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Get Ready: Preparation Guide

International
Essentials

Getting ready to lead an International Essentials session is simple. Each one-page outline can be used as both the leader's guide and as the students' worksheet. It includes directions and guided discussion questions. Print one sheet for each person in your group. Work through the discussion from left hand column to right.

Before you begin: *Pray*

Only God can empower you to have a successful session.

Pray that God will help each person in your group to:

1. Attend the session.
2. Understand what is discussed.
3. Apply the main lesson in a specific way.
4. Share what they learn with someone else.

Four Phases of the Group Discussion Flow

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer: Start by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. Students value connection time, so take time to build friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other). End this time with a prayer to begin the lesson.

Discussion:

Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

Lesson Summary: Brief summary to tie the lesson together as a whole. Use the statement to direct you as you lead the students in what they should take away from this time.

Transition: This statement is to help transition into reading God's Word.

Notes:

Use Examples - Be ready to use examples from your life as the group discussion proceeds.

Use Discernment - Use the connection time to assess everyone's spiritual condition. If there are a number of non-Christians present, your session may contain more basic explanations and you may need to be sensitive about prayer times, etc.

HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

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International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT
1

Lesson A: God

Bible Passages: Genesis 1:1-2:3

Session Objective: Establish a basic understanding of God's nature.

This entire unit precedes our traditional "follow-up" (Unit 2) because we want to make sure our international friends understand the basics of the gospel. These five lessons can also serve as a stand-alone study to investigative the Bible's main ideas. You may walk through this lesson one-on-one or in a small group. If you have already taught these ideas and if you know the person is a Christian, begin with Unit 2.

- Since the group may be meeting for the first time, be sure you get to know one another in the **Connect** section. The questions under **Our Lives** should be especially insightful.

- Avoid turning this lesson into a debate about evolution. The purpose is to understand what we learn about God in Genesis 1. Help the group to understand and appreciate God's power, creativity, and special design of humanity.

- Explain and emphasize what it means to be created in God's image. Theologically, the Imago Dei is a profound and wonderful topic to consider.

- As you prepare, make sure to ask the questions intended to touch the learner's heart, not just the head (such as, "How could this help you when you feel worthless or don't like yourself?" under the **Hear** section.)

Lesson B: Sin

Bible Passages: Isaiah 6:1-10; 53:6; 59:1,2

Session Objective: Deepen the group's understanding of sin.

Even though this lesson uses three passages in Isaiah, you only need to look up Isaiah 6:1-10. The other two passages are written out in the lesson. We use several passages so the group has several Biblical images of sin: unclean lips, guilt, dull hearts, blind eyes, and lost sheep. These build up to the final passage (Is. 5:1,2): sin is separation from God.

- Use Isaiah's words to contrast God's holiness with our sinfulness. Explain these terms as simply as possible: holiness means God is absolutely perfect and sin means we lack God's perfection.

- The last question in the **Hear** section should be emphasized ("What can be done about this terrible separation?") Don't hesitate to let this question linger and hang until the next week. Tell the group to think more about this crucial question and explain that you will answer it next week.

- The questions under the **Understand** should be pondered. Make sure everyone has a pen to fill in the blanks. Ask everyone to write something in these blanks and share their answer with the group.

Lesson C: God becomes Man

Bible Passages: John 1:1-18, 29-43

Session Objective: Appreciate that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man and understand why this is important.

Often we start lessons on Jesus with the cross. This lesson is designed to deepen the group's understanding and appreciation of the Incarnation: God becoming man. Jesus is fully God and fully man.

- In the first **Bible Discussion Question** draw the parallel between Genesis 1 and John 1. The parallel highlights that Jesus, the Word, is eternal because He is God.

- Make sure to spend adequate time considering this question: "Why was it necessary for God to become a man?"

- You might need to explain the role sacrificial lambs played in covering sin in the Old Testament. Jesus was the spotless lamb sacrificed for us and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22).

- In the **Understand** section help the group to articulate the basic concept that Jesus was fully God and fully man. If they don't understand this concept, review key verses from John 1.

- The first question in the **Apply** question contains some important homework. Recommend that the group read John over the next week and write down any questions they might have.

Lesson D: The Cross

Bible Passages: Luke 23, John 20

Session Objective: Understand the reality and importance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

After establishing the fact that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man, we examine the importance of His death and resurrection. Carefully pray, ponder, and prepare each section of this lesson because all the other lessons build up to it.

- Under the **Connect** section have everyone in the group answer the first discussion question. This question should deepen the level of authenticity, force everyone to consider a tough question, and make them appreciate what Jesus did for us. Also, read aloud and briefly discuss the quote from C.S. Lewis.

- Emphasize Jesus' words to the criminal in Luke 23:43. You can supplement the given questions with others: "What gave Jesus the authority to say this?" Or "How do you think this man felt after hearing these words?"

- Many international students will resonate with Thomas, who wanted proof of Jesus' resurrection. Give close attention to the question about Thomas and the link between seeing and believing.

- Don't skip the summary questions in the **Apply** section ask each participant to write something in the blanks here.

Lesson E: Faith

Bible Passage: Romans 6, Ephesians 2

Session Objective: Realize how we receive God's gift to us: by faith.

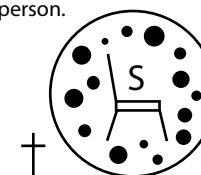
The previous four lessons gave us information about God, ourselves, and Jesus' life and death. Now, we are confirming that the students have already placed their faith in Jesus OR challenging them to do so. You have NOT completed this lesson until you have given the students a chance to place their faith in Jesus.

- In the first section, ask everyone to describe the best gift they have ever received. Why was this gift so special? Why did they give it to you? Make the important connection between gifts and love (the quote from Napoleon will allow you to explain this fact).

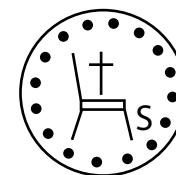
- Some of the questions in the **Hear** section might be difficult to understand. Do not spend too much time on questions that might divert the group's attention from the main idea. If you cannot answer a question well put a small mark (*) by it. Then, explain that the rest of the lesson should clarify the question and that you will return to it at the end.

- To explain faith, use the example of giving someone a gift or life-saving medicine. They must take or receive the gift for it to become their own.

- To prepare for the **Apply** section review the diagrams in the "Four Spiritual Laws" or "Knowing God Personally" booklets. You must know how to draw and explain the diagrams of the two kinds of person.



Self-directed Life



Christ-directed Life

God Understanding who God Is

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

Group introductions: What is your name? Where are you from? Department?
What was your highlight of last week? What was the most difficult thing that happened?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions Our Lives

- Why are you in this group? What do you hope to get out of our time together?

- How would you describe God?

Deeper Perspectives

- A.W. Tozer wrote: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Transition

The Bible begins by describing how God created the world. We can learn much about God's character in this story.

Bible Passage: Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Background: Genesis, the first book of the Bible, begins with God describing the beginning of our universe. The focus of this lesson is to see what Genesis 1 tells us about God.

Let's take turns and each read one section: Genesis 1:1-12, 1:13-25, 1:26-2:3

Bible Discussion Questions

- "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The Bible's very first sentence is foundational for everything that comes after it. This succinct beginning describes God and lays the foundation for how we should view reality.

Look at the verse closely by dividing it up into its three basic components, and discuss what each part tells us about God:

1. In the beginning
2. God created
3. The heavens and the earth

- How did God create the universe? Does anyone or anything else exist that has this kind of power?

Continue questions

- Moving on through the rest of the Genesis 1 passage, what does God repeat at the end of each day of creation? What kind of value does this give His world?

- How does the creation of human beings differ from the rest of the world? What do you think it means for humans to be created "in the image of God"? How could this help when you feel displeased or unhappy with yourself?

- How is the seventh day different from the other days of creation (2:2-3)? If God is all-powerful, why did He rest on this day? What are the benefits of setting aside one day each week to rest and worship God?

- This passage claims that there is a purpose and design behind nature or "creation" because there is a Designer behind it. What evidence do you see in our physical world for God's design and purpose?

- If God really did create the whole universe, the world and us, what effect does that have on you? Why?

Summary

List 5 things you learned about God today.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Clarification

- Which of these 5 things surprised you most?

- Which of these 5 things comforts you most in a difficult situation you are facing in your life?

Act

- The God who created the universe created you in His image? How will this change the way you view yourself and other people this week?

Write down your specific actions to take from this study. In groups of two or three, share what actions you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Sin Understanding our problem

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did Application go from last week's lesson?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Do you think there will ever be a time in our world when war and fighting will cease?

- Why do some people and nations have so much materially and yet millions of people die of starvation?

Deeper Perspectives

- The same selfishness and greed that leads to war and starvation lives in our hearts. How have you seen selfishness in your life this past week?

Transition

If God is so powerful and if His creation is good, why are there so many problems? What is wrong with the world? And what is wrong with me? The answer is sin. No one is perfect; everyone is selfish. Sin enslaves us all. The Bible makes this clear.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 6:1-10

Background: God appointed certain men to speak His words to other people. These men, like Isaiah, were called prophets. In 740 B.C. Isaiah had a vision of God. In this vision, he sees the greatness of God. God gives him a message of bad news to tell others.

Bible Discussion Questions

Read Isaiah 6:1-6

- How is God described in verse 1? How do you feel in reading this description of God?

- The seraphim (6:2) are glorious angelic beings with remarkable power—indicated by six wings—who are devoted to praising God. These perfect, superhuman creatures humble themselves to worship God. Read what they say in verse 3: What does “holy” mean? What about “glory”? Who is “the Lord of Hosts”?

- Isaiah sought to live a pure life before God but what is his attitude toward God? Why? What does “unclean lips” (v. 5) mean?

- What does the fire (“a burning coal”) do to the man? What is “sin”? Why does it need to be atoned for?

Continue questions

Read Isaiah 6:1-6

- What message does God give Isaiah to tell others?

- Why do people hear but not understand, see but not perceive? What prevents them from being healed?

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way.”

- According to this verse what is the essence of sin? How do you see this in your own life?

Isaiah 59:1,2 “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

- What causes a separation between God and us? What can be done about this terrible separation?

Summary

- How would you summarize what we learned today:
About God?
About all other people?

Write important points down.
God:

Me and all other people:

Clarification

- What left the deepest impression from our lesson today?

- What surprised you most from our lesson today?

Act

- In the coming week, how can you develop the same kind of humility before God that we saw from Isaiah and the seraphim?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

God becomes Man

Understanding the Life of Jesus

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

What was the highlight of the past week for you?
How did Application go from last week's lesson?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

• If you were the all-powerful God of the universe and wanted to reveal yourself to those you created, how would you do this?

Deeper Perspectives

• Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette: "As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet." Why is this true?

Transition

All people are polluted by sin. No one is perfect. We might be good when compared to other people but we always fall short compared to God. God is totally pure. Our impurity separates us from God. God is separated from the creatures He loves and created in His image. How can the relationship between God and man be restored?

Bible Passage: John 1:1-18, 29-34

Background: Before meeting Jesus, John was a fisherman. When Jesus said, "Follow me" he laid down his nets to follow Jesus. He became one of the twelve disciples and was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John writes his gospel ("good news") about Jesus because we want people to believe in Jesus and have life (John 20:30-31). He begins by explaining who Jesus is.

Bible Discussion Questions

Read John 1:1-9

• What does the first words of verse 1 remind you of? Why did John make this parallel?

• Who is "The Word"? How long has He existed? How is he described in verses 3-5?

Read John 1:10-19

• Did the people recognize Him (verses 10-11)? Why not?

• What happens to those who believe in the Word (v. 12)? How is this possible?

• Verse 3 says the Word created the world then verse 14 says He became part of creation. Why was it necessary for God to become a man?

Continue questions

Read John 1:29-34

• John calls Jesus the "Lamb of God"? What role do lambs play in how Jews approach God?

• How is it possible for one man to take away the sins of the world?

In this scene we see God the Son being baptized, God the Spirit coming in the appearance of a dove and God the Father saying "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (see Luke 3:22).

We believe that God is three persons—in one essence. This 3-in-1 and 1-in-3 is called the Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit.

I Peter 2:22 "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth."

• Jesus can take away sin because He was sinless, perfect in every way. Why is this unusual?

Summary

If one of your friends—who does not know Jesus—asked you to describe Jesus, what would you say?

Summarize John 1 in these lines:

Clarification

• What amazes you most about God becoming a man?

• What surprised you most from our lesson today?

Act

• In the coming week, how can you grow in your understanding of who Jesus Christ is?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

The Cross

Understanding Jesus' Death & Resurrection

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer

How is your research/classes going?
How did Application go from last week's lesson?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Think of the person you love most in the world. Would you be willing to die for them? Why or why not?

Deeper Perspectives

C.S. Lewis said "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

- If someone claims to be God they must be a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. Do you agree?

Transition

Jesus claimed to be God. But what proof does He offer? And what does this do for me?

HEAR God's Word

Bible Passage: Luke 23, John 20

Background: Luke was a Gentile (non-Jewish) physician who was not one of the eyewitnesses of Jesus' life. He carefully gathered information from the apostle Paul and other eyewitnesses to write a detailed historical document about Jesus.

Bible Discussion Questions

Read Luke 23:32-49

- What is crucifixion? What kind of people did the Romans crucify?
- Jesus is crucified between two criminals. One soldier insults him; the other asks (verse 40) "Don't you fear God?" Why should someone in this situation fear God?
- Describe the attitude of the two criminals toward Jesus. What do you think they believe about him? If the criminal is guilty, how can Jesus say that they will be together in paradise (v. 43)?
- Given his circumstances, what is surprising about the way Jesus prays (v. 34)?
- In verses 44-49 Luke records a number of unusual things that occurred after Jesus died. What caused these events?

Continue questions

Read John 20:1-10, 19-31

- What do Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter find in the tomb where Jesus was buried?
 - How do the disciples feel and act in verses 19, 20? Are they expecting to see Jesus?
 - What does Jesus say and do when He appears? Why?
 - What conditions did Thomas set before he was willing to believe Jesus was alive? What did Jesus say in verse 29 about "seeing" and "believing"? Since people do not "see" Jesus alive today, how can you believe?
- 1 Peter 2:22: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."*
- Romans 5:8,9: "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."*
- How are we saved (justified) with God? How does this make you feel?

UNDERSTAND it

Summary

If someone asked you why did Jesus die on the cross, how would you answer?

- Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?

Clarification

- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus died for you?
- What surprised you most from our lesson today?

APPLY it to Life

Act

- How do you need to respond to the death and resurrection of Jesus? What needs to change in your life?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Faith

Receiving the Gift of Life

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

What have you been doing for fun this semester?

How did Application go from last week's lesson?

Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

• What is the greatest gift you have ever received? How did you feel after receiving that gift?

Deeper Perspectives

Napoleon Bonaparte said "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him."

• Why do people love Jesus so deeply? And why are they willing to die for Him?

Transition

If your best friend wrapped up a gift and gave it to you, when does that gift become yours? When you accept it! How do we receive the gift of life that Jesus offers to us through his death and resurrection?

Bible Passage: Romans 6, Ephesians 2

Background: Paul was a brilliant Jewish scholar who persecuted Jesus' followers . . . until Jesus personally appeared to him. Meeting Jesus Christ transformed Paul. He became the greatest missionary in history. He went to many cities in the Roman Empire and began new churches (communities of people who follow Jesus). He then wrote letters to these churches. Our verses today come from letters (epistles) that Paul wrote.

Bible Discussion Questions

Read Romans 6:23: What is God's gift to us?

• When you work hard at your job, you expect a paycheck. Your wage is what you rightfully deserve. What do we rightfully deserve because of our sin?

• What is death? How have you experienced this death in your own life?

• How does God give us the free gift of eternal life?

• What do we owe God for this gift?

Continue questions

Read Ephesians 2:4-10: What saves us?

• God is rich in mercy and loves us with a great love. How does this make you feel about God? Have you ever experienced this kind of love from another person?

• Paul contrasts death and life in verse 5. Why are we dead? What makes us alive?

• How are we saved? What can we do to earn this?

• According to verses 9 and 10, what kind of attitude should this gift of God produce in us?

*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."
Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

• What does it mean to believe in Him?

• How does this reverse our state (from death to life)?

Summary

What must someone do to be saved?

How would you describe grace to a friend? Faith?

Grace: _____

Faith: _____

Clarification

• How does it make you feel to know that you cannot earn your salvation, it a pure gift from God?

• What amazed you most from our lesson today?

Act

• Draw two circles below. In each circle draw a simple chair at the center.

In the first circle put your name on the chair and put a cross (to represent Jesus Christ) on the outside of the circle. In the second circle put the cross on the chair and your name in the circle but below the chair.

These circles represent two kinds of lives. The first is a life without Christ and the first is a life entrusted to Christ.

• Which circle best describes your life?
• Which circle would you like to represent your life?

You can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer (prayer is talking with God). God knows your heart and is not as concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of prayer. If you want to turn to God from self and trust Christ to come into your life, let's pray!

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

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Before you begin: *Pray*

Only God can empower you to have a successful session.

Pray that God will help each person in your group to:

1. Attend the session.
2. Understand what is discussed.
3. Apply the main lesson in a specific way.
4. Share what they learn with someone else.

Four Phases of the Group Discussion Flow

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer: Start by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. Students value connection time, so take time to build friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other). End this time with a prayer to begin the lesson.

Discussion:

Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

Lesson Summary: Brief summary to tie the lesson together as a whole. Use the statement to direct you as you lead the students in what they should take away from this time.

Transition: This statement is to help transition into reading God's Word.

Notes:

Use Examples - Be ready to use examples from your life as the group discussion proceeds.

Use Discernment - Use the connection time to assess everyone's spiritual condition. If there are a number of non-Christians present, your session may contain more basic explanations and you may need to be sensitive about prayer times, etc.

HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT
2

Lesson A: Assured

Bible Passages: Luke 15:11-24;
1 John 5:11-13

Session Objective: Provide young believers with security of their salvation and assurance of their new relationship with God.

This entire unit is designed as "follow-up" and this lesson is usually your first follow-up with a new Christian. Reflecting on God's love and acceptance is important for Christians at any stage but it is particularly helpful to the recent convert.

You may walk through this lesson one-on-one or in a small group setting. In either case it is valuable for new Christians to articulate out loud when they first trusted Christ.

- The **Understand it** section is especially important in this lesson and the questions there should be given the time they deserve.

- Try to create an environment in these studies that encourages openness and honesty.

- If young believers doubt their salvation, they should feel the freedom to say so. If you can share a time when you struggled with doubt that may help them also feel the freedom to share.

- Remember, ultimately our assurance is based on what Christ has done for us on the cross and God's love and forgiveness, not on our emotions or feelings. If anyone in your group struggles with this issue, the "train diagram" found in the "Four Spiritual Laws" has helped many.

Lesson B: Forgiven

Bible Passages:
Luke 7:36-50;
1 John 1:9-2:2

Session Objective: Help new Christians appreciate God's forgiveness of sin and our need for confession to restore our fellowship with God after we sin.

Approach this lesson much like "Assured"- 2A. It is part of a series usually considered basic follow-up. As such you want to show special sensitivity to those that have questions and doubts.

When we sin, we do not stop being God's children, but we do break fellowship with our heavenly Father. Depending on the background of your group this may or may not be easy for them to grasp.

- You may share ways you have experienced these truths in your relationship with God.

- Creating an atmosphere that allows openness and candor will help you discover spiritual issues and special ministry needs of the group.

- The questions under the **Clarification** section would be especially helpful for your group. Be sure to allow enough time to consider them carefully.

Lesson C: Filled

Bible Passages: John 18:15-18;
Acts 2:14-22; Ephesians
3:16-20; Ephesians 5:18-21

Session Objective: Introduce the concept of the Spirit-filled life and encourage the new believer to walk in the Spirit's power.

Most young Christians understand that the Christian life is challenging. They know their need for power to live it. This lesson explores this issue from the story of Peter (which shows clearly the difference the Holy Spirit can make) and from Ephesians 3 and 5 (which tells us that this power is intended for each and every follower of Christ).

- How to be filled with the Holy Spirit is a teaching that may take some time for the Christian to fully grasp.

- If you have begun to realize the ministry of the Spirit your personal experience with that will help this lesson come alive.

- Be sure and emphasize the **Summary** section and listen carefully to see to what extent the group is grasping the concept.

- You may want to meet personally with some of the group members at a later time and share the concept "Have you Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?" (<http://www.greatcom.org/english/spirit.htm>)

Lesson D: Continually

Bible Passages:
Colossians 2:6-7; Psalm 16:8,9

Session Objective: Show that the Christian life is a process and that our goal is continual fellowship with Christ.

Many young Christians wrongly expect growth as a Christian to move at a faster pace than is realistic, or they experience an up-and-down spiritual life. This study shows us what a day-by-day close personal walk with God looks like practically.

- In Colossians 2:6-7 we see the walk described. The questions following this passage are important for helping to make the Christian walk tangible and helping the group see what elements could be involved.

- Psalm 16:8-9 allows us to see into David's life and observe what his personal relationship with God looked like.

- Use these passages to help the group come to practical conclusions about the elements that would make up a healthy and meaningful walk with God and to motivate them in their relationship with Christ.

- The **Act** section will be important for allowing the group to state personally what specific steps they wish to apply to strengthen their walk. Be sure to allow enough time in the lesson so they can each express their thoughts.

Lesson E: Truth

Bible Passage:
John 8:42-47

Session Objective: Help the student grapple with the fact that the Bible teaches that we can believe in "absolute truth".

In John 8 Jesus makes a case for the fact that truth is "absolute". Our modern society and the university world present a very different view- that "there are no absolutes" and that all truth is relative. Postmodernism also embraces this view. For anyone to establish a strong foundation in their faith they must resolve this discrepancy between what Jesus taught and what the world says.

-- There are several principles that the group can derive from John 8:42-47:

- There is such a thing as truth.
- It comes from God.
- Jesus spoke truth.
- Those who reject God also reject Jesus' teachings.
- Those who are of God receive the words of Christ as truth.

- When you reach the reference on Postmodernism it might be helpful to review the term. How Postmodernism interprets truth is stated most clearly by Stanley Grenz in *A Primer on Postmodernism*: "[Postmodernism] affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate ... There is no absolute truth; rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate."

Of course, Jesus in John 8:42-47 shows the inaccuracy of this view.

Assured

Be sure of your personal relationship with God

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- How are you doing?

Consider this statement:
"Relationships grow from acceptance and assurance."

- Have you seen this to be true since coming to the United States?

- How would this statement apply back in your home culture?

Deeper Perspectives

- This principle also applies in a relationship with God.

Transition

Let's see what the Bible has to say about it.

Bible Passage: Luke 15:11-24

Background: This is the story of a rebellious son. The father represents God. The rebellious son represents how we sometimes act toward God. The father was looking down the road, hoping his son would return. He had compassion: running to meet his son and celebrating his return. This story assures us that God loves and accepts us. He wants to have close fellowship with us.

Bible Discussion Questions

- Have you seen yourself acting towards God in ways similar to the rebellious son? When?

- What are some evidences of the father's love and acceptance of the rebellious son?

- How were the son's thoughts and actions reflective of the father's love and acceptance?

- What can we learn about relationships from this story?

- Do you often see Jesus' kind of love demonstrated in the behavior of people in the U.S.? How about in the behavior of people in your culture?

Bible Passage: 1 John 5:11-13

Background: These verses provide simple clarity that receiving Christ assures us that we have eternal life (with God).

Bible Discussion Questions

- What does this passage teach us about the source of eternal life?

- What do you think John wanted people to know and feel when they read these words?

- What do these passages show us...

-- about God?

-- about ourselves?

- How do you think these passages relate to the statement we discussed earlier: **"Relationships grow from acceptance and assurance?"**

Summary

Write the main lesson learned from these passages in the space below:

Clarification

- Why don't we always experience assurance in our personal relationship with God?

- Was there anything about the lesson today that you found confusing?

- What surprised you most from our lesson today?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- As you experience more assurance of God's love and acceptance, what difference could this make in the weeks ahead?

- What practical steps can you take to cultivate more of Jesus' type of love in your actions and attitudes toward others?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Forgiven

Be sure you experience God's forgiveness so you can have a close relationship with Him

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

Consider this statement:
"Forgiveness gives a relationship a fresh start."

- Have you experienced the reality of this statement? How?

Deeper Perspectives

- Why is forgiveness such a great need in our closest relationships?

- These same principles apply in our relationship with God.

Transition

Let's see what the Bible has to say about it.

Bible Passage: Luke 7:36-50

Background: This story involves Jesus, a sinful woman and a self-righteous religious leader. After Jesus saw the woman's sorrow over her sins, He forgave her of her sins. This should encourage anyone who feels that God could never forgive them of all the bad things they have done.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What are some differences in how the religious leader viewed the sinful woman and how Jesus viewed her?
- In verses 40 – 47 Jesus applies the cancellation of debts to the attitudes of the religious leader and the woman. What do you learn here?
- What do you suppose was the impact on the woman when she heard that her sins had been forgiven?
- What do you suppose Jesus was trying to teach from this story?

- How do you think you can apply this to your life and relationship with God?

Bible Passage: 1 John 1:9-2:2

Background: This passage clarifies that we should confess our sins to God. As we acknowledge the fact that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, we can experience the joy of being forgiven by God.

Bible Discussion Questions

- Do you agree that people commit sins? What leads you to this conclusion?
- How did Jesus Christ provide a solution to the problem of sin? (See also 1 John 1:7) What must we do to take advantage of that solution?
- What do you think these passages teach us...
 - about God?
 - about ourselves?
- How do you think these passages relate to the statement we discussed earlier: "Forgiveness gives a relationship a fresh start"?

Summary

Write the main lesson learned from these passages in the space below:

Clarification

- Why don't we always experience the forgiveness that God offers us?

- Was there anything about the lesson today that you found confusing?

- What surprised you most from our lesson today?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- Remember the main lesson: "Experiencing God's forgiveness allows you to have a close relationship with Him."

- In the coming week, what difference will it make to be more confident of God's forgiveness?

- What practical steps can you take to cultivate a greater understanding of God's forgiveness of you and others?

- Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Filled

Be sure you are filled with the Holy Spirit so you can have power for living

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- How did Application go from last week's lesson?

Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Consider this: "Often we need help to do a difficult assignment."

Deeper Perspectives

- Has there been an experience in the past several weeks where you felt overly challenged and needed help?
- Can you tell us about it?

Transition

This same principle is also seen in our walk with Christ.

This study will explore the solution we find in the Bible for the power we need to live the Christian life effectively.

Bible Passage: John 18:15-18 and Acts 2:14-22

Background: These two passages show the remarkable change in Peter's courage within a few weeks. Before being filled with the Holy Spirit, he denied Christ. After being filled, he preached with great courage to a large crowd.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What types of changes do you see in Peter from John 18 to Acts 2?
- What seems to have been the major contributors to those changes?
Note: Clearly the Holy Spirit provides significant help for difficult assignments in life.
- How do you think this passage relates to the statement we discussed earlier: "Often we need help to do a difficult assignment?"

Bible Passage: Ephesians 3:16-20 and Ephesians 5:18-21

Background: The first passage describes how much help God wants to give us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, Paul commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and shows the dramatic life-change that can result.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What are some benefits believers will experience if they take advantage of the presence of the Spirit in their lives?
- What are some specific behaviors that result from being filled with the Spirit?
- In what ways do those behaviors contrast with typical human behaviors?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about the power the Holy Spirit gives for living? Write important points down:

Clarification

- Is there anything about the filling of the Spirit that is unclear to you?
- What new idea do you want to continue to explore from this study?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to apply what you are learning about the filling of the Holy Spirit?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then, in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Continually

Relate to God all the time

International
Essentials

2D

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

Consider this statement: "A relationship with a person greatly benefits from frequent interaction."

- Have you seen this statement to be true in your experience?
- Is there someone who you have grown very close to in your life? What made this relationship strong?
- Have you been in a relationship in which you didn't spend much time together? What happened: did the relationship stay strong or did you drift apart?

Deeper Perspectives

This principle also applies in a relationship with God.

Transition

Let's see what the Bible has to say about it.

Bible Passage: Colossians 2:6-7

Background: In many Bible translations, verse 6 reads "so walk in Him." This passage reminds us that the Christian life is a continual walk of faith. We received Christ BY FAITH, and that is how we continue on the journey.

Bible Discussion Questions

- In this passage and many others, the Christian life is described as a "walk". Why do you think this is a good description of the process we experience?
- What do you think it means to say we are to "live in him, rooted and built up in him"?
- What are some ways to be strengthened in our walk with God?
- Why is it natural to be "overflowing with thankfulness" as we walk in faith?

Bible Passage: Psalm 16:8,9

Background: These verses give insight into David's walk of faith and his total dependence on God. "I have set the Lord continually before me."

Bible Discussion Questions

- What positive outcomes in David's life result from walking in daily dependence on God?
- Why do you think God wants this type of relationship with us?
- Have you discovered any ways to keep a continual connection to God throughout your day?
- How do you think these passages relate to the statement we discussed earlier: "A relationship with a person greatly benefits from frequent interaction"?

Summary

Write the main lesson learned from these passages in the space below:

Clarification

- When we are having trouble maintaining a continual, close, personal walk with God, what is most often the cause?
- What is the solution when we sin and find ourselves out of fellowship with God? (1 John 1:9)
- Was there anything about the lesson today that was hard to understand?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- As you experience a more consistent walk of faith, what difference will it make in the weeks ahead?

What practical steps can you take to become more like David when he said: "I have set the Lord continually before me."

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Truth

Walking confidently because God gives us Truth

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- How did Application go last week from our lesson on walking continually with God?
- When you hear people say that 'there are no right answers', or that you should 'tolerate all points of view', how does that make you feel?

Deeper Perspectives

In the parable of the "6 Blind Men and the Elephant" each blind man feels a different part of an elephant and reaches a different conclusion. One grabs a tusk and says, "This is a spear! Another holds the trunk and says, "This is a snake!" Etc. Each man believes that they have the whole of the elephant, however in reality they only have a part of it, and no one can have the whole elephant, just like no one can know the whole truth.'

- Does this illustration about truth seem legitimate to you? Do we really know that no one can know the whole truth?
- How might it make our lives better if we all knew that objective truth really existed?

Transition

The Bible in general and Jesus in particular claim to give us absolute truth.

Bible Passage: John 8:42-47

Background: Jesus often dialogued with Jewish religious leaders. Here, we see a group of Jews who seem to be favorably impressed with Jesus, but are still clinging to their Jewish racial/religious heritage as their core identity. Jesus points out to them that their hearts AND minds are still in the wrong place.

Bible Discussion Questions:

- What principles does Jesus give us about truth?
- Do you believe what He says here: that a personal God (the Father) exists who is the source of objective truth? Why or why not?
- Do you believe what He also says here: that a personal devil exists who is the ultimate source of falsehood? Why or why not?

Continue questions

If, as Jesus says and contrary to post-modernism, objective truth and falsehood really do exist, then ...

- What difference can this make for you as you hear many of the false assumptions you are confronted with in your studies?
- What differences could that make in how a student at college conducts their life?
- What differences might that make in how a person from your home culture lives?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about truth? Write important points down:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?
- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, how are you going to learn more truth from the Word of God?
- How are you going to make yourself more aware of the falsehoods that the devil might be spreading?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Assignment: This coming week, please read the article "The Reliability of the Bible" at <http://www.leaderu.org/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html>

Tell

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Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

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HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT
3

Lesson A: Apply

Bible Passages:
Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23;
Joshua 1:8

Session Objective: Create a thirst for God's Word in our hearts and a commitment to live it out.

You want to help the students have a deeper desire to know God through His love letter to us, the Bible. But they also need to be clear that they're not just gaining head knowledge but seeing their lives change as they DO what it says.

- In the **Hear** section emphasize the need to apply the Bible to our lives and not just know it.

- Since the main thrust of this lesson is about applying God's truth, the **Apply** section is crucial. Under **Act** make sure that they share specific ways that they will apply this lesson.

Lesson B: Pray

Bible Passages: Acts 4:
14-31

Session Objective: Build the heart attitude and lifestyle of dependent, hopeful prayer to God.

- In the **Discussion** section make sure to find out their current attitude and practice toward prayer. International students from different cultures will have varying thoughts about prayer.

- Look for the group to at least come away with the following principles:

- Pray together in times of stress and difficulty.
- Acknowledge God's sovereignty, His control over all things.
- Expect God to answer prayer in unexpected ways.

- In the **Hear** section emphasize this question-- "From this passage, what are some good principles for us about how to interact with God when we are threatened? What changes might we expect?" Make sure to give it adequate time:

Note: There is a suggested 'home-work' that the group members should be encouraged to do later in the week (2 Sam 11:1-12:13).

Lesson C: Witness

Bible Passages:
John 1:35-46

Session Objective: Be gripped by the need and command to tell others about Jesus.

- Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- Through Jesus, all people can personally 'come and see' God (get to know Him like a friend).
- Jesus demonstrates through His supernatural power that He is the Son of God (the Messiah, the King of Israel).

- In the **Hear** section this is a key question: "What are some barriers to talking about Christ with non-Christians?" Make sure to discuss it well. Help the students identify and step out to overcome barriers that might block us from telling others about Jesus. Share from your own personal experience too.

- The **Act** section has a very relevant practical step to take, so make sure that a specific plan is made

Lesson D: Fellowship

Bible Passages:
Hebrews 10:24-25;
John 15:12-13

Session Objective: Build a lifestyle of love toward other believers.

- Look for the group to at least come away with the following principles:

- The benefits of meeting with other believers include mutual encouragement and motivation to love and good deeds.
- Jesus set the best example for how we are to treat other believers-- laying down our lives for each other.

- In the **Connect** section you should be able to uncover some felt needs for fellowship.

- In the **Hear** section, the Bible passages are rather general. Help the students to think of practical and specific ways that they could live these out. Brainstorm with them about possibilities of what these verses might look like in their every day lives.

Lesson E: Think

Bible Passage: Acts 17:16-31

Session Objective: Begin grasping the biblical view of God Himself, in order to better love the Lord with all our mind.

- Look for the students to come away with the following principles:

- God has unique characteristics and is very different from 'gods' of other religious traditions.

- How we think about God greatly affects what we believe about the world and ourselves, and what we value in life. Thus, what we think about God radically and unavoidably shapes how we behave.

- In the **Connect** section help students to articulate what they really believe about God's character. As new believers it's not crucial that they have every point theologically correct. Help create an atmosphere where they can safely share what they really believe.

- In the **Hear** section, the last two discussion questions are the most important, so let them fully discuss them.

Note: The Bible passage shows Paul presenting the biblical God to two different worldviews. Help your group members wrestle with how to contrast the Biblical view of God with alternative worldviews today.

Also, note that Epicureanism is actually very similar to today's secular materialism, and Stoicism has similarities to Eastern pantheism with which Asian students may be quite familiar.

Apply

Because we love God we will learn His Word and apply it to our lives

CONNECT with each other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to life

Begin with Prayer

*How did your application go from last week's lesson?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- What are the most honored sacred writings in your home culture?

- How much have you read and learned of those writings? Have they made a difference in how you live your life?

- What do you know about the authors of the Bible?

Deeper Perspectives

- What is something you've already learned from the Bible that's impacted your life?

Lesson Theme

Because we love God we will learn His Word and apply it to our lives.

Bible Passage: Matthew 13:3-8 and 13:18-23

Background: Jesus often taught spiritual truth in the form of stories such as this one.

Please read the Bible passages together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What is the main point of this story?

- What are the conditions that keep the seed from being fruitful?

- Which of the 4 soils best represents your life right now? Please explain why.

- Have you had any persecution or difficulties as a result of believing in Jesus?

- What is the "fruit" that Jesus is talking about? Can you share some examples of this in your own life?

Bible Passage: Joshua 1:8

Background: Joshua prepares to lead Israel into the land God promised them. God gives Joshua some important instructions before beginning this difficult task.

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What do you think "success" means in this verse?

- What are we supposed to do with the Bible in order to have this success?

- If you have begun a regular habit of reading and studying the Bible, what time of day works best for you to do this?

- What benefits have you had from this time spent in God's Word?

Assignment Questions

Previously, you had an assignment to read the article "The Reliability of the Bible" at <http://www.leaderu.org/orgs/probe/doc/-/bibdocu.html>

- What was most helpful to you from the article? Was there anything that was hard to understand or that you would like to discuss further?

The Bible is unique because it is inspired by God, and it is completely true, in every part. This is called "inerrancy" which means "without error".

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about knowing and applying God's Word? Write down the important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what is one thing that you will do to learn the Bible and apply it to your life?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Is there someone who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Pray Talking to God

CONNECT with each other

Begin with Prayer

How did your application go from last week's lesson about Knowing and Applying God's Word?

Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- When things are either very bad or very good in your life, is it your habit to talk through those things with a good friend? How does that help you?

- What can you do if you can't find a friend (or the right kind of friend) to talk things over with?

Deeper Perspectives

- What characteristics do you look for in a person in order to trust him?

- From your background, what have you learned about talking with God? Do you believe that you can share your struggles and joys with God, and will He listen and care?

Lesson Theme

As Christians we always have a trustworthy Friend with whom we can pour out our hearts, anytime and anywhere.

HEAR God's Word

Bible Passage: Acts 4: 7-31

Background: Acts introduces us to the early church shortly after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to Heaven. The Jewish Council held a lot of authority over the people of Israel at that time. They were worried about being blamed for Jesus' death. When the Christian believers shared Christ with the people, they included the fact that the Jews and Romans had killed Him. This made the Jewish leaders very nervous and angry, and they had the authority to demand that the Christians stop spreading this message, and to punish them if they did. The young Christians had little or no political power to resist the Jewish leaders' authority. Yet they still longed to communicate the good news of Christ to the people.

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What strikes you from this passage about how the disciples responded after being threatened?

Continue questions

- What did they know and express in prayer about God in the midst of this threatening environment?

- Did the disciples' prayers result in any changes?

- From this passage, what are some good principles for us about how to interact with God when we are threatened? What changes might we expect?

Assignment Questions

Please read about a great sin that David committed (2 Sam 11:1-12:13). Read also David's prayer in response to that sin (Psalm 51). Answer the following questions and recording your answers in a notebook:

- What are some characteristics of David's interaction with God in this prayer?

- From this passage, what are some good principles for us about how we should interact with God when we sin?

- What does this passage teach us about how God responds when we admit our guilt to Him?

UNDERSTAND it

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about talking with God about the joys and difficulties we go through in life? Write important points down:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

APPLY it to life

Act

In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to begin talking things over with God more? Write down your specific actions and share them. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Is there someone who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

CONNECT with each other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to life

Begin with Prayer

*How did your application go from last week's lesson about talking with God in Prayer?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- These days people love to use Facebook to tell their friends exciting news, but people have been spreading good news in simpler ways throughout human history.

In 490 B.C., after the Greeks won the Battle of Marathon, a Greek messenger ran 40 km - today's Olympic Marathon distance - from the battlefield to Athens to deliver the news of victory. Upon arriving he uttered, "We have won!", and then died from exhaustion. He was obviously a man who was very motivated to tell others good news.

- Think of some times when you had good news. How do you feel about sharing news with people?

Deeper Perspectives

- Why would the news about Jesus be welcomed as good news to people here in America? In your home culture?
- In what ways might news about Jesus NOT be welcomed by people here in America? In your home culture?
- Would there be any cases when we should go ahead and tell others important news, even if we don't know whether they will receive it favorably?

Lesson Theme

The Bible also contains incredibly good news that ought to be told to everyone who will listen.

Bible Passage: John 1:35-46

Background: The first character in this story, John, is also called "John the Baptist". God gave John the responsibility of introducing Jesus to the nation of Israel. John the Baptist is not the same person as the author of this gospel (the apostle John).

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- Why do you think the people in this passage were so motivated to tell others about Jesus?
- Describe or summarize from this passage how the news about Jesus spread quickly.
- From this passage, what were people saying about Jesus that caused others to be attracted to Him?

Continue questions

- What terms were they using to address Jesus?
- Explain what you think those various descriptions of Him mean.
- Are you like John and the disciples in the Bible passage? Are you motivated to tell others about Jesus?
- What are some barriers to talking about Christ with non-Christians?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about telling others about Jesus? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?
- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to have a spiritual conversation with someone who doesn't know Christ? What is one piece of good news about Jesus that you can share?

Write down your specific actions to take below. In groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

*Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends.
Who will pray for us?*

Fellowship

Form close relationships with true followers of Jesus for support and encouragement



CONNECT with each other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to life

Begin with Prayer

*How did your application go from last week?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Some cultures strongly value individuality while others more strongly value community. You have probably noticed that American society highly values "individuality". Describe your home culture. How do the American approaches to family and friendships differ with your home culture's approach?

Deeper Perspectives

- Most international students experience loneliness because they are away from their family and close friends. How have you established relational networks since you arrived in the U. S.? Have you experienced loneliness? Would you like to share about it?

Lesson Theme

In order to thrive as human beings we need to form close relationships with true followers of Jesus for support and encouragement.

Bible Passage: Hebrews 10: 24-25

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What are some benefits of meeting with other believers?"

- Have you met any other Christians with whom you can fellowship? If not, let's brainstorm about where you can meet some more followers of Jesus.

Bible Passage: John 15:12-13

"This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What do these verses teach us about relationships with other Christians?

- How do you think this passage helps us to form close relationships with other brothers and sisters in Christ?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about fellowship with other followers of Jesus? Write down the important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

In the coming week, how will you develop more meaningful fellowship with other Christians? Write down at least one specific action to take. Then share that action step with each other.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Think

Loving God with all our mind

CONNECT with each other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to life

Begin with Prayer

How did your application go from last week's lesson about **Fellowship** with other believers?

Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- How would you define a fulfilling and successful life?

- Explain further why you answered the way you did.

Deeper Perspectives

In order to find out if you are really on track with your life, you have to get back to the very foundation of what reality is all about. For example, Buddhism says that ultimate reality is a universal 'oneness'. Atheism says that unconscious matter is what is ultimate.

- In your home culture's view of the world, what is most ultimately real?

- Do you think that most people think enough about ultimate questions? Why or why not?

Lesson Theme

The Bible gives us a clear picture of ultimately reality—God, so we should love God by thinking deeply about Him.

Bible Passage: Acts 17:16-31

Paul was on a missionary journey and had gone to Athens alone ahead of his co-workers. Previously in Acts, Paul's message was to Jews. This time his message was to people with a totally different view of ultimate reality.

Epicureans

Epicureans were basically atheists, who saw the universe and its effects as merely the interaction of particles of matter ("atoms"). One of their philosophy's aims was to rid people of the fear of "the gods" and of punishment after death. They taught that we can know the world truly through observation by our senses. They also taught that our purpose is to achieve pleasure (at least up to the point where discomfort results), while living honorably, wisely and justly. (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Epicurus)

Stoics

Stoics believed that Nature is God ("pantheism"). They believed that our circumstances are guided by Nature's will, or "Fate". They taught that we humans have a choice in how we respond to Fate and should strive to keep our passions in check, guide our actions by reason, and live a tranquil ('stoic') and virtuous life. (Wikipedia, Stoicism)

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What characteristics of "the Christian God" did Paul describe to the people of Athens?

- Why do you suppose Paul thought it was important to bring out those characteristics to them (keeping in mind that they believed in Epicurean or Stoic philosophies)?

- How do these characteristics of God compare with prevailing views of 'The Ultimate Reality' in your home culture?

- How might knowing these characteristics of God influence our values, our direction and purposes in life and, ultimately, our behavior? Why might this be one way to "love the Lord with all your mind"?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about loving God with all our minds as our ultimate reality? Write important points down:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

For Additional Study

Read the article "Evidence for God's Existence" found at:
<http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/evidence.html>

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to think more clearly and deeply about God's character as our ultimate reality?

For example, one key to transforming our minds to the Biblical world view is spending lots of time reading, meditating and discussing God's word. Write below your specific actions to take. Share this and then let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Get Ready: Preparation Guide

International
Essentials

Getting ready to lead an International Essentials session is simple. Each one-page outline can be used as both the leader's guide and as the students' worksheet. It includes directions and guided discussion questions. Print one sheet for each person in your group. Work through the discussion from left hand column to right.

Before you begin: *Pray*

Only God can empower you to have a successful session.

Pray that God will help each person in your group to:

1. Attend the session.
2. Understand what is discussed.
3. Apply the main lesson in a specific way.
4. Share what they learn with someone else.

Four Phases of the Group Discussion Flow

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer: Start by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. Students value connection time, so take time to build friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other). End this time with a prayer to begin the lesson.

Discussion:

Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

Lesson Summary: Brief summary to tie the lesson together as a whole. Use the statement to direct you as you lead the students in what they should take away from this time.

Transition: This statement is to help transition into reading God's Word.

Notes:

Use Examples - Be ready to use examples from your life as the group discussion proceeds.

Use Discernment - Use the connection time to assess everyone's spiritual condition. If there are a number of non-Christians present, your session may contain more basic explanations and you may need to be sensitive about prayer times, etc.

HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT 4

Lesson A: Love People

Bible Passages: John 13:1-5, 12-17, 34-35

Unit Note: The previous Units of the Essentials focused on strengthening the young group members' personal walks with God. This unit starts them on the road of ministry to others. God's heartbeat for our ministry is to reconcile the world to Himself. Lessons B, C, & D of this Unit all work toward that end: Win, Build and Send.

However, the first lesson is about Love. This lesson is essential to cover first because in order to be effective winners, builders and senders we first need to love those to whom we minister. Finally, the ultimate purpose of all ministry is to glorify God, which is the topic of Lesson E.

Unit Objective: Be effective winners, builders and senders, motivated by Christ's love and aiming for God's glory above all.

Session Objective: Grow in loving people better through Christ's great example.

Learn and begin to apply at least several of the following principles:

- Love requires service and humble sacrifice; Jesus has demonstrated both of those to us, in going to the cross for our sakes.
- Jesus asks us to love others with the same kind of love He has for us.

Communicate that certain people may seem hard to love, but the Bible tells us, "We love because He first loved us."
1 John 4:19

Lesson B: Win

Bible Passages: Matthew 4:17-22; Luke 19:10; Matthew 24:14

Session Objective: Be committed to actively win people to Christ and have basic plans for when and with whom to start.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- Jesus was compassionately concerned about the people around Him who were in a state of great darkness. People around us are also in a state of great darkness, and need us to show them the compassion of Christ.
- Ultimately, the most important thing we can do for nonbelievers is to help them come into God's kingdom. Thus being one of Jesus' "fishers of men" is one of the greatest callings we can imagine.
- Winning others is sometimes very difficult because most people don't realize the depth of their spiritual (i.e. like fish, they normally won't just jump into the boat). Thus, being effective witnesses usually requires lots of love and perseverance.

In the **Apply** section, help students identify non-believing friends and family members who need prayer and help in understanding the gospel.

Lesson C: Build

Bible Passages: 1 Thessalonians 2:5-12

Session Objective: Be committed to build others in Christ and learn the basics of how to do it.

In the Hear section, take a few minutes to look together at the background of the Thessalonian church from Acts 17:1-10.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- Our attitudes in helping other young believers to grow should be similar to loving parents, both gently encouraging and boldly challenging them to grow.
- We need to watch out for selfish motivations within us when we build others in their faith.
- Building others effectively requires both hard work and godly modeling.
- The goal in building others in their faith should be that they would live lives worthy of the God who has called them.
- Multiplication is more effective for reaching the world than addition.

In the **Apply** section, if any group members are already leading younger believers in Bible studies, discuss how they can implement these principles.

Lesson D: Send

Bible Passages: Luke 10:1-2; 1 Kings 8:60; Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8

Session Objective: Understand the urgent need and strategy for sending believers out to the world with the gospel.

This lesson will stretch the group's vision, yet it's also meant to present a clear plan in how to send; it shows God's strategy to reach the world.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- Pray often: Ask God – the Lord of the harvest – to raise up laborers. Ultimately, God is the one who sends.
- Young believers may not yet be mature enough to be sent or to send others, but help them to take small steps to send others. (For example, they can pray, give, and learn about places that need the gospel.)

The group might ask, "Is the Christian gospel really appropriate for all cultures around the world?" There are good answers to that question, here are things you might say:

- 1) God is the Creator of all humanity (Acts 17:24-28).
- 2) All people are sinners and need redemption (Acts 17:29-31; Romans 3:9-19).
- 3) Jesus was from Israel (He was not a Westerner) and the Bible is not a Western book.

Lesson E: Glorify

Bible Passage: Revelation 4:8-11; Revelation 5:11-14; Isaiah 43:1-7

Session Objective: Begin practically living for the purpose of glorifying God.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- Every human life is designed to be lived for God's glory, because He made us all. That purpose should be the ultimate goal of every area of our lives (school, marriage, career, leisure, money, etc.)
- Understand that God deserves honor and credit for all the successes of our lives.
- Understand that God deserves eternal glory from us because He loved, forgave, chose and adopted us as His own children, even though we deserved His rejection and punishment.
- We are to love, win, build, and send others with the goal of bringing glory to Him.

In the **Apply** section, help the group members honestly confront areas in their lives where they are motivated by other goals besides glorifying God. Help them creatively think of practical ways to begin shifting their goals more to His glory.

Also in the **Apply** section, note that there are two suggested homework passages that may help spur students to more God-glorifying motives.

Love People

Realizing that loving people is the foundation for ministry

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How are your classes/research doing?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Think of someone who really has loved you. How has that person's love inspired positive change in your life?

Deeper Perspectives

- "Love from another person is probably the deepest need as well as the strongest instrument of change in our lives." Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?

Lesson Theme

God loves us so deeply we are to demonstrate love toward other people.

Bible Passage: John 13:1-5, 12-17, 34-35

Background: Jesus had great love for His disciples and this love motivated Him to do great acts of service for them. Those acts of love caused great change in those early believers' lives.

Please read the Bible passages together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- How would you describe the kind of love Jesus had for His disciples?
- Jesus had already spent about three years in close companionship with His disciples, and at this time He knew He was about to be killed. Given that background, how would you have felt if He had washed your feet? How might that have impacted your life?
- Our world often misunderstands the term "love." What are some common definitions of love? How do these definitions for love differ from the kind of love Jesus describes? Why do you think that our world often lacks the kind of love Jesus showed?

Continue questions

- How would our world change if people loved and served others like Jesus did in this story?

- In verses 15-17, Jesus clearly said that He was an example for us to follow. What are some ways we can 'wash someone else's feet?' Why would you want to?

- In John 13:34-35 Jesus summarizes the importance of love. What is the impact of this love? What are some practical ways to show love to the people in your life?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about love as the foundation for ministering to others? Write down some important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to cultivate more of Jesus' kind of love in treatment of others?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then share what you wrote. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Win

Spread the good news of eternal life through Christ

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How did your Application go last week from our lesson on loving people?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Each of us was at one time lost without Christ. In God's mercy, He drew us to Himself. This is a process that all followers of Christ experience. What was happening in your life during that process of realizing your need for Christ?

Deeper Perspectives

- Among your friends and relatives, who can you pinpoint that is in the same desperate place you once were—without Christ? What portion of the people in your home culture do not know Christ?

- What is God's attitude toward them?

- From your own experiences, what would you say is the most common method God uses to draw people to Himself?

Lesson Theme

God primarily uses people to show others how to know Him.

Bible Passages: Matthew 4:17-22, Luke 19:10, Matthew 24:14

In the first passage from Matthew's gospel, Jesus challenges His followers to join Him in His mission (the primary purpose for which He came).

Please read the Bible passages together.

Bible Discussion Questions

Matthew 4:17

- What was Jesus doing?

- What was Jesus' message?

- What do you think motivated Jesus?

- What did Jesus want to accomplish through His efforts?

Matthew 4:18-22

- What were Peter and James doing when they were approached by Jesus?

- Jesus began by saying, "Follow Me." Why is this important?

Continue questions

- What did Jesus mean when He said, "I will make you fishers of men"?

- How is telling others the good news about Jesus similar to fishing?

- Is there anything that strikes you about the response from Peter, Andrew, James and John to Jesus' challenge?

- How can we be 'fishers of men'?

Luke 19:10

- What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth?

Matthew 24:14

- What is the scope of our audience for this message?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about winning people to Christ? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything within today's lesson today that is still unclear?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, how can you follow Jesus more in becoming a fisher of men? Just like the fishermen left their nets, is there anything you might have to leave behind?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Is there someone who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our lives and tell our friends.

Build

Help people grow to be true followers of Jesus

International
Essentials

4C

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did Application go last week from
our lesson on winning others to the Lord?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God
for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Do you feel like you have been growing (becoming more mature, more godly, more Christ-like) over the past few months? In what ways?

Deeper Perspectives

- How important do you think having a few others alongside you has been to your spiritual growth?
- How has it helped you with your development as a Christian?
- What do you think the condition of your faith and walk with Christ would be if you hadn't been taking part in this group?

Lesson Theme

We should build up young believers in their faith and their walks with Christ.

Bible Passage: 1 Thessalonians 2:5-12

Background: Paul helped start the first Christian church in the town of Thessalonika (in today's Greece) during his second missionary journey. You can read about his time there in Acts 17:1-10. After leaving the town, he wrote two letters (1 & 2 Thessalonians) to the young believers there to encourage them.

Please read the Bible passage together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- From 1 Thessalonians 2:5-6, what are some attitudes that could prevent us from being effective in building others in the faith?
- In verses 7-8 and verses 11-12, the Scripture uses the illustration of a mother, then a father to bring out qualities that make us effective in building others. What qualities are listed?
- Why would comparing ourselves to mothers or fathers be helpful to us as we build into the lives of others?
- From verses 9-10, why do you think godly behavior and strong character are so important for us to maintain as we build others in their faith and walk with Christ?
- From verse 12, what does Paul say is the ultimate goal we would like to see in the lives of others? Why is this so important?

Continue questions

- Typically the mother encourages and the father challenges in this illustration. Why would both types of interaction be needed? Which is easiest for you? Which is more difficult?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about keys to building young believers up in their faith and their walks with Christ? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, identify some young believers that you can begin to build in their faith. How will you start?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Send

Help followers of Jesus go to those who need Him



CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go last week
from our lesson on building others in the
Lord?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God
for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

• What would you estimate as the percentage of people in this country who have heard the message of Christ and have come to faith in Him like you did? What would you estimate for your home country?

Deeper Perspectives

• If you, as an individual, wanted to change the world, how would you go about doing it?

• If you, as an individual, wanted to spread a great message to the most people, how would you go about doing it?

Lesson Theme

What do you think Jesus' strategy was to change the world, to change the hearts and minds of vast numbers of people, to spread his great message to the most people?

Bible Passages: Luke 10:1-2, 1 Kings 8:60, Matthew 24:14, Acts 1:8

Background: In the early chapters of Luke's gospel, Jesus' broad influence on Israel is shown through His preaching of the good news of God's kingdom and His leading of His disciples. In Luke 10, however, Jesus unveils a strategic plan to reach even larger numbers of people.

Please read the Bible passages together.

Bible Discussion Questions

- What are some key principles in Luke 10:1-2 that Jesus implemented in order to reach and ultimately transform the world?
- What does His metaphor of "harvest" and "laborers" mean and why do you think He used it?
- Read 1 Kings 8:60, Matthew 24:14, and Acts 1:8. Where are we to go to proclaim God's kingdom?

Continue questions

• Luke 10:1 says that Jesus sent His disciples out, and in Luke 10: 2, Jesus says that the 'Lord of the harvest' will send laborers out. What do you think this suggests that we should do today?

• How should people be sent? Brainstorm some of the practical needs of those who are sent.

• In addition to winning and building, why is sending so important?

• What are some practical ways that we can imitate the principles that Jesus used as we seek to proclaim God's kingdom throughout the world?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today regarding 'sending' principles for reaching the world for Christ? Write down important points:

Clarification

• Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

• What made the deepest impression on you?

• Was there anything about the lesson today that was hard to understand?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

• In the coming week, what is at least one step that you can take to help send others to reach the world for Christ?

Write down your specific action(s) below, and then share what you plan to do. After that, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing about what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our lives and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Glorify

Doing all things to bring glory to God

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go last week from our lesson on sending others to serve the Lord? Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Who usually gets the glory for the good things that happen in your life? Does that seem appropriate to you? Why or why not?

Deeper Perspectives

- In this nation, does God often get the glory that He deserves? Who often gets the glory instead? Why?
- Name the types of people who often get glory in your home culture. What conclusion does this suggest about your culture?
- What is the ultimate purpose that drives you to do the things that you do?

Lesson Theme

God defines the ultimate purpose for our lives and show us the best focus for all our pursuits.

Bible Passages: Revelation 4:8-11; 5:11-14; Isaiah 43:1-7

Background of Revelation: The Book of Revelation contains prophetic visions about the future, some of describe the new heaven and the new earth. Note that men and angels will continually give praise and glory to God.

Please read the two Revelation passages one at a time.

Definition: glo-ri-fy / 'glôə,fi Verb
1. Reveal or make clearer the glory of (God) by one's actions.
2. Give praise to (God).

Bible Discussion Questions

- In the two Revelation passages, find as many reasons as possible for why God is worthy of eternal praise and glory.
- Why is God more worthy than any person of getting praise and glory for the good things in our lives?

Continue questions

Background of Isaiah: Isaiah was a prophet who God used to speak to His people. In this passage, God is talking to the people of Israel.

Read the Isaiah passage and then continue discussing the questions.

- For what ultimate purpose did God make us, love us and choose us as His own children? Explain what you think that purpose means for your life.

- In the first four lessons of this unit we've talked about how to build God's kingdom. Our ultimate goal in all of this is to bring God glory. Why should this be our main goal?

Summary

How would you summarize this lesson on the importance of giving glory to God in all things? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?
- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, how can you live your life more for God's glory (in your values, priorities, words and activities)?

Write down your specific actions below and then share what you plan to do. After that, let's pray for one another.

Homework: This coming week, read Romans 11:33-36 and John 17:1-5. Consider the meaning and application of these passages for your personal life and for your relationship with God.

Tell

- Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Get Ready: Preparation Guide

International
Essentials

Getting ready to lead an International Essentials session is simple. Each one-page outline can be used as both the leader's guide and as the students' worksheet. It includes directions and guided discussion questions. Print one sheet for each person in your group. Work through the discussion from left hand column to right.

Before you begin: *Pray*

Only God can empower you to have a successful session.

Pray that God will help each person in your group to:

1. Attend the session.
2. Understand what is discussed.
3. Apply the main lesson in a specific way.
4. Share what they learn with someone else.

Four Phases of the Group Discussion Flow

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer: Start by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. Students value connection time, so take time to build friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other). End this time with a prayer to begin the lesson.

Discussion:

Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

Lesson Summary: Brief summary to tie the lesson together as a whole. Use the statement to direct you as you lead the students in what they should take away from this time.

Transition: This statement is to help transition into reading God's Word.

Notes:

Use Examples - Be ready to use examples from your life as the group discussion proceeds.

Use Discernment - Use the connection time to assess everyone's spiritual condition. If there are a number of non-Christians present, your session may contain more basic explanations and you may need to be sensitive about prayer times, etc.

HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT
5

Lesson A: Power

Bible Passages: Romans 8:1-17

Session Objective: Live in a more intimate and dependent relationship with the Holy Spirit, thus walking in His power for a more Christ-like life.

- Make sure to bring enough Satisfied booklets for everyone in your group. In preparation for this lesson, familiarize yourself again with the Satisfied booklet.
- In the **Connect** section, build motivation for this lesson by focusing on how difficult it is to live a godly life despite our deep desires to do so.
- The Greek terms for “flesh/sinful nature” have many shades of meaning in different contexts, so they are difficult to translate in Romans 8. In this passage, the NIV probably captures the most accurate meaning, so try to use that translation for this study.

Look for the students to capture several of the following principles:

- Recognize that the Holy Spirit is God (in Romans 8:9-11 He is equated with God the Father and with Jesus Christ), and thus in Him is both power and personality.
- Realize, from studying Romans 8 and the Satisfied booklet, that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a “technique” like getting a soft drink from a vending machine. Instead, realize that it is a transformation from within caused by an increasingly intimate relationship with God Almighty.

Lesson B: Truth

Bible Passages: John 14:16-17, 14:26, 16:13-14, John 18:37, John 17:17

Session Objective: Build habits of seeking and living in God's truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Bible.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- We are living in a ‘postmodern age’ where the notion of absolute truth is currently unpopular. This lesson challenges students to stand against this trend and live by God's absolute truth. In the **Connect** section, guide them to see the futility of life in a totally relativistic world.
- In the **Hear** section, guide them to see the fruitful lives they will have by accepting God's Word as their standard of truth. The Holy Spirit will use the Word to lead them in the truth.
- Depending on the Bible version that you use, be prepared to explain the word “sanctify” (to make pure and holy) in John 17:17.
- During the **Understand** and **Apply** sections, encourage discussion of examples (including some from your life) of how God's Word has proven itself to be superior to other sources of truth.

Lesson C: Peace

Bible Passages: Isaiah 26:3-4, Psalm 23, Philippians 4:6-7, John 14:27

Session Objective: Trust God in order to experience peace amid life's difficulties.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- Peace comes through trusting God and His character. He cares for us, and He overcame the things we fear most on earth (including death).
- An intimate, dependent relationship with God will bring inner peace no matter how difficult our circumstances and trials.
- At the end of the **Bible discussion** people are asked to share about what troubles them or makes them afraid right now. Lead the way by sharing about anything in your own life. Be real about where you are in experiencing God's peace. Also be sensitive to people who may not be comfortable sharing as openly. During the prayer time at the end make sure to pray for all concerns that were shared.
- Suggestions for the **Apply** section: To experience more peace amid stressful circumstances, encourage them to build habits of regular time with God. They should be in His Word (including memorization) and in prayer (especially sharing their stresses and praying with other believers).

Lesson D: Words

Bible Passage: Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 12:11-12, Acts 2:1-14, 2:36-41, Acts 4:1-13

Session Objective: Learn to rely upon the Holy Spirit in order to speak the right words at the right time.

- In the **Connect** section, build hunger in students' hearts by exposing the reality that we all struggle to know what to say in certain contexts.

If the students are having a hard time grasping the principles of this lesson, remind them:

- Choosing the right words at the right time—especially in difficult situations—is much more likely when our lives are controlled by the Holy Spirit. The impact of the Holy Spirit on your students' lives will be more evident as they spend time with Jesus (Acts 4:13), especially letting His peace rule and His word dwell richly within them (Col. 3:15-16).

- Suggestions for the **Apply** section: For this coming week, ask the students to wait to do the **Tell** portion until after they have spent some good time with the Lord. Ask them to see if their communication with their friend(s) improves.

Lesson E: Integrity

Bible Passage: 1 Peter 1:14-19

Session Objective: Develop a greater hunger to live a life of godly character.

Look for the students to come away with a couple of the following principles:

- We should desire to live holy lives because God Himself is holy, and since we're being made in His image we are challenged to reflect His character.
- We should desire to live holy lives because God is our Father. Many international students should appreciate this especially if they come from patriarchal cultures.
- We should desire to live holy lives because God impartially judges according to each one's work.
- We should desire to live holy lives because God redeemed us from sin and death with Christ's precious blood.
- Suggestions for the **Understand** and **Apply** sections: Some of the students' home cultures will have different notions of what “good character” means than we do in here. Be sure to emphasize that the standard of godly character is that of God Himself—not the moral standards of any culture.

Power

Living each day with power from the Holy Spirit

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How did your Application go from last week's lesson?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

• Behaving in a godly, righteous way can be very difficult sometimes. Can you give any examples from your own life?

Deeper Perspectives

• The traditions, laws, and religious books of our cultures often tell us clearly how we ought to act, and yet we sometimes have great difficulty finding the power to do what we know we should do. Why is it often so hard to do what is right and so easy to do what is wrong?

• Does your home culture or your own personal experience offer any solutions to this problem?

Lesson Theme

Many people struggle do to do what is right, but God gives us power to live in a godly way.

Bible Passage: Romans 8:1-17

Supplemental Reading: Satisfied booklet

Bible Discussion Questions

Please read Romans 8:1-8

• What is "the Law"? What do we learn about the sinful nature and the Law in this passage?

• What do we learn about the Spirit in verses 1-8?

Please read Romans 8:9-12

• In Romans 8:9-12 what do we learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians?

• Notice that in Romans 8:9 the Spirit is called both "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ". That is because the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son are all equally God. Since He is God, what are some of the Holy Spirit's characteristics?

Continue questions

• In Romans 8:13-17, how is our relationship to God described? What are some of the rights and privileges we have because of this relationship?

Now let's look at part of the Satisfied booklet. Please open the booklet to page 10. Someone please read page 10 through the end of the verses Ephesians 3:16-17.

• What are some situations where we need to "experience God's power through the Holy Spirit"?

• Devout followers of other religions (e.g. monks or holy men) often strive to become more "holy" through strict self-discipline techniques (whether physical or mental). How is God's provision for holiness different from these techniques?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about how the Holy Spirit helps us live more godly lives? Write important points down:

Clarification

• Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

• What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

• In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to deepen your relationship with God the Holy Spirit in order to live a more Christ-like life?

Write down actions to take below and share what action you plan to take. Then, let's pray for one another.

*Homework:
Read through all of the Satisfied booklet and apply it to your life this week.*

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Truth

Discerning what is true

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did Application go from last week's lesson about the Holy Spirit and power for godly living?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions Our Lives

- Are there any aspects in your life right now where you are really struggling to know what is true? How does that make you feel?

Deeper Perspectives

- In your home culture, what are some of the ways that people determine what is true and what is false?
- Comparing this country to your home country, what are some similarities and some differences in how people determine truth?
- Is knowing the truth important for people's spiritual lives? Why or why not?

Lesson Theme

The truth can be hard to find in this world. But God desires for us to discover the truth, and He is active in giving us ways to find it.

Bible Passages: John 14:16-17, 14:26, 16:13-14, John 18:37, John 17:17

John 14:16-17, 14:26, 16:13-14 Background: On the night before He was crucified, Jesus gave a long series of teachings to His followers. This set of passages focuses on some very important concepts that Jesus taught them about the Holy Spirit and truth.

Please read aloud John 14:16-17; 14:26; 16:13-14.

Bible Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth"? Why is "the Spirit of truth" our "Helper"?
- In 14:17, Jesus says that the world cannot receive, nor see, nor know the Holy Spirit. What does this tell you about what the World knows of truth? How should we respond differently to truth?
- From 16:13-14, list the things Jesus says the Holy Spirit will do for us, especially regarding truth. Why is each of these functions important?

Continue questions

John 18:37 Background: When Jesus was standing before Pontius Pilate (the Roman governor), He made a very powerful claim about truth.

Please read aloud John 18:37.

- If Jesus' claim is accurate, how should we (and the rest of the world) respond to His teachings?

- What is the important relationship between John 18:37 and John 14:26?

John 17:17 Background: This passage records a prayer of Jesus on the night before He was crucified.

- From what Jesus asks here, how does the truth make us pure and holy?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about how we can better know the truth? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to deepen your knowledge of God's word in order to better know the truth?

Write down actions to take below, and share what action you plan to take. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends.

Peace

Experiencing peace even in overwhelming situations



CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go from last week's lesson about truth?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- What kind of situations tend to make you feel worried or anxious?

- Have you ever felt great fear or worry since becoming a Christian? What was the cause?

Deeper Perspectives

- What are some common ways in which people, including your friends and family members, try to find peace amid the troubles of life?

- Do the ways that most people seek peace seem effective to you?

Lesson Theme

God can give us peace, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Bible Passages: Isaiah 26:3-4, Psalm 23, Philippians 4:6-7, John 14:27

Please read Isaiah 26:3-4

Bible Discussion Questions

- How does a person obtain the "perfect peace" that God promises to give?

- What are some practical ways that we can grow in trusting God?

Psalm 23 Background: As a young man David was a shepherd, so in this psalm he reflects on God's character as our shepherd.

Please read Psalm 23

- What do we learn about God's character?

- What has God promised to do for us?

Continue questions

- How does knowing God's character and His promises give us peace?

Philippians Background: Note that Paul was writing from captivity in a Roman prison.

Please read Philippians 4:6-7

- What are we commanded to do in these verses?

- What does God promise us?

John 14 Background: Jesus' was giving his final instructions to His followers on the night before He was put to death on the cross, so they were understandably afraid and anxious.

Please read John 14:27

- Jesus promises to give us His peace, so that we don't need to be afraid. Is there anything that you feel afraid or troubled about right now?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about how God gives us peace even when circumstances are overwhelming? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to deepen your trust in God and thus find greater peace?

Write down actions to take below, and share what action you plan to take. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Is there someone who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends.

Words

Expressing Spiritual Truth

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go from last week's lesson about the Holy Spirit and peace?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

• What kinds of situations make you nervous about whether you will say the right thing in the right way?

• What are some techniques that you or other people use to solve this problem?

Deeper Perspectives

• Do you think a high level of education and fluency in English is good enough for those times when you need to say the right thing in the right way, especially about your faith in Christ? Why or why not?

Lesson Theme

God gives people the power to say the right thing at the right time.

Bible Passages: Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 12:11-12; Acts 2:1-14, 2:36-41, 4:1-13

Please read Matthew 16:21-23

Bible Discussion Questions

• What did Peter say that was wrong? Why do you think that Peter said these things to Jesus?

Luke 12 Background: Jesus spoke these words to His disciples when the Jewish leaders were starting to oppose Him.

Please read Luke 12:11-12

• What does Jesus promise?

Please read Acts 2:1-14, & 2:36-41

• In Acts 2, in what ways was Peter in a challenging speaking situation?

• Contrast Peter's speech in Acts 2 with Matt 16:21-23. Make a list of the ways that Peter's communication ability and effectiveness changed between these two passages.

Continue questions

• What can account for the change in Peter's ability to speak the right things in the right way?

Acts 4 Background: Peter and John had just seen a man healed, and then preached a great message about Jesus, but then they got in trouble.

Please read Acts 4:1-13

• Again, list all the things you notice about Peter's communication ability and effectiveness in this passage.

• In Acts 4, how was Peter in a tough speaking situation?

• What can account here for Peter's ability to speak the right things in the right way?

Please read Luke 12:11-12 again

• How does Jesus' promise affect your confidence that you will speak the right words in the right way in tough situations? How will you find those right words and that right way?

Summary

• How would you summarize what we learned today about how a deepened walk with the Holy Spirit can enable us to speak the right words in the right way in tough situations?

Write down important points:

Clarification

• Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

• What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

• In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to deepen your relationship with the Holy Spirit in order to speak the right words in the right way to the people He leads you to?

Write down your actions to take, and share your plan. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing about what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends.

Integrity

Building Biblical foundations for Godly character



CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

How are you doing?

How did your Application go from last week's lesson about the Holy Spirit granting us the capacity for good communication?

Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- In Western culture many traditional moral standards are being questioned, changed or abandoned. What are some areas of moral behavior that bother you here on this campus?

- In your home country what are some things people do that you would say are wrong?

Deeper Perspectives

- How would you define "moral integrity?"

- What standard do you use to determine whether something is right or wrong?

- Whether we realize it or not, we all live by a set of moral standards. What motivates you to live by your standards?

Lesson Theme

God repeatedly urges us to live in a morally upright way. But He does much more than just give us lists of rules. God also provides us with sound reasons for why living with moral integrity.

Bible Passages: 1 Peter 1:14-19

Background: Peter, one of Jesus' closest followers, later became one of the main leaders in the early church. Two letters, written by Peter and inspired by God, are included in the New Testament to encourage believers.

Please read 1 Peter 1:14-19

Bible Discussion

- What reasons can you draw from this passage for why we should conduct ourselves in a holy, moral way?

- The Word of God clearly declares that God is holy. Why is that such a strong motivation for us to also strive for personal holiness?

- In verses 14 and 18, how does Peter describe the readers' lives before they were Christians?

Continue questions

- We are often influenced by our sin nature and by worldly temptations. Should these influences prevent us from developing godly character and integrity? Why or why not?

- We cannot earn forgiveness or restore our relationships with God through good works. What role does God's grace play in our development of godly character?

- In previous lessons we have often discussed the role of the Holy Spirit in developing Christ-like character in our lives. Can you share some personal examples that show how depending on the Holy Spirit is helping you make right choices? (Gal 5:22-23)

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about living with godly moral character?

Write important points down:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to live with more moral integrity?

Write down your actions to take, and share your plan. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Get Ready: Preparation Guide

International
Essentials

Getting ready to lead an International Essentials session is simple. Each one-page outline can be used as both the leader's guide and as the students' worksheet. It includes directions and guided discussion questions. Print one sheet for each person in your group. Work through the discussion from left hand column to right.

Before you begin: *Pray*

Only God can empower you to have a successful session.

Pray that God will help each person in your group to:

1. Attend the session.
2. Understand what is discussed.
3. Apply the main lesson in a specific way.
4. Share what they learn with someone else.

Four Phases of the Group Discussion Flow

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer: Start by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. Students value connection time, so take time to build friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other). End this time with a prayer to begin the lesson.

Discussion:

Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

Lesson Summary: Brief summary to tie the lesson together as a whole. Use the statement to direct you as you lead the students in what they should take away from this time.

Transition: This statement is to help transition into reading God's Word.

Notes:

Use Examples - Be ready to use examples from your life as the group discussion proceeds.

Use Discernment - Use the connection time to assess everyone's spiritual condition. If there are a number of non-Christians present, your session may contain more basic explanations and you may need to be sensitive about prayer times, etc.

HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT
6

Lesson A: Trust

Bible Passages:
1 Samuel 17:23-24,
32-37, 45-53;
Proverbs 3:5-6

Unit Objective: By faith, begin developing Christ-like attitudes that will facilitate growth over the long haul.

Session Objective: Pick one giant faith obstacle in each of our lives right now and exercise trust in God to face it through His strength.

Look for the group to understand several of the following principles:

- Our lives will be blessed if we, like David, get in the habit of regularly recalling God's provisions for us.
- God often allows us to be confronted by "giants" that He wants us to trust Him to overcome.
- We can receive God's direction for our lives when we "lean not on (our) own understanding," but instead "trust in the Lord."

In the **Understand** section, help the group members recall concrete examples from the past when God has proven Himself trustworthy.

In the **Apply** section, challenge the group members to write down one very tough faith barrier that each is facing (or perhaps avoiding) right now.

Lesson B: Love God

Bible Passages: Psalms
31:1-8, 14-19, 20-24;
Matthew 22:36-38

Session Objective: Gain biblical understanding that will help to promote greater love for God.

Look for the group to grasp the following principles:

- The great majority of our lives revolve around who or what we love. Therefore, the best use of our time is developing our love for God above everything and everybody else.

• We can't love God more by trying harder to love Him. We love Him as a response to His love for us. (You might read 1 John 4:10, 19 to the group.) That means we need to spend a lot of time getting to know how much He loves us.

In the **Connect** section, seek to involve group members in discussing the meaning of love in their home cultures, and who (or what) it is that they are expected to love most in those cultures.

In the **Understand** section, try to get the group members to think about and express why it is so important for us to love God (Matthew 22:36-38). Tell them that we naturally have affections, but it is best to focus our affections on the One who most deserves those affections--our Creator and heavenly Father.

To help them in the **Apply** section, remind them that loving God is similar to loving a friend or a family member. Share some aspect of your own love relationship with the Lord as an example.

Lesson C: Obey

Bible Passages:
Deuteronomy 30:8-20;
Ephesians 2:1-10

Session Objective: Set our hearts and habits toward obeying God more than we have previously—as a result of understanding our new life in Christ.

Look for the group to understand these principles:

- In the Deuteronomy passage: Although we do not live under the Old Testament law any more, the principle of blessing and curse still generally applies. If we obey God's directions for our lives, things will generally go better for us, and if we disobey, they will generally go worse (Gal 6:7).

• In the Ephesians passage: Obedience comes from the new life that God has given us through His mercy and grace. We are His workmanship. God created us specifically to walk in good works. One of our key duties in life, then, is to find out what good works God created us for and then gratefully walk in those good works. So obedience is part of our very nature.

In the **Understand** section, it will probably be easy for the students to understand that we should obey because of natural cause-and-effect. However, help them also to understand that as believers with new life, obedience is now integral to our very nature. God created us for it.

In **Apply**, urge your students to bravely face those areas in their lives where they are not yet completely obedient.

Lesson D: Faithfulness

Bible Passage: Matthew
25:14-30

Session Objective: Know clearly that God has entrusted us with gifts, abilities, and opportunities so we need to use these for His purposes.

Look for the group to understand and appreciate the following principle:

- Like the Master in the parable, God has graciously favored us with gifts, and with corresponding responsibilities for those gifts. These gifts, however, still belong to Him, and we are privileged and expected to make the most of them for His glory.

In the **Hear** section, take time to review what God's purposes are and why He expects the gifts He's given to be used well. Ask each student to write a list of what God has entrusted to him or her.

In the **Understand** section, help the students to grasp how richly God has gifted them and to understand the responsibility that comes with those gifts. (Perhaps they have previously understood their responsibility before their parents, relatives or their nation, but now we are talking about stewardship before God. Share ways you are striving to use the gifts God has entrusted to you for His glory. Discuss how they can do the same.

In the **Apply** section, make sure each student writes down specific action steps regarding at least one 'gift.' Pray together, giving their gifts back to God and asking Him to multiply them for His glory.

Lesson E: Hope

Bible Passages:
Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:1-7

Session Objective: Develop a clear outline in our minds of the general structure of history and realize that we are an integral part of that story.

Look for the group to grasp these two principles:

- Hope: for believers in Jesus, history is full of meaning and hope. Non-Christian world views fall short in seeking to supply such meaning and hope to their followers.

• Urgency: because history is going somewhere, and because we are living in the "Redemption" phase, we urgently need to get involved in fulfilling God's plan.

In the **Hear** section, help the students see that the four general phases of history are not presented in chronological order in the two Ephesians passages. Clarify how Paul deals with each phase:

Creation – 1:4-5
Fall – 2:1-3
Redemption – 1:5-7, 13; 2:4-6
Glory – 1:8-12, 14; 2:7

In the **Understand** section, help the students wrestle with how this God-centered view of history should affect their life plans (education, family, career, etc.).

In the **Apply** section discuss each student's personal "Vision statement." Pray about planning their future more intentionally in light of God's purpose for history and their part in it.

Trust

Trusting God instead of yourself

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

How are you doing?
How did your Application go from last week's lesson?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- What things often cause you to feel worry or anxiety? Is there anything right now that is prompting you to fear?

- When you face fearful challenges or uncertain circumstances, what is the one thing in your life that you most fundamentally trust in? Have you found that particular focus of your trust to be reliable?

Deeper Perspectives

- In many cultures, an individual is encouraged to trust in himself or herself when faced with great difficulties. Do you think that this is good advice? Why or why not?

Lesson Theme

The Bible contains many stories which teach us to trust God—not ourselves—when circumstances are difficult.

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 17:23-24, 32-37, 45-53

Background: The Israelites and Philistines (a neighboring nationality) are preparing for a great battle. The Philistines send their greatest warrior to oppose Israel's army. Goliath—a gigantic Philistine—challenges any Israelite to a one-on-one fight to the death. David, just a young teenager at the time, accepts the challenge in the name of God.

Please read the three sections one at a time: verses 23-24, 32-37, and 45-53.

Bible Discussion Questions

- Why wasn't David afraid of Goliath the way the Israelite soldiers were?

- What did David's previous encounters with the lion and the bear teach him about God?

- Why was it important for David to know that "the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear?" How might this fact apply to us in circumstances where we are tempted to be afraid?

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:5-6

Bible Discussion Questions

- Why do you think this passage warns us against trusting ourselves?

- How do you know when you trust self instead of God?

- In what ways is God more trustworthy than anything or anyone else, including ourselves?

- What principles can be drawn from the story of David and Goliath and from Proverbs 3:5,6 that will help us trust God?

Summary

How would you summarize our lesson today about trusting God during discouraging or uncertain times? Write down some important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to cultivate more trust in the Lord—and less in other sources?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

Note: As additional homework to prepare for next week's lesson, please read 1 Samuel 23 and Psalm 31 and be ready to talk about them.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Love God

Love and worship God wholeheartedly

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go from last week's lesson on trusting God?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- How have you seen God demonstrate His love for you?

- Is there anything happening in your life right now that makes you want to love God more? If so, what is it?

Deeper Perspectives

- If people knew more of God's love for them, would it cause them to love Him more? Explain.

Lesson Theme

God's love for us and our love for Him are two of the most important topics in the Bible (e.g. John 3:16; Deuteronomy 6:5).

Bible Passages: Psalm 31:1-8, 14-24

Background: David wrote Psalm 31, probably during one of the times he fled from King Saul. (You can read about one such time in 1 Samuel 23.) Saul resented David because he knew that Israel's people loved David and that one day David would replace him as king.

Please read verses 1-8, 14-19, and 20-24.

Bible Discussion Questions

- David mentions God's unfailing love three times in this psalm (verses 7, 16, 21). How did this awareness affect David during a time of great distress?
- What else did David say in this psalm that describes God's unfailing love?
- How does David express his love for God in other verses in this psalm?

Bible Passage: Matthew 22:36-38

Bible Discussion Questions

- What does this passage show us about the things that God values?
- What does the passage say about the ultimate purpose for which God has made us?
- What do you think it means to love God with "all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind?" Why do you think all three aspects of humanity are mentioned?
- What behaviors or attitudes ought to characterize us if we love God the way David described in Psalms and Jesus in this passage?

Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about loving God with all our hearts? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to experience more of God's great love for you, as well as to cultivate and express more of your love for Him?

Write down your actions to take, and share your plan. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Obey

Doing what pleases God

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did the Application go from last week's lesson on Loving God?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Do you feel that it is easy to obey God? Why or why not?

Deeper Perspectives

- Americans treasure 'liberty.' They typically feel that individual freedom of choice is one of their highest values. What is your culture's view on submitting to authority?
- What are some of the reasons to submit to those in authority over you?

Lesson Theme

When we love someone we will try to find ways to please that person; the same is true with God. We should obey Him because we love Him.

Bible Passage: Deuteronomy 30:8-20

Background: Moses gave the messages in Deuteronomy to the people of Israel right before they entered the Promised Land. In this passage, Moses gives them the challenge to obey God's Word.

Please read the Deuteronomy passage.

Bible Discussion Questions

- Make a list of the verbs that Moses commanded the Israelites to do in this passage. What did he promise would be the results of doing those things?
- Now make a list of the verbs in the passage that Moses warned the Israelites not to do. What did he promise would be the consequences if they did those things anyway?

- In verses 11-14 where did Moses say the Israelites could find God's 'commands,' 'statutes' and 'judgments?' What does this mean for us today?

Continue questions

- Twice in this passage, Moses commanded the Israelites to "love the Lord your God" (verses 16 and 20) and then followed that with commands for them to obey Him. Our previous lesson was about loving God. How do loving God and obeying Him go together?

Bible Passage: Ephesians 2:1-10

Background: The Apostle Paul sent a number of letters to the young churches including the believers in the city of Ephesus.

Please read the Ephesians passage.

- Focus in on verse 10. What is another strong reason from this verse for why we should obey God? How is this reason different from the reasons we talked about from Deuteronomy 30?

- One of the great mistakes we Christians can often make is to begin to practice "legalism" (living as if we can earn merit with God, or even salvation, through our behavior). How does this verse protect us from the temptation of Christian legalism?

Summary

How would you summarize the reasons given in these passages for why we should obey God? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to obey God more (either things He wants you to do, or things He wants you to stop doing)?

Write down your actions to take, and share your plan. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and also tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

Faithfulness

Using well what God gives you, for His purposes

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go from last week's lesson on obeying God?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions Our Lives

• As international students you are very gifted intellectually. What are some of your other strengths and talents? And what are some ways that others have helped you to come to America to study?

• What would you say is the ultimate purpose for the talents, strengths, privileges and benefits you have received? Please explain your answer.

Deeper Perspectives

• How do you view the relationship between privileges and responsibilities?

Lesson Theme

We need to be faithful to appropriately use what we have been given. This is also called stewardship.

Bible Passages: Matthew 25:14-30

Background: Jesus told His disciples this parable just before declaring that He was to be crucified (26:1-2). So we can view this teaching as some important "last instructions" to them. Note: "A talent was a monetary unit worth about 15 to 20 years' wages for a laborer." Some translations call the talent a "bag of silver."

Please read the passage out loud.

Bible Discussion Questions

• From verse 14, why was it important for the three servants to take good care of the talents?

• Look closely at verses 16-18. What was different about how the first two servants handled the money versus how the last servant did?

• In verse 25, the last servant admits that he was "afraid." Why is that significant in the story?

Continue questions

• What precious things has our Master entrusted to us? From what we have learned in previous lessons, what do you think His ultimate purposes are for giving us those things?

• What reasons (or excuses) do we have for not making the most of what God has entrusted to us? What fears might hamper us from properly using the blessings God has given us?

• Notice the difference between the master's response to the first two servants (verse 21, 23) and the last servant (verses 26-30). What principles can we observe that will help us one day hear our Master say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant"?

Summary

How would you summarize today's lesson about effectively using God's gifts for His purposes? Write down important points:

Clarification

• Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

• What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

• In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to begin using what God has given you in wiser, more God-pleasing ways?

Write down your actions to take, and share your plan. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends.

Hope

God's Sovereignty over history gives us hope

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?
How did your Application go from last week's lesson on faithfulness?
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

Discussion Questions

Our Lives

- Do you feel that you have more hope now than at previous times in your life? Why or why not? What factors affect your hope?

- What are some factors that give people hope and what are some factors that decrease hope?

Deeper Perspectives

- What factors do most people choose as the basis for their future hopes?

- Do you think human history has been generally proceeding in a positive and meaningful direction? What do you think can give us hope for the future?

Lesson Theme

God gives a clear picture of the meaning of history and this gives us a compelling reason for hope.

Bible Passages: Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:1-7

Background: From a biblical perspective, history can be divided into four basic parts:-- 1) Creation; 2) Fall; 3) Redemption; 4) Judgment and Glory.

Please read the passage aloud.

Bible Discussion Questions:

- What do these passages say about each of the four aspects of history?
- Creation:

- Fall:

- Redemption:

- Judgment and Glory:

- From the world view communicated in these passages, discuss the following:

- What is the overall meaning of history?

- What ought to be the goal(s) of the human race?

Continue questions

- What ought to be our life's goal(s) as individuals?

- From these passages, what are some good reasons why we Christians have hope for the future?

- Do you think that Christianity offers a better hope for the future than other world views? Why or why not?

- Write out your own personal "vision statement" expressing why you find confidence in the future based on your personal relationship with Christ.

Summary

How would you summarize today's discussion of the hope we can find through God's direction of history? Write down important points:

Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

New Terms

List new vocabulary words that you would like to remember:

Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to experience more of God's great love for you, as well as to cultivate and express more of your love for Him?

Write down your actions to take, and share your plan. Then, let's pray for one another.

Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that **person to tell**.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?