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Introduction

Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies

Welcome to the conversation! The Bible study resources you are using are created to support the bold vision of the Book of Faith initiative that calls “the whole church to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.”

Simply put, this initiative and these resources invite you to “Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.”

We enter into this conversation based on the promise that exploring the Bible deeply with others opens us to God working in and through us. God’s Word is life changing, church changing, and world changing. Lutheran approaches to Scripture provide a fruitful foundation for connecting Bible, life, and faith.

A Session Overview

Each session is divided into the following four key sections. The amount of time spent in each section may vary based on choices you make. The core Learner Session Guide is designed for 50 minutes. A session can be expanded to as much as 90 minutes by using the Bonus Activities that appear in the Leader Session Guide.

• Gather (10-15 minutes)

Time to check in, make introductions, review homework assignments, share an opening prayer, and use the Focus Activity to introduce learners to the Session Focus.

• Open Scripture (10-15 minutes)

The session Scripture text is read using a variety of methods and activities. Learners are asked to respond to a few general questions. As leader, you may want to capture initial thoughts or questions on paper for later review.

• Join the Conversation (25-55 minutes)

Learners explore the session Scripture text through core questions and activities that cover each of the four perspectives (see diagram on p. 6). The core Learner Session Guide material may be expanded through use of the Bonus Activities provided in the Leader Session Guide. Each session ends with a brief Wrap-Up and prayer.

• Extending the Conversation (5 minutes)

Lists homework assignments, including next week’s session Scripture text. The leader may choose one or more items to assign for all. Each session also includes additional Enrichment options and may include For Further Reading suggestions.

A Method to Guide the Conversation

Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies has three primary goals:

- To increase biblical fluency;
- To encourage and facilitate informed small group conversation based on God’s Word; and
- To renew and empower us to carry out God’s mission for the sake of the world.

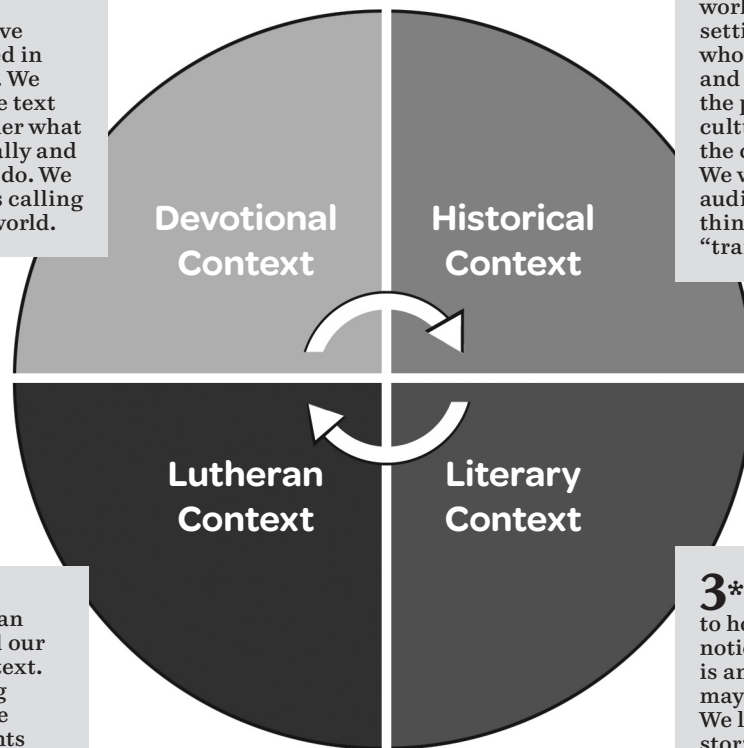
To accomplish these goals, each session will explore one or more primary Bible texts from four different angles and contexts—historical, literary, Lutheran, and devotional. These particular ways of exploring a text are not new, but used in combination they provide a full understanding of and experience with the text.

Complementing this approach is a commitment to engaging participants in active, learner-orientated Bible conversations. The resources call for prepared leaders to facilitate learner discovery, discussion, and activity. Active learning and frequent engagement with Scripture will lead to greater biblical fluency and encourage active faith.

1 We begin by reading the Bible text and reflecting on its meaning. We ask questions and identify items that are unclear. We bring our unique background and experience to the Bible, and the Bible meets us where we are.

5 We return to where we started, but now we have explored and experienced the Bible text from four different dimensions. We are ready to move into the “for” dimension. We have opened Scripture and joined in conversation for a purpose. We consider the meaning of the text for faithful living. We wonder what God is calling us (individually and as communities of faith) to do. We consider how God’s Word is calling us to do God’s work in the world.

2* We seek to understand the world of the Bible and locate the setting of the text. We explore who may have written the text and why. We seek to understand the particular social and cultural contexts that influenced the content and the message. We wonder who the original audience may have been. We think about how these things “translate” to our world today.



4 We consider the Lutheran principles that help ground our interpretation of the Bible text. We ask questions that bring those principles and unique Lutheran theological insights into conversation with the text. We discover how our Lutheran insights can ground and focus our understanding and shape our faithful response to the text.

3* We pay close attention to how the text is written. We notice what kind of literature it is and how this type of literature may function or may be used. We look at the characters, the story line, and the themes. We compare and contrast these with our own understanding and experience of life. In this interchange, we discover meaning.

*** Sessions may begin with either Historical Context or Literary Context.**

The diagram on p. 6 summarizes the general way this method is intended to work. A more detailed introduction to the method used in Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies is available in *Opening the Book of Faith* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008).

The Learner Session Guide

The Learner Session Guide content is built on the four sections (see p. 5). The content included in the main “Join the Conversation” section is considered to be the core material needed to explore the session Scripture text. Each session includes a Focus Image that is used as part of an activity or question somewhere within the core session. Other visuals (maps, charts, photographs, and illustrations) may be included to help enhance the learner’s experience with the text and its key concepts.

For those subscribing to the Web version of Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies, the Learner Session Guides will be downloaded and printed in preparation for the session, or they may simply be projected for groups that decide to be paperless.

The Leader Session Guide

For easy reference, the Leader Session Guide contains all the content included in the Learner Session Guide and more. The elements that are unique to the Leader Session Guide are the following:

- **Before You Begin**—Helpful tips to use as you prepare to lead the session.
- **Session Overview**—Contains detailed description of key themes and content covered in each of the four contexts (Historical, Literary, Lutheran, Devotional). Core questions and activities in the Learner Session Guide are intended to emerge directly from this Session Overview. Highlighted parts of the Session Overview provide a kind of “quick prep” for those wanting to do an initial scan of the key session themes and content.
- **Key Definitions**—Key terms or concepts that appear in the Session Overview may be illustrated or defined.
- **Facilitator’s Prayer**—To help the leader center on the session theme and leadership task.

- **Bonus Activities**—Optional activities included in each of the four sections of “Join the Conversation” used by the leader to expand the core session.
- **Tips**—A variety of helpful hints, instructions, or background content to aid leadership facilitation.
- **Looking Ahead**—Reminders to the leader about preparation for the upcoming session.

Session Prep Video

(Available on the DVD that accompanies this unit.) To help you prepare to lead the session, Session Prep Video segments have been created. A guide will walk with you through a session overview and the key parts of the session flow. These segments can provide helpful hints, but they are not meant to replace your own deeper preparation.

Leader and Learner

In Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies, the leader’s primary task is facilitating small group conversation and activity. These conversations are built around structured learning tasks. What is a structured learning task? It is an open question or activity that engages learners with new content and the resources they need to respond. Underlying this structured dialog approach are three primary assumptions about adult learners:

- Adult learners bring with them varied experiences and the capability to do active learning tasks;
- Adult learners learn best when they are invited to be actively involved in learning; and
- Adults are more accountable and engaged when active learning tasks are used.

Simply put, the goal is fluency in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture. How does one become fluent in a new language, proficient in building houses, or skilled at hitting a baseball? By practicing and doing in a hands-on way. Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies provides the kind of hands-on Bible exploration that will produce Bible-fluent learners equipped to do God’s work in the world.

Books of Faith Series

Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies includes several series and courses. This John unit is part of the Books of Faith Series, which is designed to explore key themes and texts in the books of the Bible. Each book of the Bible reveals a unique story or message of faith. Many core themes, story lines, and characters are shared by several books, but each book in its own right is a book of faith. Exploring these books of faith in depth opens us to the variety and richness of God's written word for us.

John Unit Overview

When you read the Gospel of John, you are immediately struck by its poetic quality and the prevalence of imagery and metaphor that is not present in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

The Gospel of John begins by taking a cosmic approach that shows us the depth of Jesus' relationship to God. Jesus is the Incarnate Word, united with God even before creation. This is an important theme that runs throughout the Gospel. According to John, disciples of Christ know God and have a relationship with God because of their belief in Jesus.

John's uniqueness as a book of faith is highlighted by other major themes that differentiate this Gospel from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke:

In the other Gospels, Jesus uses parables in his teaching, but parables are absent in John. Instead you'll find long theological discourses (see John 3:1-21; 6:22-71; 10:1-21; 12:27-50; 14:1-17:26).

John's Gospel makes use of "I am" statements in which Jesus articulates his true identity in word pictures or images meant to speak directly to the people. The "I am" images he uses include the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, and the true vine.

Instead of speaking about the kingdom of God, John's Gospel shows how believing in Jesus as

God's Incarnate Word gives us eternal life, both now and for all time. Believing in the Son radically connects us to God. This connection transcends time and space.

Session 1, What Is Jesus' Relationship with God? (John 1:1-18), explores Jesus' incarnation and relationship with God even before creation.

Session 2, How Is It Possible for Us to Be in Relationship with God? (John 3:1-21), looks at Jesus' role in our lives and in our relationship with God. Through Jesus, God's gift of love to the world, we receive new life and live in God's presence forever.

Session 3, What Does It Mean that Jesus Is the "Bread of Life"? (John 6:25-59), offers a deeper look at one of Jesus' "I am" sayings. When we share the "bread of life" in the Eucharist, we share in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Session 4, Who Can See Jesus? (John 9:1-41), shows that it takes faith to see Jesus.

Session 5, What Does It Mean that Jesus Is the "Resurrection and the Life"? (John 11:1-44), focuses on Jesus' power over life and death, now and for all time.

Session 6, What Does It Mean to Be a Disciple of Jesus? (John 13:1-35), explores Jesus' command to love one another. Through love and service to our neighbor, we are recognized as Jesus' disciples.

Session 7, How Does Jesus Want His Disciples to Relate to the World? (John 17:1-26), shows that Jesus unites us with God and with one another, and sends us out to continue his ministry in the world.

Session 8, How Does Jesus' Relationship with His Disciples Continue? (John 20:11-31), explores the gift of the Holy Spirit, who accompanies us as we go forth in Jesus' name.

John 1:1-18



Focus Statement

We see and experience God through Jesus, the Incarnate Word, one with God even before creation.



Key Verse

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14



Focus Image



The Trinity (Father, Son and the Holy Ghost as a dove). Left wing of a triptych. Robert Campin (1378-1444).

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What Is Jesus' Relationship with God?

Session Preparation

Before You Begin . . .

Take time to reflect upon what it means to you that Jesus, the Incarnate Word—God's Word made flesh—existed before time itself. What effect does this have on your relationship with Jesus?

Session Instructions

1. View the Session Prep Video.
2. Take time to read this Leader Session Guide and mark the activities you intend to include in your group session. What points do you plan to emphasize? Highlight them.
3. Review all activities, checking for necessary materials. Collect these prior to the session.
4. Have extra Bibles on hand in case a member of the group forgets to bring one.

Session Overview

There are four Gospels in the Bible that tell the good news of Jesus Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The first three are called the **Synoptic** Gospels because they share the same view and similar or overlapping stories. John's Gospel, however, is very different in writing and approach. It opens with a cosmic approach that speaks of Jesus' presence and relationship with God even before the beginning of time and creation. The significance of the depth of this relationship is an important theme that runs through the entire book. It also has a deeper meaning for Jesus' disciples. Through him, they too are intimately connected with God. Keep this theme in mind as your group studies the Gospel of John. Look for the many ways in which it appears throughout this book of faith.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The author of the Gospel of John was traditionally believed to be Jesus' disciple, John the son of Zebedee. However, many now believe that the author was a member of a Christian community in Asia Minor, possibly founded by the "beloved disciple" mentioned in the Gospel of John. The tensions between followers of Jesus and Jewish religious leaders are portrayed throughout the Gospel. Some scholars believe this indicates that John was written

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? Synoptic:

“Seeing together” or having a common perspective (from the Greek *syn* meaning “together” and *optic* related to “seeing”).

? Synagogues:

Jewish places of worship.

? Prologue:

Introduction, preface, or opening (seen as verses 1-18 in John 1).

? Deuterocanonical books /Apocrypha:

Books not included in either the Jewish or Protestant canon (meaning “accepted list” of books). These books, also known as the Apocrypha, are accepted and listed as canon by many Christians. Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians include many of these books in their accepted canons.

after Christians were expelled from the **synagogues** around 90 C.E. Whether or not this is the case is debated, but it does appear tensions were high between Jewish leaders and Jewish Christians when John’s Gospel was written. This situation plays an important role in John. In none of the other Gospels are “the Jews” identified as frequently, especially in opposition to Jesus and his followers.

Yet, the Christians of John’s time clearly see themselves in a continuous line with Israel and its history and faith story. (The insight that the Christians of John’s community celebrated their Jewish lineage is an important one in light of the fact that some readers have interpreted the Gospel of John as anti-Semitic.) Your group will explore how both realities are demonstrated in the **prologue** of the Gospel of John, especially John 1:17, which demonstrates the link between Moses and Jesus.

LITERARY CONTEXT

John’s prologue raises several themes that will continue throughout the Gospel: light and darkness, belief, truth, witness, and the identity of Jesus. Your group will begin to identify these themes and the relationship between the Word and God.

Your group will also explore similar themes in John and Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. You’ll see that Wisdom is intimately connected with God and is even present at creation (Proverbs 8:22-36). The Wisdom of Solomon, one of the **Deuterocanonical books**, also known as the **Apocrypha**, describes Wisdom as the “breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty” (Wisdom of Solomon 7:25). The descriptions of Wisdom are similar to the description of the Word in the Gospel of John. Both Wisdom and the Word are present at creation. However, Wisdom in the Old Testament is personified as a woman and is not equated with God in the same way that the Word is. In the Old Testament, Wisdom serves God. You’ll look at the similarities and differences between Wisdom and the Word that became flesh to communicate God’s love.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

The Gospel of John and the first creation story in Genesis both start with the same words: “In the beginning.” Your group will use Luther’s principle of “Scripture interprets Scripture” to examine several texts, including Genesis 1:1–2:4 and Colossians 1:15-23, that will shed light on the meaning of John’s prologue. Both Genesis and the prologue of John start with a more expansive, cosmic view of creation. Genesis also shows us

the creative power of God’s spoken Word. God speaks and the world and all living things come into being. In John’s Gospel, the Word becomes flesh, walks among us, and ushers in a new creation in which God is now intimately connected to humanity in an incredibly powerful way. Colossians 1:15-23 also speaks of Jesus’ existence before creation and how through him we are reconciled with God.

Another text that may be helpful as you discuss John’s prologue is 1 John 1:1—2:2. Notice the similarity in use of language and imagery. The passage in 1 John also focuses on Jesus’ identity as both divine and human.

DEVOTIONAL CONTEXT

What is Jesus’ real relationship with God? What does that mean for us? These two questions are at the heart of approaching this text from a devotional perspective. From the beginning of the Gospel, John clearly places Jesus in a deep and highly connected relationship with God. Jesus refers to the depth of this relationship throughout the Gospel when he speaks both of being sent by and being of one mind with God. He also speaks of himself as being the “gate” through which the sheep must pass to have an abundant life in God (John 5:22-23; 6:44; 6:57; 10:7; 10:30; 14:6-7).

God speaks to us profoundly when the Word takes on flesh and a human life. Group members will explore what it means to them that Jesus is the Incarnate Word of God. How have they experienced Jesus’ **incarnation** in their lives in real and “fleshy” ways? How does God speak to them through those they encounter daily?

The immensity of God’s love for us cannot be overstated when reading this text. The Word became flesh in order to enter into a deeper communion with us so that we, too, might know God as Jesus does.

Facilitator’s Prayer

Before participants arrive, find a quiet place and pray:

O Word made flesh, sometimes it is hard to feel your presence as I rush through my busy and often hectic schedule. Quiet both my heart and mind as I prepare to lead. Empower me to feel your presence through the conversation and participation of all those in the room so that, together, we might come to know you better. Amen.

? Incarnation:

Personification, embodiment, materialization; term used by Christians to describe God’s Word taking on flesh in Jesus.

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Tip:

Start your session with introductions. If you are seated around a table, give each person an index card. Have participants make name cards by folding the index cards in half (joining the shorter edges together), writing their names on the cards, and placing the cards on the table in front of them. Use these cards each week until group members are familiar with each other. You could also use name tags.



Tip:

The Focus Activity will help learners begin to think about the relationship between words and actions as you launch your study on the Word made flesh. Have learners break into trios for discussion. After a few minutes, gather in the large group again to share reflections.



Tip:

If you choose to use a candle, check your local fire codes and your congregation's fire policies regarding the use of open flames.



Tip:

Ask group members about their hopes and expectations for studying the Gospel of John. Studying the Bible can raise anxiety for participants who may feel their knowledge is inadequate. Assure them that they will all experience new insights. Encourage sharing.



Tip:

Also be aware that some learners may initially feel uncomfortable in a large group setting. Assure everyone that they need only share the things they feel comfortable sharing.

Gather (10-15 minutes)

Check-in

Take time to connect or reconnect with the others in your group.

Pray

God of love,

You sent your son Jesus into the world. He is your Word to us, now and for all time. Thank you for speaking to us through him, and also through Scripture and through one another. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus Activity

Discuss the meaning of the phrase “actions speak louder than words.” Tell how you have experienced this in your life. Have words ever been louder than actions?

Open Scripture (10-15 minutes)

Read John 1:1-18.

- What verse did you most connect with as the text was read?
- What are the key images?
- What did you find intriguing or confusing?

Here are options for introducing the text:

- Light a candle before reading the text. Dim the room lights, if possible.
- Invite two group members to read the text, one at a time. Give some time for quiet reflection in between the readings. (Asking the two people prior to the session will give them an opportunity to practice either a meditative or dramatic reading.)

Join the Conversation (25-55 minutes)

Historical Context

The earliest Christians came from the Jewish faith and still clung to their Jewish identity. They believed Jesus was the promised Messiah and, therefore, he continued the history and faith of Israel. There is evidence, however, that tensions between Jewish

Christians and Jewish religious leaders increased after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. There may have been a formal decree that eventually expelled the Jewish followers of Jesus from the synagogue, the Jewish place of worship. It does appear that tensions were high when John's Gospel was written. Keep this in mind as you study the Gospel.

1. Where in the session Scripture text do you see any kind of conflict? Is it a conflict in values, belief, decisions, or actions? Who is involved?
2. What evidence do you see in the text that the Christians of John's community saw themselves in line with the history and faith of Israel?

Literary Context

1. The Gospel of John doesn't begin with a story about Mary, Joseph, Bethlehem, shepherds, a star, or Wise Men. It begins instead with a "prologue" or introduction in John 1:1-18. This introduction (which is also the session Scripture text) raises themes that will continue to be important throughout the Gospel.

- List key words and themes that appear in the text.
- How is the Word's relationship to God described?
- If you were writing a book about Jesus, where or how would you begin?

2. The books in the New Testament were originally written in Greek. The Greek term for "word" is *logos* (LOW-gohs), derived from the plan giving order to the universe in Greek thought, as well as divine Wisdom in Judaism. Many scholars see a correlation between Wisdom personified in the Old Testament and the Deuterocanon/Apocrypha (books not included in the Jewish or Protestant canon or "accepted list" of biblical books) and the Word made flesh or Incarnate Word in John's prologue. Wisdom and the Word are both said to be present at creation, although only in John is the Word equated with God.

Read Proverbs 8:22-36 and the following passage from a deuterocanonical book written in praise of Wisdom:

For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. Wisdom of Solomon 7:25

- What do these passages say about Wisdom.
- Compare this to what John 1:1-18 says about the Word.

+ Bonus Activity:

Break into smaller groups. Use commentaries and study Bibles to look up some historical background on the text. What were the conditions and conflicts thought to be in effect during the writing of John's Gospel? How might these have affected John's writing?

+ Bonus Activity:

Reflect and write down your thoughts about how Christianity might be in conflict with the norms of our society. What correlations might that have for the Christians of John's time?

+ Bonus Activity:

Sing or read the words to hymn 514, 518, or 648 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. All of these hymns mention Wisdom in relationship to Christ. What do these hymns say to you?

+ Bonus Activity:

Select volunteers to read both the Proverbs text and John 1:14 from two different Bible translations. What new insights does the group have as a result of hearing the variations in the texts? Chart some of the differences the group notices.

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Bonus Activity:

Distribute paper and pens to the group. Break into pairs or trios. Instruct learners to list words and ideas found in both John 1:1-18 and Colossians 1:15-23. Now draw connections between the two texts. What new insights are drawn out by this activity?



Tip:

Distribute paper and pens to the group. Break into pairs or trios. Instruct learners to list words and ideas found in the three statements and John 1:1-18. Now draw connections between these. What new insights are drawn out by this activity?



Bonus Activity:

Purchase small notebooks for participants to use as journals during the sessions. After your discussion, ask them to journal their thoughts on what it means to them that Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, existed before time itself. What effect does this have on their relationship with Jesus?



Bonus Activity:

Distribute lumps of clay to participants and ask them to sculpt representations of what John 1:1-18 means for them in their lives.

Lutheran Context

1. Using the Lutheran principle of Scripture interprets Scripture, look at other Bible passages that help interpret the session Scripture text. Read Genesis 1:1—2:4 and Colossians 1:15-23, then discuss the questions.

- How is God’s Word present and active in the Genesis story?
- List themes that you find in both texts.

2. The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) states that the Word of God speaks to us in three ways:

2.02.a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.

b. The proclamation of God’s message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God’s Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God’s revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God’s Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

- Compare these three statements with John 1:1-18 and list the similarities.

Devotional Context

1. God’s Word speaks through Jesus Christ, through believers, and through the Bible.

- Give an example of the Word speaking to you or your congregation in one of these ways.
- God’s Word can speak through you. What do you think about that?

2. Look back at the Focus Image at the start of the session. This is one artist’s picture of the relationship between God and Jesus (and the Holy Spirit as well). Draw a picture or describe how you see the relationship between God and Jesus.

- How have you seen Jesus “in the flesh” in your life? How does God speak to you through the people you encounter each day?

Wrap-up

Be ready to look back over the work your group has done in this session.

1. Refer back to the group's hopes and expectations for studying John, and ask if any of these were met in this session. As a result of this session, are there any additional hopes and expectations for your future time together?
2. Ask group members what the highlight of the session was for them. What did they find most engaging and why? Take note of the responses as you plan future sessions. Especially take note of the types of activities the group seems to enjoy.
3. Point out any "ah-ha" moments that you noticed in the session. Thank group members for their openness and willingness to participate. The more comfortable the group becomes, the more open they will become in sharing, and you'll have many more "ah-has" to come.
4. Point out the homework in *Extending the Conversation* and invite group members to select assignments that particularly appeal to them. Review these at the start of the next session.

Pray

O Loving God, we thank you that you concretely spoke and showed us the depth of your love for us by sending your Son Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, to live and dwell among us. We give you thanks that through him we can come to know your truth and grace more fully and participate in a deeper relationship with you. Help us to live our lives in celebration of the Word made flesh by sharing your word, love, and grace with friends, family, and strangers alike. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Extending the Conversation (5 minutes)**Homework**

1. Read the Scripture text for the next session: John 3:1-21. If time permits, read all of John 1:1—3:21 (see page 18 for a daily reading plan).
2. During the course of the week, meditate on John 1:1-18. If you develop any new insights or thoughts, jot them down to share next week.

**Tip:**

Check in with everyone during this time. How are participants feeling about today's session? Do they have recommendations for your next time together?

**Tip:**

Monitor the mood of the participants. Does everyone seem comfortable with what transpired in the session? If not, check in privately with those exhibiting any uneasiness. This may or may not be related to the session.

**Tip:**

Encourage participants to bring any homework that they do to the next session to share with others in the group.

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3. Use John 1:1-18 as inspiration for writing a hymn. Start by picking a favorite hymn tune and then write lyrics to fit the music.

4. Take photographs or capture images and then create your own visual presentation on the meaning of John 1:1-18.

Looking Ahead

1. Reflect on how things went during this session. What did you learn about facilitating a Bible study? What worked well? What might you have done differently?

2. Reflect upon the preferred learning styles of your adult learners. What came easier to your group? Do they prefer learning through visual means, conversational means, or through physical activities?

3. Read the Scripture text for the next session: John 3:1-21.

4. Read through the Leader Guide for the next session and mark portions you wish to highlight for the group.

5. Make a checklist of any materials you'll need to do the Bonus Activities.

6. Pray for each member of your group during the course of the week.

Enrichment

1. If you want a daily plan for reading through the Gospel of John during this unit, read the following sections this week:

Day 1: John 1:1-18

Day 2: John 1:19-28

Day 3: John 1:29-34

Day 4: John 1:35-51

Day 5: John 2:1-11

Day 6: John 2:12-25

Day 7: John 3:1-21

2. Visit www.textweek.com and explore links related to this week's focus verse.

3. Watch the movie *Sister Act* (Touchstone/Disney, 1992) and reflect upon how the nuns live out an incarnational ministry in their neighborhood. How does this ministry change people?

For Further Reading

Available from www.augsburgfortress.org/store:

Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John by Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Fortress Press, 1998). Describes the values, conflicts, and traditions of the ancient world.

Incarnation by Alister E. McGrath (Fortress Press, 2005). Provides art, poetry, prayer, and reflection on the Word made flesh.