God or put Him in a box?
6. What aspects of God and His nature do you think get diminished the most by people, even Christians?
7. Review Jesus’ seven “I AM” statements. Which one(s) have you diminished this past week? Confess these sins of diminishing God, writing them a piece of paper. Fold the paper so no one sees what you have written, then everyone is to put their paper into a non-burnable container.

A — ASSURE

8. Read aloud the following Bible passage. (For the readers, it is suggested that you either read them together as a choir, or you take turns reading them, first, one person reads, then the next person, and so on, until either all the passages have been read or everyone present has read a passage. If you are taking turns reading the passages, you might also consider having the reader turn to the person on their right or left and read the passage directly to that person. **(NOTE: NOT ALL the PASSAGES NEED to BE READ!** The leader, each week, should decide ahead of time whether or not all the verses will be read, and, if not all, which verses will be read.)
9. Once all the passages you are going to read have been read, burn the sin papers in the container and either scatter the ashes to the wind or bury them.

Ps. 103:12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Jn. 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”

Ro. 3:23-25 “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

Ro. 6:10 “...the death he died he died to sin, once for all.”

Gal. 2:16 “...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.”

Eph. 2:4-5 “ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Eph. 2:8-9 “...by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

1 Tim. 2:3-6 “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all.”

Tit. 3:4-5 “...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,”

Heb. 9:28 “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

1 Jn. 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S — STRETCH

10. Review again the seven “I AM” statements. Pick one of the statements where you feel/sense the nudging of the Holy Spirit, where He wants to stretch your understanding and faith.

- How would your life and what you do and what you don’t do be different if you had a better understanding of the full richness of this “I AM” statement, and/or if you had more faith in the full richness of the statement?
- What questions, doubts, and/or concerns are holding you back in your understanding or faith/confidence?

11. What new step of faith do you believe Jesus, the great “I AM,” is inviting you to take and the Spirit is nudging you to take?

E — EMPOWER

12. Our power comes from Jesus the Vine and by abiding/living in Him (Jn. 15:1-5, see also Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17)

- What pruning would be helpful in your life so that you would be more fruitful (see Heb. 12:1-2)?

13. Which of the verses below do you personally find to be the most empowering at this time? Share it and memorize it.

Josh. 1:9 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Mt. 19:26 “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Mk. 9:24 “I believe; help my unbelief!”

2 Cor. 1:20 “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”

Eph. 3:20 “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”

Phil. 4:13 “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

2 Tim. 1:7 “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

1 Jn. 5:14-15 “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

APPLY

14. If you can, identify an area in your life where your faith in the “I AM” state you have chosen is being or will be put to the test.

- Pray for a discerning mind and heart. Listen for/to the Spirit’s promptings.
- If you think it would be helpful, enlist the help and support of a Christian brother or sister.
- Respond as the Spirit prompts. (2 Cor. 3:4-6)

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the Bread of Life who satisfies our deepest hunger.

You are the Light of the World who scatters every darkness.

You are the Door who welcomes us into safety.

You are the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

You are the Resurrection and the Life who conquers death.

You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life who leads us home.

You are the True Vine who gives us strength to bear fruit.

As we reflect on Your holy Name — the great *I AM* — anchor us in who You are. Let Your identity shape our identity. Let Your sufficiency silence our fears. Let Your presence steady our steps.

Where we are hungry, feed us.

Where we are lost, guide us.

Where we are afraid, comfort us.

Where we are weak, sustain us.

Where we are fruitless, prune and renew us.

Make us people who abide in You, trust in You, and reflect Your life to the world.

Amen.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What name does God give Himself in Ex. 3:14?

2. “I AM” is open-ended. “I AM....” I can be followed by an infinite number of descriptors. Jesus’ seven “I AM” Statements are seven such descriptors: Jn. 6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1

- How do these seven descriptors expand and enrich our understanding of God?

3. Which of the descriptors challenges your thinking and reasoning the most?

4. Which of the descriptors comforts or assures you the most?

CONVICT

5. J. B. Phillips wrote a book entitled *Your God Is Too Small*. How does or how might God get diminished in a person's mind or heart? What "small" thinking do you see some people having in regard to God?

6. Reviewing the seven "I AM" statements, in regard to which of the statements does your thinking or believing tend to be on the small side?

7. What needs to change in your mind, your thinking, and your heart?

ASSURE

8. Jesus is the GOOD SHEPHERD (Jn. 10:11). As a Good Shepherd, He knows His sheep (Jn. 10:14). He knows we are dumb and foolish, yet He laid down His life for us (Jn. 10:15). He is the resurrection and the life, not only His resurrection and life, but ours as well (Jn. 11:25). Jesus is the Vine, as we remain in Him and He in us, His life flows in and through us, and we will be fruitful (Jn. 15:1,4-5).

9. Read and memorize 1 John 2:1-2

Truth: Jesus died once for ALL.

STRETCH

10. Review again the seven "I AM" statements. Pick one of the statements where you feel/sense the nudging of the Holy Spirit, where He wants to stretch your understanding and faith.

11. How would your life and what you do and what you don't do be different if you had a better understanding of the full richness of this "I AM" statement, and/or if you had more faith in the full richness of the statement?

12. What questions, doubts, and/or concerns are holding you back in your understanding or faith/confidence?

13. What new step of faith do you believe Jesus, the great “I AM,” is inviting you to take and the Spirit is nudging you to take?

EMPOWER

14. Our power comes from Jesus the Vine and by abiding/living in Him (Jn. 15:1-5, see also Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17)

15. What pruning would be helpful in your life so that you would be more fruitful (see Heb. 12:1-2)?

APPLY

16. If you can, identify an area in your life where your faith in the “I AM” state you have chosen is being or will be put to the test.

- Pray for a discerning mind and heart. Listen for/to the Spirit’s promptings.
- If you think it would be helpful, enlist the help and support of a Christian brother or sister.
- Respond as the Spirit prompts. (2 Cor. 3:4-6)

WEEK 6 – Good Friday: Jesus’ Arrest, Trials, & Crucifixion

- **Scripture:** John 18-19
- **Theme:** Jesus’ Passion – Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

KNOW

In John 19-20, Jesus will be arrested, tried, mocked, crucified, and buried. In these two chapters, in addition to Jesus, we will encounter soldiers, Malchus, Peter, a servant girl, Caiaphas, Pilate, four women, the crowd, and Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and John (although not by name).

1. As you read these two chapters (if you are a part of a group, read them out loud), mark words/phrases that catch your attention or that raise questions for you.
2. Try to come up with one to five descriptive words for each of the people listed below:

The soldiers – 18:3-6; 19:2-3,23-24 _____

Malchus – 18:10 _____

Peter – 18:10,15-18,25-27 _____

Servant girl – 18:17 _____

Annas & Caiaphas – 18:19-24 _____

Pilate – 18:29-19:16 _____

The crowd – 18:39-40 _____

Four women – 19:25 _____

Joseph & Nicodemus – 19:38-39 _____

- With which character do you most identify? Or, how do you identify with each of the characters?
3. What Jewish customs are mentioned? What Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled?
 4. What is Jesus’ understanding of “Kingdom”? How is it different from Pilate’s? (18:33-39, see also Mt. 4:17; Mt. 6:10,33; Mt. 11:12; Mt. 12:28; Lk. 17:20-21; Acts 28:23,30-31)
 5. Truth is a big concept in John’s Gospel. Pilate asks, “What is truth?” (18:38). How do you understand “truth” (Jn. 1:14,17; 3:21; 4:23-24; 5:23; 8:32)?
 6. The climax of these two chapters is 19:30. What is the relationship between this verse and Mt. 26:39; Jn. 12:27; and Jn. 18:11? How is 19:30 climatic?

C – CONVICT

"Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" is a traditional African-American spiritual. Another line of the song is "Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?" Sadly, all of us have to answer "yes" to those two questions. In a very real sense, all of us crucified our Lord. All of us nailed Him to the tree (Ro. 3:23).

Peter failed to confess his allegiance to Jesus. Pilate failed to follow his conscience and do what he knew was right. This week, I want to focus us on our sins of omission, our sins of failing to do the good God desired us to do. Scripture tells us:

“Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17)

and

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn. 3:16-18)

7. Confess your sins of neglect, of not doing the good and being the blessing God has called and intended you to do. Write them a piece of paper. Fold the paper so no one sees what you have written, then everyone is to put their paper into a non-burnable container.

A — ASSURE

8. Read aloud the following Bible passage. (For the readers, it is suggested that you either read them together as a choir, or you take turns reading them, first, one person reads, then the next person, and so on, until either all the passages have been read or everyone present has read a passage. If you are taking turns reading the passages, you might also consider having the reader turn to the person on their right or left and read the passage directly to that person. **(NOTE: NOT ALL the PASSAGES NEED to BE READ!** The leader, each week, should decide ahead of time whether or not all the verses will be read, and, if not all, which verses will be read.)
9. Once all the passages you are going to read have been read, burn the sin papers in the container and either scatter the ashes to the wind or bury them.

Ps. 103:12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Jn. 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,”

Ro. 3:23-25 “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

Ro. 6:10 “...the death he died he died to sin, once for all.”

Gal. 2:16 “...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.”

Eph. 2:4-5 “ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Eph. 2:8-9 "...by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

1 Tim. 2:3-6 "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all."

Tit. 3:4-5 "...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,"

Heb. 9:28 "so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."

1 Jn. 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 Jn. 2:2 "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

S – STRETCH

Most people have comfort zones that God wants to stretch. We also tend to be protective of our time, our possessions, or both.

10. Ponder:

Gal. 5:25 "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."

Eph. 4:30 "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

1 Th. 5:19 "Do not quench the Spirit."

11. Remembering your sins of omission, your comfort zones, and your stewardship of time and possessions, where do you see the Spirit nudging you?

12. What opportunities do you have to be a blessing this week? ...this month?

13. What is holding you back?

E – EMPOWER

14. Which of the following verses do you find to be most inspiring? ...most empowering?

2 Cor. 3:4-6 "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit.

Phil. 2:12-13 "Work out your own salvation... ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Col. 1:29 "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."

15. Memorize the passage you find most inspiring or most empowering.

APPLY

16. Find a “service partner” and choose a service project you can and will do together within the next month, through which you will be a blessing of God to someone.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Tonight we have stood at the foot of Your cross. We have watched Your suffering, heard Your final words, and witnessed the depth of Your love. You carried our sin, bore our shame, and endured the judgment we deserved. By Your wounds we are healed. By Your sacrifice, we are forgiven. By Your death, we are given life.

Let the cross shape our hearts. Let it humble our pride, quiet our fears, and deepen our gratitude. Where we take Your grace lightly, awaken us. Where we forget the cost of our salvation, remind us. Where we cling to sin, free us.

Teach us to live as people redeemed — walking in forgiveness, extending mercy, and loving as You have loved us. And as we leave this study, keep us near Your cross, where love is revealed, hope is secured, and grace flows without end.

We thank You, Jesus, for saying, *“It is finished.”*

Amen.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in John 18? ...in John 19?

2. How would you describe Jesus in these two chapters?

3. What questions do you have?

4. How would you describe Peter in chapter 18? (vv. 10,15-18,25-27)

5. How would you describe Pilate in these two chapters? (vv. 18:29-19:16)

CONVICT

6. With which character do you most identify:

The soldiers (18:3-6; 19:2-3,23-24)

Peter (18:10,15-18,25-27)

Caiaphas (18:19-24)

Pilate (18:29-19:16)
The crowd (18:39-40)

7. All of us put Jesus on the cross (Ro. 3:23). Spend a moment reflecting upon specific sins you have committed for which Jesus took up the cross, suffered, and died.
-

8. What needs to change in your life?
-

ASSURE

4. Spend a few minutes reflecting on Jn. 3:16-17, Ro. 3:24-25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:55-57, and 2 Cor. 5:17,21
-

5. Where do you need forgiveness today?
-

6. You are encouraged to choose one of the passages and make a computer poster of it, placing the poster somewhere that it will serve as a daily reminder for you.
-

STRETCH

7. Both Peter and Pilate needed courage and boldness to do the right thing. In and/or for what are you needing boldness at this time?
-

8. To whom is the Spirit nudging you to share your faith, proclaiming Jesus as your Savior and Lord?
-

9. What fear(s) keep you from being more bold? (2 Tim. 1:7)
-

EMPOWER

10. Which of these verses do you find most empowering at this time: Josh. 1:9; Mk. 9:24; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:13; 2 Pe. 1:3-4?
-

APPLY

11. What is a situation you are facing where you can be bold and do the godly things, or you can play it safe and remain quiet? Choose today who you will serve (Josh. 24:15). Pray for the courage to do the godly thing and then do it.
-

WEEK 7 – Easter and Beyond

- **Scripture:** John 20-21
- **Theme:** As the Father sent Me, so I send you. Feed My sheep.

KNOW

John 20 and 21 are resurrection narratives.

Note: John's Gospel is 21 chapters. In chapter 12 (halfway through the Gospel before Jesus' crucifixion), we are already at Palm Sunday. Chapters 13-17 (five chapters. Roughly a quarter of John's Gospel – Maundy Thursday covers just a few hours of Jesus' life. Chapters 18-19 are crucifixion narratives. Chapters 13-19 (seven chapters, a third of John's Gospel) cover roughly 24 hours of Jesus' life. Now in chapters 20-21, we have resurrection narratives. The fact that half of the Gospel is Palm Sunday through the resurrection demonstrates the significance John attributes to this material.

*John 13-17 (Maundy Thursday) is covered in a separate six-week study.

In John 20-21, we have: (1) the empty tomb, (2) Jesus meeting Mary in the garden, (3) Jesus appearing to the twelve, minus Thomas and Judas, the evening of His resurrection, (4) Jesus appearing to the eleven (Thomas included) eight days later, (5) providing seven of the disciples with a miraculous catch of fish and breakfast, and (6) Jesus reinstating/commissioning Peter. In John 20:30-31, John also clearly states why he has written his Gospel.

1. Put yourself in the place of the person, or one of the people, involved in the incidents identified below. What are one to three observations you have about each incident:

The empty tomb – Jn. 20:1-10 _____

Jesus and Mary – Jn. 20:11-18 _____

Jesus and the Ten – Jn. 20:19-23 _____

Jesus and Thomas – Jn. 20:24-29 _____

John's Stated Purpose – Jn. 20:30-31 _____

The Miraculous Catch of Fish – Jn. 21:1-14 _____

Jesus and Peter – Jn. 21:15-22 _____

- Which of these stories is most meaningful for you at this time?
2. What difference do you think Jesus' resurrection made to His disciples and to how they viewed life and death? (1 Cor 15:50-58; Phil 1:21-25)
 3. Jesus greets and commissions His disciples the evening of His resurrection saying, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.... If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (see also Jn. 17:15-18; Mt. 4:19; Mt. 9:37-38; Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 5:19; Lk. 19:10; Jn. 15:16-17; Acts 1:8; Ro. 10:14-17; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Col. 1:24; 1 Jn. 1:1-4).
 - What does living a life worthy of your calling and commissioning mean and/or look like for you?

4. In 21:15-17, in the Greek, the word translated as "love in English keeps changing. The first two times Jesus asks Peter if he (Peter) loved Him (Jesus), Jesus uses the word "*agape*" (an unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love). Peter, both times, answers with the Greek word "*philos*" (a love likened to a brother, sister, or close friend). Peter, remembering his denial of Jesus some 30 to 40 days earlier, can't bring himself to use the word "*agape*." Jesus is indeed Peter's Lord and best friend, but having denied Jesus three times, Peter cannot bring himself to say that he loves Jesus unconditionally, selflessly, and sacrificially. He wishes he could, but he can't. The third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, Jesus used Peter's word "*philos*." Peter is deeply saddened. He is saddened that he has forced Jesus to use his (Peter's) word, "*philos*," rather than Jesus' word, "*agape*." He is saddened by the memory of his denial. Jesus, however, by using Peter's word "*philos*," demonstrates acceptance of Peter and where Peter is currently at. Jesus is still calling Peter to "*agape*" – He used that word twice, but in essence, He is telling Peter that "*philos*" is a good place to begin. What is more, after Peter each time responds with "*philos*," Jesus responds by commissioning Peter, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep," "Feed my sheep." Jesus is letting Peter know that He (Jesus) believes in him (Peter) and He (Jesus) is entrusting to Peter that which is most precious to Him (Jesus), those for whom He (Jesus) died.

C – CONVICT

5. Jn. 20:25 – Without concrete evidence, Thomas struggled to believe. Where, when, and why do you ever struggle to believe in regard to faith and God?
6. Jn. 21:7,11 - As was typical, Peter was impulsive. How would you describe your nature: impulsive, cautious, etc.?
- When has your nature proven to be a weakness to be overcome?
7. How would you answer Jesus' question, "Do you '*agape*' Me?"
8. Confess your sins by writing them a piece of paper. Fold the paper so no one can see what you have written, then put it in the non-burnable container.

A – ASSURE

9. Read aloud the Bible passage below. Once all the passages have been read, burn the sin papers in the container and either scatter the ashes to the wind or bury them.

Jn. 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 8:11 "Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.'"

Jn. 12:47 "If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."

1 Jn. 1:7-9 "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 Jn. 2:2 “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S – STRETCH

10. Upon Jesus’ revelation of Himself to Thomas, Thomas exclaims, “My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20:28). What NEW step of faith can you take today to proclaim through your actions that Jesus is your Lord and your God?

E – EMPOWER

Jesus has breathed on us and has baptized us with His Spirit, filling us with power ready to be released in witness and in service.

11. Choose one of the following verses to memorize for a constant reminder of your empowerment:

Mk. 1:8 “I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Jn. 20:22 “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

2 Cor. 3:4-6 “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit.”

Gal. 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Gal. 5:25 “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

2 Tim. 1:7 “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

2 Pe. 1:3 “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”

APPLY

12. Jesus has given us/you, His Spirit (Jn. 20:22), and He is sending us/you (Jn. 20:21).
- After prayerful thought, identify one person to whom you believe God is sending you.
 - John tells us that he wrote his Gospel in order that people might believe, and that in believing they might have life (Jn. 20:31). Identify at least one thing from your study of John’s Gospel you believe would be timely and helpful for your friend to whom you believe God is sending you.
 - Identify a first step or a next step in giving witness to your friend regarding Jesus, the Christ. (Note: Your first step or next step may not involve words. Seeds need to be planted before they can be watered and fertilized. Sometimes the soil needs to be prepared before the seeds can be planted. Prayerfully assess where your friend is at and go from there.)

- Consider the “Five Point Friendship” plan that was introduced in Lesson 4 – The Samaritan Woman at the Well.

Closing Prayer

Risen Lord Jesus,

You stepped out of the tomb with victory in Your hands. You breathed peace into fearful disciples. You restored the fallen. You sent Your people into the world with purpose and promise. Your resurrection is not only an event — it is a new creation, a new beginning, a new life for all who believe.

As we close this study, breathe Your resurrection life into us.

Where we are discouraged, lift us.

Where we are weary, strengthen us.

Where we are uncertain, guide us.

Where we are ashamed, restore us as You restored Peter.

Make us Easter people — people of hope, courage, joy, and mission.

People who hear Your voice.

People who follow where You lead.

People who love as You have loved us.

People who say with confidence, “My Lord and my God.”

Send us out in the power of Your Spirit, that through us others may encounter the risen Christ.

Amen.

For Personal Reflection & Discussion

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in John 20? ...in John 21?

2. How would you describe Jesus in these two chapters?

3. What questions do you have?

4. How would you describe Mary? (20:1-2,10-18)

5. How would you describe the disciples in general? (vv. 20:19-20; 21:1-14)

6. How would you describe Peter? (20:3-7,9; 21:3,7-11,15-21)

7. How would you describe Thomas? (20:24-29)

8. With which character do you most identify: Mary? John? Peter? Thomas?

CONVICT

9. In 21:15-17, in the Greek, the word translated as "love in English keeps changing. The first two times Jesus asks Peter if he (Peter) loved Him (Jesus), Jesus uses the word "*agape*" (an unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love). Peter, both times, answers with the Greek word "*philos*" (a love likened to a brother, sister, or close friend). Peter, remembering his denial of Jesus some 30 to 40 days earlier, can't bring himself to use the word "*agape*." Jesus is indeed Peter's Lord and best friend, but having denied Jesus three times, Peter cannot bring himself to say that he loves Jesus unconditionally, selflessly, and sacrificially. He wishes he could, but he can't. The third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, Jesus used Peter's word "*philos*." Peter is deeply saddened. He is saddened that he has forced Jesus to use his (Peter's) word, "*philos*," rather than Jesus' word, "*agape*." He is saddened by the memory of his denial. Jesus, however, by using Peter's word "*philos*," demonstrates acceptance of Peter and where Peter is currently at. Jesus is still calling Peter to "*agape*" – He used that word twice, but in essence, He is telling Peter that "*philos*" is a good place to begin. What is more, after Peter each time responds with "*philos*," Jesus responds by commissioning Peter, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep," "Feed my sheep." Jesus is letting Peter know that He (Jesus) believes in him (Peter) and He (Jesus) is entrusting to Peter that which is most precious to Him (Jesus), those for whom He (Jesus) died.

- How would you answer Jesus' question, "Do you '*agape*' Me?"
-

ASSURE

12. Where do you need forgiveness today?

13. Spend a few minutes reflecting on Jn. 3:16-17; Jn 8:11; Jn. 12:47; 1 Jn. 1:7-9; 1 Jn. 2:2. Choose one of the passages and memorize it.
-

STRETCH

14. Identify a relationship you have where your commitment (love) has been conditional.
15. What needs to change in thought? ...attitude? ...way you talk about him or her? ...behavior(s)?

EMPOWER

16. Reflect on the verses below. Choose one to memorize and use it to empower you throughout the week.

Josh. 1:9 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Mt. 1:23 "They shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)."

Mt. 28:20 "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jn. 17:17-18 “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

2 Cor. 1:20 “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”

Eph. 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,”

Col. 1:29 “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”

1 Jn. 4:4 “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

APPLY

17. In regard to the relationship you identified under “Stretch,” make a plan:

- Identify a first step or a next step in strengthening/improving your commitment.
- (Consider the “Five Point Friendship” plan that was introduced in Lesson 4 – The Samaritan Woman at the Well.

Bible Study Group Covenant

A shared commitment for Christ-centered community

1. Our Purpose

We gather as a small group to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ — learning His Word, practicing His way of life, and encouraging one another to live as His people in the world.

2. Our Commitments to One Another

Presence

I will make participation in this group a priority.
If I must miss, I will communicate with the group leader.

Confidentiality

Personal stories shared in the group stay in the group.
Stories are ours to protect, not to repeat.

Scripture & Prayer

We will center our time on God's Word and prayer.
We will encourage one another to practice Scripture and prayer throughout the week.

Participation

I will contribute honestly and graciously.
I will listen well and avoid dominating our conversations.

Spiritual Growth

I will pursue growth in Christ through Scripture, prayer, and obedience.
I welcome gentle accountability and encouragement from the group.

Hospitality & Care

We will create a safe, welcoming environment for all.
We will support one another in times of need.

Mission

We will look for ways to bless our neighbors, serve our community, and live out the Gospel together.

3. Our Group Practices

Begin and end on time.
Share leadership responsibilities as gifts allow.
Communicate respectfully and promptly.
Resolve conflict biblically and directly (Matthew 18:15–20).

4. Our Covenant

By God's grace, we commit to these practices for the sake of Christ, His church, and His mission.

Signed:

Group Members: _____

Date: _____