

THE
WITNESS
of JESUS

Group Leader's Guide

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This study guide is to be used in conjunction with *The Witness of Jesus* by Kenneth Schenck (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2014).

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

This six-week study is based on Kenneth Schenck's book, *The Witness of Jesus*. The study zeroes-in on evidence the apostle John presented in his gospel that proves Jesus' deity. You and your group members will see Jesus as the source of living water, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life, and the I AM—God himself. These are extremely important identifications, because they overturn the popular notion that Jesus was just a good man. Also, these identifications help us see how all we need to lead a full, righteous, productive, and joyful life is found in Jesus.



Week 1

THE LIVING WATER

John 2–4

Jesus gives living water.

TO THE FACILITATOR

Show a glass of water to the group. Ask how long a person might live without water. Generally a person can survive only four or five days without water, but the time may vary according to the climate. Explain that this session focuses on living water that brings eternal life to those who believe in Jesus.

FOCUS ON GOD’S WORD

John wrote his gospel primarily to show that Jesus is the Son of God and to create faith in him (John 20:30–31). He demonstrated Jesus’ deity by reporting miracles or signs Jesus performed during his earthly ministry. The first of these signs took place at a wedding in Cana, near Nazareth (2:1–2).

When Jesus’ mother, Mary, told him the master of the banquet had run out of wine (v. 3), Jesus turned ceremonial water into wine (vv. 4–10). This miracle revealed his glory (v. 11), but perhaps it also showed that the need for ceremonial cleansing would soon yield to cleansing by Jesus blood, symbolized by the wine.

Jesus entered the temple at Jerusalem when it was almost time for Passover (v. 13). Angry about the crass commercialism he found there, he cleared the area of those who corrupted the sacrificial system (v. 16). His zeal for pure worship demonstrated his love for his Father in heaven and disdain for corrupt worship (v. 17).

Perhaps Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, may have seen Jesus chase the moneychangers from the temple. Also, he may have heard Jesus predict that he would rise from the dead on the third day. At any rate, he visited Jesus by night and confessed that Jesus’ signs proved he had come from God (3:1–2). Jesus told Nicodemus he would not see the kingdom of God unless he became born again or born from above (vv. 3–8). He was referring to the act whereby the Holy Spirit gives believing sinners a brand-new life.

Jesus and his disciples traveled through Samaria on their return to Galilee (4:13). At Sychar Jesus encountered a woman of bad reputation, who was drawing water from a well at noon (vv. 4–6). When Jesus asked her to give him a drink of water, she was surprised that he, a Jew, would speak to her, a Samaritan (vv. 7–9).

Jesus offered the Samaritan woman living water (vv. 9–14), and as the conversation continued, she became increasingly convinced that Jesus was more than just a Jew (vv. 15–19). Jesus told her

that worshipping God is not a matter of tradition. God accepts only worship that is offered “in spirit and in truth” (vv. 21–24). The woman perceived that Jesus was the Messiah (vv. 25–26). Her discovery was so life changing, she left her water jar at the well, returned to the city, and successfully persuaded the people to accompany her to Jesus (vv. 28–30).

FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Why do you agree or disagree that Jesus turned water into wine simply because his mother wanted him to do so?
2. Why do you agree or disagree with those who say we should pray to Mary because Jesus will not turn down what she requests of him?
3. Do you think the water and wine referred to in John 2 represent respectively law and grace? Why or why not?
4. What was there about the buying and selling at the temple that stirred Jesus’ righteous indignation?
5. How might a spirit of commercialism corrupt worship today?
6. Why do you agree or disagree that the members of the Sanhedrin knew Jesus had come from God?
7. Do you think some people who reject Jesus know his true identity? Defend your answer.
8. Why can’t water baptism save sinners?
9. Do you believe Jesus’ mention of water in John 3:5 refers to physical birth, the Word of God, or the Spirit? Defend your answer.
10. What can we learn about cross-cultural witnessing from Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman?
11. How would you describe living water?
12. How do spiritually thirsty people try to assuage their thirst?

WRAP-UP

If possible, give each group member a bottle of water as a reminder that Jesus offers living water. If it isn’t possible to do this, challenge everyone to offer salvation this week to someone they believe is spiritually thirsty.



Week 2

THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6

Jesus is the Bread of Life.

TO THE FACILITATOR

Ask the group members to identify their favorite kind of bread. Explain that this session focuses on the best kind of bread ever offered to humankind—the Bread of Life.

FOCUS ON THE WORD

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand appears in each of the four gospels. A huge crowd followed Jesus to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee because they had seen his miracles (John 4:1–2). After going up to a mountainside, Jesus sat down with his disciples, looked at the crowd, and asked Philip where they could purchase bread for the crowd (vv. 3–4). Of course he knew what he would do, but his question startled Philip, who replied that eight months wages wouldn't buy enough bread to feed the crowd (vv. 5–7). Andrew brought a boy with a tiny lunch to Jesus, but he realized the boy's five small barley loaves and two tiny fish would not go far (vv. 8–9).

Jesus took action. He gave thanks and distributed the loaves and fish to the hungry crowd (vv. 10–11). Remarkably, everyone ate and felt full. After “dinner,” the disciples gathered twelve baskets of leftovers (vv. 12–13). Because the crowd wanted to make Jesus their king, he withdrew to a mountain by himself (vv. 14–15). It was not time for him to accept a crown. He must first embrace a cross!

Later, Jesus walked on water and rejoined his disciples (v. 25). He explained that working for food amounts to laboring for something that spoils, whereas doing the work of God has eternal value (vv. 26–27). The work of God, he said, is to believe in Jesus (v. 29).

Jesus identified himself as the Bread of Life, the true manna sent from God to satisfy spiritual hunger and give eternal life (vv. 30–35). He promised to keep all who would believe on him, and he also promised to raise them to life after death (vv. 36–40).

Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and giver of eternal life rankled some Jews. They refused to accept him as anyone but Joseph's son (vv. 41–42). But Jesus chided them, and clearly identified himself as the living bread God had given (vv. 43–51). He said eternal life results from believing in him—eating his flesh that he would give “for the life of the world” (v. 51).

The thought of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood (v. 56) irked the crowds, so many turned away from him (vv. 60, 66). When he confronted the Twelve with the issue of whether they, too, would turn away from him (v. 67), Peter answered for himself and the others. He confessed

there was no appropriate place to be except alongside Jesus. He proclaimed, “You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (v. 68).

FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Why do you agree or disagree that many today profess to follow Jesus because they expect to get something from him?
2. How did Jesus’ question about buying bread test Philip?
3. What does it say about Andrew that he knew a little boy had a small lunch?
4. On a scale of one to ten, how aware of a child’s potential are you? How might you improve this awareness, if necessary?
5. Why do you agree or disagree with the saying “Little is much if God is in it”?
6. How significant was it that Jesus fully satisfied the hunger of the people in the crowd?
7. Why do you agree or disagree that it was significant that the disciples gathered twelve baskets of leftovers?
8. How has Jesus rewarded you for a service you performed for him?
9. Why do you think Jesus did not let the five thousand make him king?
10. Why do you agree or disagree that it is essential to believe in Jesus’ true humanity?
11. Why do you agree or disagree that it is essential to believe in Jesus’ true deity?

WRAP-UP

Close this session by asking volunteers to complete the following sentence: “Because Jesus is the Bread of Life . . .”



Week 3

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8–9

Jesus is the Light of the World.

TO THE FACILITATOR

Ask whether any group members have experienced a power outage after sundown. How did it feel to live in darkness? Explain that this week’s session focuses on Jesus, who came as the Light of the World, although many people chose to continue to live in spiritual darkness.

FOCUS ON THE WORD

When Jesus declared, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness” (John 8:12), the Pharisees challenged him (v. 13). But both Jesus and God the Father bore witness to the truth that he was indeed the Light of the World (vv. 14–18). He spoke these words in the temple near the place where offerings were deposited (v. 20). In *The Witness of Jesus*, author Kenneth Schenck comments: “The death of Christ took care of all need for purification and sacrifice. No sacrificial food is ever needed again. No animal blood need ever be shed again” (pp. 45–46).

Further, Jesus indicted the Jews for their rejection of him, and predicted they would finally realize he was the Son of Man after crucifying him (vv. 21–28). Interestingly while he was speaking, “many put their faith in him” (v. 29).

Jesus said he had the power to set free those who were enslaved by sin (v. 32), but the Jews objected. They were not slaves but Abraham’s descendants, they argued (v. 33). Jesus explained that everyone who sins is a slave to sin (v. 34), and a slave isn’t a member of a family. His status is far different from that of a son in the family (v. 35). However, Jesus assured those who heard him that he could free them from their slavery to sin (v. 36).

Because Jesus is the Light of the World, he can give light to blind eyes. When he and his disciples came upon a man who had been blind all of his life, Jesus cast aside the popular belief that blindness was the result of sin, either that of the blind person or his parents (9:1–3). Jesus healed the man, much to the amazement of many who knew the man (vv. 4–9). But some were slow to accept the miracle. They questioned the former blind man about his identity, how his sight was restored, and who had healed him (vv. 9–12).

The questioners fetched the Pharisees, who objected to the fact that the healing had occurred on the Sabbath (vv. 13–15). Some of them protested that Jesus wasn’t from God, because in their opinion he had violated the Sabbath. Others were puzzled. They wondered how a Sabbath breaker—a sinner—could do such miracles (v. 16). On page 57 of *The Witness of Jesus*, Kenneth Schenck

astutely observes: “While the eyes of the man went from blindness to total sight, the eyes of the religious leaders were becoming dimmer.”

When the Jews pressed the healed man’s parents and the man himself for what they hoped would be a denial of the healing, they received a sterling testimonial and a pointed question from the man. He insisted that he had already told them what Jesus had done, and asked: “Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

For his testimony, the man was excommunicated (v. 34), but Jesus found him and led him to faith in him as the Son of Man (vv. 35–38).

FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. How has Jesus, the Light of the World, brightened your life?
2. By shedding his blood, did Jesus cover our sins or do something about our sins that was more permanent? Defend your answer.
3. Some modern theologians allege that Jesus didn’t know the future. How would you explain from John 8 that he did know the future?
4. Why do you agree or disagree that the entire human race is enslaved by sin?
5. How did unbelieving Jews show they were slaves to sin?
6. What evidence can you point to that proves the Pharisees were spiritually blind?
7. How did spiritual blindness characterize your life before you became a believer?
8. Why do you agree or disagree that Christians should keep the Sabbath?
9. Are there any activities you think a Christian should refrain from doing on the Lord’s Day? If so, what are they and why should they be avoided?
10. Why is it sometimes difficult to take a stand for Christ in the workplace?
11. How can Christians do a better job of shedding light into a dark world?

WRAP-UP

Turn out all the lights where your group meets. Wait a couple of minutes before you turn them back on. Ask, “How would you like to spend your entire life in darkness? Isn’t light a wonderful gift from God?” Explain that millions of people live in total darkness about why Jesus, the Light of the World, came to earth. Have a volunteer read aloud 2 Corinthians 4:3–4. Challenge everyone to share the light of the gospel with someone this week.



Week 4

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10, 12

Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

TO THE FACILITATOR

Do you know every group member's first name? If you acknowledge each person by name, you will gain good two-way interaction. This session, reminds us that the Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name (John 10:3).

FOCUS ON THE WORD

The religious leaders who opposed Jesus were false shepherds. They led God's people astray. Jesus was the Good Shepherd. His sheep listen for his voice. He calls them by name, and they follow him (John 10:1–4). If a stranger—a false shepherd—tries to attract the Good Shepherd's sheep, they will turn away from the stranger because they do not recognize his voice (vv. 5–6).

Jesus' allegory about sheep and shepherds confused his opponents. They simply did not understand spiritual truth (v. 6).

Not only is Jesus the Good Shepherd, he is also the gate to the sheep pen (v. 7). The custom of a true shepherd was to take his place at the entrance to the sheep pen. He would guard the enclosure against predatory animals and robbers. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, would save his sheep and lead them to pasture (vv. 8–9). He had come to bring life, and he would lay down his life for the sheep (vv. 10–11).

A hired shepherd did not care about the sheep. He would abandon the sheep at the first notice of an approaching wolf (vv. 12–13). Undoubtedly, Jesus was equating the false religious teachers with derelict shepherds!

Jesus identified himself clearly as the Good Shepherd who would lay down his life for the sheep (vv. 14–15). By "the sheep," he probably was referring to the people of Israel, but he felt a compulsion to bring other sheep into the fold—likely Gentiles (v. 16).

Although the religious authorities clamored for Jesus' death and the Roman authorities sanctioned it, Jesus' death was voluntary. He said so, and he also predicted his resurrection (vv. 17–18). Upon hearing Jesus' words, the Jews' opinion of him varied from that of considering him demon-possessed to that of considering him a miracle-worker (vv. 19–21).

At the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem, the Jews gathered around Jesus and asked him whether he was the Messiah (vv. 22–24). He told them his miracles clearly identified him as the Messiah, but not everyone believed the evidence (vv. 25–26). However, Jesus promised to give

eternal life to those who believed—his sheep (v. 27). Furthermore, he and his Father would keep them safe (vv. 28–29). He also testified that he and his Father were one (v. 30).

In *The Witness of Jesus*, Kenneth Schenck comments on Jesus' refusal to judge those who did not believe in him (see 12:37–50). He observes: “[Jesus’] mission on earth was to save not condemn the world. . . . It is striking that Jesus, the king, did not come to administer judgment while he was on earth. How often do we want to be instruments of justice here and now! Yet even Jesus recognized that God had another time in mind for it” (p. 74).

FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. What images come to mind when you think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd?
2. How does it encourage you to know the Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name?
3. How does it encourage you to know he does not drive his sheep but leads them?
4. How can Jesus' sheep obey him at home and in the workplace?
5. If someone told you no one is safe in today's dangerous world, how would you respond?
6. Why do you agree or disagree that Jesus' death was not an accident?
7. What do you think Jesus meant by “other sheep that are not of this sheep pen”?
8. Can you sincerely thank God for believers in other denominations? Why or why not?
9. What false teachings have you heard recently?
10. How is it possible that a minister with an attractive personality may actually be a false shepherd?
11. How safe are you in the “good hands” Jesus identified in John 10:28–29? Defend your answer.
12. Why do you agree or disagree that false shepherds will face greater judgment than those whom they deceived?

WRAP-UP

Ask volunteers to complete the following sentence: “I am thankful that Jesus is the Good Shepherd because . . .”



Week 5

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John 11, 15

Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

TO THE FACILITATOR

Undoubtedly everyone in your group has grieved over the death of a Christian friend or loved one, but this session offers firm hope of seeing that person again. Tell the group that this session presents the comforting truth that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Because he lives, all who know him as Savior will live beyond the grave.

FOCUS ON THE WORD

Lazarus was dying, and his sisters summoned Jesus (John 11:1–3). However, Jesus anticipated that Lazarus’s condition would serve to glorify Jesus, so he stayed where he was for two days before leaving for Lazarus’s home in Bethany near Jerusalem (vv. 4–7). But although his disciples said the Jews in Judea had tried to stone him, Jesus planned to go there. He announced that Lazarus had fallen asleep (vv. 8–16).

When Jesus approached Bethany, Lazarus had been in his tomb for four days, and Lazarus’s sister Martha met Jesus and said Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had arrived while Lazarus was sick (vv. 17–21). But she believed God would still grant whatever Jesus asked (v. 22). Jesus assured her he was the resurrection and the life, and he asked whether she believed this (vv. 22–26). Her response was positive, and she added the testimony that she believed Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 27).

Jesus, Mary (the other sister), Martha, and a number of mourners accompanied Jesus to Lazarus’s tomb (vv. 28–34). After arriving at the tomb, Jesus wept (v. 37). On page 86 of *The Witness of Jesus*, author Kenneth Schenck offers insight into mourning. He writes: “Logical answers are rarely consoling, even though they may make sense. But it helps to know that Jesus is crying with us. . . . When we endure the death of someone dear, it is not only the hope of resurrection that consoles us, but the presence of Jesus mourning with us.”

Jesus commanded that the gravestone be removed from the entrance to the tomb. Then he prayed, and called Lazarus by name to leave the tomb (vv. 28–43). Lazarus, still bound in strips of linen, hobbled out of the tomb (v. 44). Jesus commanded the mourners to remove the linen strips and let Lazarus go.

Many mourners believed in Jesus upon witnessing Lazarus’ resurrection (v. 45). But some reported the event to the Pharisees, who feared a revolution would break out because of Jesus’

popularity. If that happened, the Romans would end whatever freedom the Pharisees and Jews had (vv. 46–48). Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied that it would be better for one man—Jesus—to die for the nation than for the nation to perish (vv. 49–50). From that moment, members of the Sanhedrin schemed to kill Jesus, so Jesus departed for an isolated place (vv. 53–54).

FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. No one ever died in Jesus' presence. How would you explain this phenomenon?
2. How do you think Mary and Martha felt when Jesus did not respond to the news that Lazarus was sick?
3. Why do you agree or disagree that delayed answers to prayer are for our good and God's glory?
4. Do you think Thomas was showing faith or a lack of faith by suggesting that the disciples go with Jesus and die in Jerusalem? Defend your answer.
5. Why do you think Mary chose to sit at home rather than accompany Martha to meet Jesus?
6. Does it encourage you to know that Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb? Why or why not?
7. Why do you agree or disagree that Lazarus's resurrection was different from the resurrection that awaits believers?
8. Why did the Sanhedrin plot to kill Jesus?

WRAP-UP

As believers, we can look beyond death and anticipate our resurrection and endless life with Jesus. Suggest that the group members ask someone this week what he or she thinks lies beyond death, and be prepared to share the good news that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.



Week 6

THE I AM

John 7–8, 14, 16–17

Jesus is God himself.

TO THE FACILITATOR

This session presents Jesus as the I AM. Tell the group that he is not only the source of living water, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, and the resurrection and the life, but he is also God himself. As God, he knows our needs and is able to meet them.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

Jesus is greater than Abraham. He told his opponents that he existed before Abraham. He said Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and he identified himself as the I AM even before Abraham was born (John 8:56–58). Undoubtedly, Jesus used the name “I AM” to identify himself as the one who called and commissioned Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). His opponents made the connection, but instead of believing in him, they picked up stones to stone him (v. 59). Jesus responded to this aggressive behavior by slipping away from the temple grounds.

Later, Jesus told his disciples he was going away to prepare a place for them in the Father's house (14:1–4). He said they knew the way to the place (v. 4). Thomas admitted he and the others did not know where Jesus was going. “So how can we know the way?” he asked.

Jesus answered by identifying himself as the way, the truth, and the life. No one can reach the Father except through Jesus, the Way (v. 6)! He also said his words and works proceeded from the Father (vv. 9–10) and his miracles authenticated his oneness with the Father (v. 11).

But Jesus made a statement that may have greatly surprised the disciples. He said his followers would do even greater things than he did on earth (v. 12). Prayer in his name would lead to these remarkable works (vv. 13–14).

After returning to heaven, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples. The Spirit would serve as their Counselor (16:5–7). The Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (v. 9). He would also guide the disciples into all truth (vv. 12–13)—perhaps a promise that he would direct the writing of the inspired Gospels. Or the promise may relate to the Spirit's leading all believers into truth.

John 17 records Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. He prayed not only for his disciples, but also for all future believers (v. 20). He prayed that the Father would keep us from the Evil One (v. 15) and make us holy by the Word (v. 17) and unified (vv. 22–23). The purpose of our unity is to let the world know how much the Father loves us.

FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Why do you agree or disagree that it is significant that Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am,” rather than “I was”?
2. Which “I am” statement of Jesus is your favorite? Why?
3. How does it help you to know Jesus is eternal?
4. Religious leaders opposed Jesus. Why do you agree or disagree that certain religious leaders oppose him today?
5. How does knowing Jesus will return someday help you to live righteously today?
6. Why do you agree or disagree that no one can go to heaven except through Jesus?
7. How do you think the Holy Spirit prepared your heart to receive Jesus as your Savior?
8. What practical help does the Holy Spirit give to believers today?
9. How can your life show that you are not of the world?
10. How can you use God’s Word to become more holy?
11. How can you contribute to the unity of your church?
12. Why do you agree or disagree that Bible-believing churches can experience a united purpose without abandoning their doctrinal distinctives?

WRAP-UP

Ask volunteers to offer a brief review of this six-week study. Thank the group members for their participation, and challenge them to share the good news of Jesus with those who need to know him.

If your group benefited from studying *The Witness of Jesus* together, check out *The Wisdom of Jesus* and *Jesus—Portraits from the Gospels* by Kenneth Schenck, available now!