

# **A LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP**

**BUILDING DEEPER FAITH**

Group Leader's Guide

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# INTRODUCTION



## SESSION DESIGN

Each session is designed around six segments, each with a specific goal. Knowing that the length of your sessions may vary, there is no set minimum or maximum time designated for each activity; however, it would be wise to devote the majority of your time to the Discover and Observe segments. Here's a snapshot of the six elements of each session.

### **Connect**

The purpose of the Connect segment is to help your group members bond with one another. Group leaders and teachers sometimes try to deliver content before connecting with the participants. That's a mistake. Your group's ability to learn will be enhanced by this segment, setting the stage for the entire session.

To create an openness among your members, try using the kitchen-style class. When you think of a kitchen, you picture people sitting around a table, usually eating, laughing, talking, and interacting. It is an informal setting where people really enjoy themselves. That's the atmosphere you'll want to create for this group—a protected environment of love and acceptance, where the group members can discover faith and learn how to practice it.

Use the connecting time to lead your group in a time of sharing, caring, and praying.

**Sharing.** This may include an icebreaker that leads to a time when people share a concern, need, or prayer request. (Some icebreaker activities are provided later in this introduction.)

**Caring.** Caring builds on the sharing time by allowing people to help one another deal with problems or concerns. That may take the form of offering help, encouragement, or support. Caring also takes place outside the meeting time through kind acts that group members do for each other. You'll want to model this caring, and you may need to suggest ideas for how to care for each other as well. The following week, you may want to check on the concerns that were raised. Doing so will hold members accountable for the support they offer and ensure that no one is forgotten.

**Praying.** Finally, pray together about the needs and concerns of the group. There's more than one way to pray as a group. You might have one person pray for the group, ask a different person to pray for each need, break into groups of two or three where each person can pray for the others,

or pray silently. Vary the prayer methods you use, and be sure to spend at least half of your prayer time on spiritual needs.

### **Discover**

The next segment of your meeting is Discover or Bible study time. A major focus of the Building Deeper Faith series is teaching the Bible.

As the leader, your role in helping students discover the truth is critical. Spend adequate time in personal preparation so that you'll be familiar with the Scripture for that session. Your personal connection to God and his Word will enable you to teach others effectively.

Encourage group members to bring a Bible with them. Every chapter of each Building Deeper Faith book has multiple Bible references. Ask students to look up some of them to read aloud.

### **Memorize**

Biblical illiteracy is at an all-time high, even among church attendees. Help your group members hide God's Word in their hearts by memorizing Scripture.

Each chapter opens with a verse that can be used as a memory verse. There are a number of Scripture memorization techniques you can use with your group. (Several are included later in this introduction.)

### **Observe**

This section is the heart of your teaching time. This is where you will help students understand the key concepts of the study. It's likely there will be more ideas than you can thoroughly explore during your session time. Don't let that frustrate you. Personalize the material to meet your group's needs. You may find that the group members already have a handle on some of the important concepts. That will allow you to spend more time elsewhere. By giving yourself adequate preparation time, you'll be able to personalize and adapt the lesson to meet your group's need. Be sure to draw from your own experiences and insights when leading the group. Be transparent.

### **Practice**

This element is aimed at helping members apply the truths they've learned. It gives the group a chance to think about how to translate the truths into their lives in practical ways. For the most part, they'll actually practice (that is, apply to life) these truths outside the group meeting time.

Each chapter contains questions that call for the readers to think about how to apply what they're learning. You can use these questions to stimulate discussion during your meetings.

You may want to take time each week to see what actions group members took as a result of their learning. The Connect segment of your group meeting is a good place to ask some accountability questions.

### **Close**

This is the element of your session that brings it home, leading the group members to make a resolution or commitment based on their learning. Here is an opportunity to summarize the ideas that you've discovered and ask participants what next step they will take as a result of what they have learned.

Encourage group members to prepare for the next session by reading the next chapter and practicing the simple disciplines that will make it more valuable: Bible study and memorization, daily prayer, and journal writing.

End the session in a way that affirms what you've learned together and the resolutions participants are making. You might choose to close with a prayer, a song, or an affirmation similar to the benedictions that are used at the close of a worship service.

## **ICEBREAKERS**

During the Connect segment of your meetings, you'll want to use a variety of techniques to encourage group interaction. Here are a few options.

### **Getting to Know You**

Ask group members to take turns introducing themselves. You might suggest one or two details for everyone to share, such as what school they attended, what their occupation is, a hobby they enjoy, their favorite food, or who their hero is. You can use this icebreaker more than once with the same group as long as you choose different details each time.

### **Introductions**

Have group members pair up and interview one another. Then have each person introduce his or her partner to the group. Allow two to three minutes for the interviews. You might provide something to write on and direct their thinking with questions like: What's your favorite color? Where did you grow up? Do you have a pet? What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?

### **My Worst Moment**

Ask for volunteers to share their most embarrassing or hilarious experience. Some other "worsts" that make this icebreaker interesting include a Christmas gift, birthday gift, or family reunion. This icebreaker also may be used more than once as long as you use a different topic each time.

### **Alliteration Descriptions**

Ask group members to introduce themselves and say something they like using an adjective that starts with the first letter of their first name. For example, "I'm Rhonda, and I like rock climbing."

### **The Most Exciting**

Ask members to share their most exciting moment. It might be an event, a holiday, their graduation, or an accomplishment.

### **Guess Who I Am**

Distribute note cards and ask each member to record basic information about him- or herself, such as birthplace, school attended, or hobby, but not their names. Shuffle the cards and redistribute them, asking each person to identify the person described on their card.

### **Find Someone**

Make a list of facts to discover about people. Include things like "Favorite color is blue," "Has a pet bird," "Has visited a mission field," or "Was on the homecoming court." Depending on the size of your group, you may want to list up to a dozen or more different things. Have the group circulate to find out who (if anyone) fits the descriptions listed.

## **Name Tag Pictures**

Ask each person to draw a picture of something that represents themselves or something they enjoy. For example, someone who likes to restore old cars may draw a car on his or her name tag. Spend some time letting the group members ask each other what their name tag represents.

## **Secret Pals**

Assign a secret pal for each group member (one of the other members of the group). Each person will do something special for his or her secret pal during the month. At the end of that time, members reveal their secret pal's name. Remember, names should not be revealed until the end of the month so that everyone can have fun guessing the identity of his or her secret pal.

## **Meal Deal**

Everyone seems to relax and enjoy conversation while eating. Find occasions for your group to eat together, even if it's only a snack. You might bring in finger foods or desserts to share during the meeting. You might even have a pitch-in meal as part of your session or go out to eat together.

# **LEADER'S TOOLBOX**

Open a carpenter's toolbox and you will see hammers, saws, chisels, and other tools. Look into a plumber's toolbox, and you will find wrenches, pipe cutters, torches, and other tools of the trade. Each trade requires its own specialized equipment.

Now, open your leader's toolbox. What tools do you have for building people with the Word of God?

Remember the way truth is taught significantly impacts what is learned. Wise teachers accumulate a number of tools to cultivate curiosity, communicate content, evoke emotions, prompt participation, inspire insight, fortify faith, and bolster behavior.

Most who enjoy teaching are always on the lookout for fresh ideas as well as ways to keep the basic methods sharp. Here is a variety of teaching methods that you can add to your tool collection.

## **Interactive Methods**

**Question and Answer.** Sometimes called the Socratic Method, in this technique the teacher challenges learners by posing questions. There are three basic types of questions:

- Factual questions require the students to answer with specific information.
- Thought questions cause students to identify causes or solutions for certain situations. They are usually introduced with the words *how* or *why*.
- Rhetorical questions do not require an audible answer and are useful for emphasizing a truth or making a fact self-evident.

**Forum.** A forum is an open discussion or question-and-answer time under a moderator's direction. This is especially useful following a presentation such as a lecture, interview, film, or symposium.

**Group Discussion.** In a group discussion, everyone works together to identify a truth or solve a problem under a leader's direction. The leader must be prepared to introduce the subject, keep the discussion on track, and summarize the conclusions at the end.

**Buzz Groups.** Buzz groups are smaller groups that simultaneously discuss the subject, often reporting conclusions to the larger assembly at the end of the meeting.

**Dyads and Triads.** Dyads are discussion groups of two. Triads are groups of three. Both allow for intimate personal sharing and are useful for involving everyone in a discussion.

**Panel Discussion.** A panel is a semi-structured discussion in which three or four people are chosen to represent different points of view. A moderator guides the discussion and summarizes conclusions at the end.

## Personal Participation Methods

**Interview.** Interviews are live conversations that allow the class to benefit from expert observations, real-life experiences, or insights from someone with specialized knowledge of a subject.

**Silent Reflection.** Invite students to think about a passage, a question, or their reactions or observations concerning a clearly stated problem. Prohibit members from speaking for a minute or two so that early reactors don't dominate the thinking of others.

**Charts.** Charts are useful to compare and contrast characteristics of Bible characters, teachings, or events. They are also helpful to create lists of observations about a text, summarize lesson points, or simplify complex or long passages of Scripture.

**Contests and Games.** Bring out the child in every adult by creating your group's own version of a parlor game or a television game show that uses Bible characters and terms as clues or answers.

## Direct Presentation Methods

**Resource Person.** A resource person is a guest presenter who is invited to share information or experiences directly related to the topic being studied by your class or group. The presentation becomes the basis for dialogue between group members or the guest and the group.

**Object Lesson.** Almost any physical prop can be used as a visual or sensory tool to reinforce a lesson point. An object lesson differs from a demonstration in that a demonstration illustrates a process or event, while an object lesson uses a prop as a metaphor to compare or contrast two things.

**Debate.** Two or more speakers alternately express their points of view (usually one pro and one con) about a proposition or issue. Each side has a chance to rebut the other's statements.

**Storytelling.** Storytelling is one of the most ancient means of teaching in which an illustration, real-life situation, imaginary scenario, historical incident, or personal experience is recounted verbally. Stories are usually used for illustrative purposes and should shed light on the subject at hand. To be effective, they must be action-oriented and told naturally with enthusiasm, good vocal expression, appropriate gestures, and facial expressions.

**Testimony.** A testimony is a variation of the storytelling method in which someone provides a firsthand, eyewitness account of a specific experience. It can be impromptu (ask if someone in the class can verify a point made in the lesson from his or her experience) or prepared (ask someone ahead of time to speak on a topic).

**Team Teaching.** In team teaching, two or more people take turns presenting lesson content. For example, one person may present a mini-lecture, followed by a response or questions by the other; then another mini-lecture, after which the partner may lead a group discussion. Or a team-taught lesson may be presented by teachers who carry on a dialogue with each other about a text, with one or the other of them occasionally engaging the whole class in learning activities that invite their participation in the conversation.

**Audiovisual Presentations.** Whiteboards, maps, bulletin boards, pictures, charts, audio recordings, and computer graphics are just a few audiovisual aids teachers can use to communicate and illustrate information. Most of these, however, as suggested by the word *aids*, are used to augment another direct presentation technique. More and more resources are now available that use audiovisual

means to present a wide variety of material. Technology can never replace the benefit of direct personal reflection and discussion in your class.

### **Direct Bible Study Methods**

**Group Observation.** Observation simply means helping a group discover what the Bible says before they determine what it means.

**Cross Referencing.** This method seeks insight into a passage by looking for other texts that provide additional background information or restate it in another author's words.

**Survey Method.** A whole paragraph, section, or chapter (rather than a single verse) is taken as the basic unit of study.

### **Creative and Artistic Methods**

**Singing.** Choose familiar tunes within easy voice range for most class members, or invite a soloist to sing to your group. (An alternative to this method would be playing a specific song or have music playing in background.)

**Writing Assignments.** Poems, limericks, short stories, testimonies, letters, sentences, paragraphs, journals, or articles are valuable expressions of new ideas, insights, and reflection.

**Sculpting.** Give group members a lump of play dough or modeling clay and invite them to illustrate something significant from the Bible passage your group is studying. (Or use another medium: paint, markers, charcoal, etc.)

## **MEMORY VERSE LEARNING**

Many adults think they cannot memorize Scripture because their memory is not what it used to be. However, anybody can memorize Bible verses with the aid of some simple techniques. Try these methods with your group members.

### **Envelope Method**

Write each word of a memory verse on a separate piece of paper. Mix up the pieces and put them into an envelope. Give each person or pair of people in your group one envelope. All the envelopes could contain the same verse or different verses. The first person or pair to put the words of the memory verse in the correct order wins.

### **Card Drill Method**

On a piece of cardboard or construction paper, write the first half of a memory verse. Create several different cards, each with the beginning of a different verse. Hold a card for the group, and the first person to finish the memory verse (and give the verse reference) wins. A variation is to put memory verse references on the cards and have group members race to recite the verse correctly.

### **Push Pin Method**

Write each word of a memory verse on an index card or piece of paper. Post the cards in an incorrect order in a place all can see, and then have group members take turns putting the cards in the right order.

### **Matching Method**

Write a complete memory verse and reference on several index cards, and then cut the cards into two pieces so that the reference and half of the verse are on one side and the rest of the verse is on the other. Mix up the cards and have each person draw one piece of a card. When you give the signal, have the people try to find their “match.” You could make this a little more difficult by writing the verses incorrectly and asking group members to correct the mistakes after they match the two halves of the card to win.

### **Clue Word Method**

Think of three to five words to serve as clues for a memory verse. Write each clue word on a separate index card. Number the cards, with the number one indicating the most difficult clue and the highest number indicating the least difficult (or vice versa). Divide the class into two groups. Show one group only the most difficult clue. If no one from that group can recite the verse, show the other group the same clue. If the other group cannot recite the verse on the first clue, go back to the first group and show the second clue. Keep doing this until the memory verse is correctly recited, and give the card to the group that recited the verse. The group with the most cards at the end of the game wins. A variation would be to assign a point value to each clue. For instance, if a group correctly says the verse on the first clue, it receives ten points. The second clue is worth eight points, and so on. The first group to get fifty points wins.

### **Whiteboard Method**

Write the memory verse on a whiteboard. Have the group or each person individually read the verse. Then erase a letter or word. Have the person recite the verse again as though the missing letters or words were still there. Continue to do this until all of the words are gone, having each person or the group continue to say the verse.

### **Guess-a-Letter Method**

Draw a blank line for each letter in a memory verse. Ask one person to guess a letter. If that letter is in the verse, write it in the appropriate blank(s). Allow the person to keep guessing letters until he or she guesses incorrectly. You could modify this game by letting the group guess individual words. When they guess correctly, fill in the entire word wherever it appears in the verse. You might also write the verse reference on the board above the blanks for the verse or make the reference part of the puzzle. The first person to say the entire verse correctly wins. (This method is similar to the game Hangman.)

### **Round Table Method**

Have the group sit in a circle. Write the memory verse on a board where everyone can easily see it. Assign one word of the memory verse to each person in the group, then start at the beginning of the verse and have each person say his or her assigned word in turn to complete the verse. Gradually increase speed so that the group must recite the verse faster and faster. At some point, remove the board so that the group must recite the verse from memory. A variation of this is to have the first person in the circle say the first word of the verse, the second person say the first two words of the verse, and so on until someone repeats the entire verse from memory.

## WEEK 1

# SEE REALITY FROM GOD'S WORLDVIEW



### FOCUS

This session compels believers to examine the way they think about God, themselves, and the world around them. You'll discover that Christians think differently from nonbelievers because they see the world in a different way. The Christian perspective is based on biblical values.

*Discovery:* Our understanding of God's Word shapes the way we think about everything else.

### PREPARE

- Read week 1 of *A Life of Discipleship*.
- Study Ephesians 1:17–23, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need. To illustrate the concept of worldview to your group, be prepared to give your own definition and show one example of how your worldview has shaped a decision you've made.
- Pray that God will use this study to transform lives.

*Hint:* Some group members may be more comfortable writing their reactions than speaking aloud, especially at this first meeting.

### CONNECT

Greet group members and welcome them to studying *A Life of Discipleship*. Explain that the purpose of these sessions is to help believers grow in their new life in Christ.

People need to warm up to each other before they will share important things in their lives, so use one or more icebreaker to encourage relationship building.

If this group has not met before, explain that sharing each other's concerns, caring for one another, and praying together will be important parts of what they do together. Invite group members to share:

- Praise items—good things God has done in their lives lately.
- Prayer requests—concerns for themselves or for a friend.
- Needs—things in their lives or in the community that the group might be able to help with.

If this group has met before and has already established relationships, continue the sharing, caring, and praying time, using a variety of approaches.

Consider enlisting someone to record prayer requests and praise items for the group each week. This will help you remember to pray consistently for important needs and celebrate answers to prayer.

Lead the group in prayer.

## **DISCOVER**

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “What is the hardest thing about living and working alongside non-Christians?” Point out that Christians tend to see the world differently because of their faith.

Read Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 1:17–23.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- How are we to view our life, the world around us, and our purpose here?
- In what ways do these verses help you develop a Christian worldview?
- How has your view of life changed most significantly since you became a Christian?

Point out that when Christ is the Lord of our lives, we must reorder our priorities.

## **MEMORIZE**

Lead your group in memorizing Galatians 2:20. Remind the group that by memorizing Scripture, they can carry part of the Bible anywhere.

## **OBSERVE**

The key points to observe in this session are:

- Worldview is a comprehensive way of looking at life that shapes our decision-making and interaction with others.
- Our family, culture, peers, education, and faith influence our worldview.
- Contemporary culture has a tremendous influence on our children's worldview.
- A Christian worldview produces hope and freedom.

## **PRACTICE**

Challenge group members to apply a biblical worldview to their decision-making. Ask, “What is the most important issue you’re facing right now? What does the Bible say that influences your reaction or decision about this matter?” Allow group members to respond.

## **CLOSE**

Bring this session to a close by offering a prayer, singing a song, or offering an affirmation and blessing. Affirm your willingness for God to shape you into Christ’s likeness.

## WEEK 2

# ACQUIRE A TASTE FOR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES



### FOCUS

The spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, fasting, Bible study, and memorization can lead to a holy life. This session challenges believers to develop good habits that will keep their spiritual life in tune.

*Discovery:* Spiritual disciplines bring spiritual power.

### PREPARE

- Read week 2 of *A Life of Discipleship*.
- Study Colossians 3:12–17, noting your insights on spiritual discipline and the holy life.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray for the spiritual growth of your group as you lead them through this study.

*Hint:* Many people are visual learners. Consider using a prop or visual aid in this session.

### CONNECT

Use an icebreaker to encourage group members to share with one another. Then take a minute to encourage group members to talk about how they are applying the lessons of *A Life of Discipleship* to their lives. Allow time for responses. Review prayer concerns from the last session and invite the group to share new requests for prayer.

Lead the group in prayer.

*Hint:* The icebreaker can be a great way to introduce the session's subject. Consider using an icebreaker that incorporates this chapter's theme.

## **DISCOVER**

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “If you exercise to keep your body healthy, what can you do to keep your spirit healthy?”

Read Colossians 3:12–17.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- How can you clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience?
- Why is love the virtue you should put on over all others?
- How are we to live according to this passage?

## **MEMORIZE**

Lead your group in memorizing Galatians 3:17. Remind group members that memorizing God’s Word builds their strength to resist temptation and helps them make choices that please God.

## **OBSERVE**

The key points to observe in this session are:

- Spiritual disciplines help to build a holy life.
- Prayer is communication with God, and there are various ways to pray.
- Meditation is focused thinking in the presence of God, leading to greater understanding, and helps build a holy life.
- Fasting is voluntary abstinence that places spiritual growth above physical appetites.
- Bible study and memorization lead to a transformed life.
- Spiritual disciplines are our weapons for fighting temptation.

## **PRACTICE**

Challenge your group members to adopt one new spiritual discipline. Members who do not practice any of the disciplines noted in this session should be encouraged to begin with daily prayer. Suggest that group members obtain a journal and write their spiritual discoveries and prayers in it.

## **CLOSE**

Close your session by praying for each person by name. Ask God to help him or her develop spiritual disciplines. Before you dismiss, remind group members to pray for one another during the week.

## WEEK 3

# DEEPEN YOUR PASSION FOR GOD'S TRUTH



### FOCUS

Two passages of Scripture, the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, provide a foundation for the Christian life. They form a blueprint for living as a Christian. As you examine these Scriptures, you'll discover that obeying God is largely a matter of attitude.

*Discovery:* Following Christ changes the way you treat others.

### PREPARE

- Read week 3 of *A Life of Discipleship*.
- Study Matthew 5–7, specifically 5:17–20, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session. You might want to divide your class into two small groups. Have the first group discuss the material on the Ten Commandments while the other examines the Beatitudes. Have each group share its insights with the larger group.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray for each member of your group by name.

*Hint:* Current events make great attention getters. You may wish to gather recent news stories that deal with personal or public finances as a starter for this session.

### CONNECT

Use an icebreaker to encourage group members to share with one another. Review prayer concerns from the last session and invite the group to share new requests for prayer.

Lead the group in prayer.

*Hint:* People who are unwilling to pray in a large group may be willing to pray in a small group of two or three.

## **DISCOVER**

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Ask, “Why do you think people care so much about the Bible, even those who don’t take the time to read it?”

Read Matthew 5:17–20 and 6:33.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What do these verses tell you about God’s Word?
- Based on these verses, what is most important?
- In what ways do you influence others by how you live?

## **MEMORIZE**

Lead your group in memorizing Matthew 6:33. Remind the group that before printed Bibles were common, all Christians relied on Scripture memorization to learn God’s Word. Ask how much Scripture group members would be able to rely on if persecution deprived them of their Bibles.

## **OBSERVE**

The key points to observe in this session are:

- The Ten Commandments show us how to display our love for God and others.
- The Beatitudes describe the attitudes and character of a disciple.
- Christians should be like salt and light, influencing the world around them.
- Christians should do what is right and be humble without expecting the praise of others.
- Christians should trust God first and not worry about other concerns of life.

## **PRACTICE**

Ask group members to reflect on this question: “Does my life look like the life described in the Sermon on the Mount?” Challenge them to identify one area of their lives that is not in harmony with the lifestyle represented in the Sermon on the Mount. Ask, “What can you do to make your life more like that of Christ?”

## **CLOSE**

Close this session by asking a group member to pray that Jesus will be established as Lord in each member’s life. Before you dismiss, encourage your group members to maintain a daily time of prayer and Bible reading.

## WEEK 4

# DEVELOP A BIBLICAL ORTHODOXY



### FOCUS

This session will help your group see why it is important to have correct biblical beliefs. You will learn the basic Christian concepts concerning God, human beings, salvation, and the Christian life.

*Discovery:* What you believe affects the way you live.

### PREPARE

- Read week 4 of *A Life of Discipleship*.
- Study 1 Timothy 4:7–16 and 2 Peter 3:18, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray for your group members as they continue to grow in the faith.

*Hint:* Some group members enjoy doing small research assignments. Consider enlisting a group member to survey people on the question “Does what you believe about God affect how you treat people?” and share his or her findings as an introduction to this session.

### CONNECT

Use an icebreaker to encourage group members to share with one another. Review prayer concerns from the last session and invite the group to share new requests for prayer.

Lead the group in prayer.

## **DISCOVER**

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “What is most important when you are building: a bridge, a theory, or a practice?” Read 1 Timothy 4:7–16 and 2 Peter 3:18.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What do these Scriptures tell you about what you believe?
- In what ways are we to be examples to others?
- Why is it important to grow in such a way that others can see your progress?
- How can you know that what you believe is right?

## **MEMORIZE**

Lead your group in memorizing 1 Timothy 4:16. Remind the group to continue the habit of Scripture memorization even after this study has concluded.

## **OBSERVE**

The key points to observe in this session are:

- A correct view of the Bible is important because it affects the way we live.
- God is both infinite and personal.
- Human beings have been corrupted by sin and need salvation.
- God offers salvation to all people to be received by faith.
- God changes the hearts of believers, empowering them to live holy lives.
- Christ is the Head of the church that exists to serve him.
- Believers in Christ will enjoy an eternal life in heaven.

## **PRACTICE**

Before the class begins, ask group members to write a brief paragraph on the subject “What I Believe.” Ask, “How does what you think about God fit with what the Bible says?” Challenge the group to reexamine their beliefs and change them if necessary to conform to what the Bible teaches.

## **CLOSE**

Close this session by offering a prayer, asking God to continue to lead each group member to grow in the faith.

## WEEK 5

# NURTURE FAMILIES OF DISCIPLES



### FOCUS

This session is focused on the family. You'll come to understand why the marriage covenant is so important, get tips for creating a healthy marriage, and gain insight into raising godly children.

*Discovery:* God created gender, sexuality, and the family to provide for our needs.

### PREPARE

- Read week 5 of *A Life of Discipleship*.
- Study Genesis 1:27–28 and Ephesians 4:32—5:3, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom for communicating his truth.

*Hint:* A visiting expert adds interest to any subject. Consider inviting someone with expertise on family matters to meet with your class, such as a pastor, counselor, or social worker.

### CONNECT

Use an icebreaker to encourage group members to share with one another. Then take a minute to invite group members to talk about how they are applying the lessons of *A Life of Discipleship* to their lives. Allow time for responses. Review prayer concerns from the last session and invite the group to share new requests for prayer.

Lead the group in prayer.

*Hint:* Encourage group members to connect with one another during the coming weeks. Relationship building can and should take place outside the group meetings.

## **DISCOVER**

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “Why is it so hard for families to stay together today?”

Read Genesis 1:27–28 and Ephesians 4:32—5:3.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What does it mean to be created in God’s image?
- What commands did God give the first humans? Do those commands apply to us? If so, how should we obey them?
- What are the characteristics of God’s holy people?
- Why does Ephesians 5:3 specifically name sexual immorality, impurity, and greed?

## **MEMORIZE**

Lead your group in memorizing Ephesians 5:2. Consider offering a gift (perhaps a Bible) to anyone who can recited all key verses from *A Life of Discipleship*.

## **OBSERVE**

The key points to observe in this session are:

- God created the family and sexuality.
- The marriage covenant is the foundation of the family.
- Love, respect, responsibility, and mutual submission are key elements of marriage.
- Children need love, training, and good examples to follow.

## **PRACTICE**

Ask group members to identify one area of their family life that needs to be strengthened. Possible responses include communication with a spouse, time spent with children, child discipline, or faithfulness in marriage. Ask, “What will you do this week to improve that area of your family life?”

## **CLOSE**

Close this session—this study—with a prayer addressed to the Father, in the name of Jesus, and seeking the instruction and comfort of the Holy Spirit.