

THE INTERPRETATION BIBLE STUDIES

LEADER HELPS

LUKE

The IBS Leader Helps are designed to facilitate group study by providing lesson plans for the ten units in each of the Interpretation Bible Studies. These lesson plans utilize a variety of interactive methods, which have been chosen for the express purpose of engaging participants in the learning process.

Each participant in the group should have a copy of IBS study book and should make a commitment to do advance preparation for each session.

The sessions are planned for one hour. If the time allotted is shorter than an hour, it will be necessary to be selective about the activities, choosing those that are most appropriate for your group.

Leader Preparation

Read the Gospel of Luke in its entirety before beginning to teach. This is important, not only to familiarize yourself with Luke's content, but to prevent "cross-pollination" with other gospels, carrying over their details into Luke's story.

Skim through the whole study book to discern its flow. This is especially helpful if there are multiple teachers, in order to prevent leaping ahead into the next unit.

Prepare the room ahead of time. For informal discussion and ease of sharing, a semi-circular arrangement of chairs works best. Position yourself as one of the group, instead of setting yourself apart as "the authority."

Secure necessary teaching aids. A newsprint easel is an invaluable asset. Be sure to have markers and masking tape if you wish to display the sheets for future reference. A map of Palestine in Jesus' time will be helpful. Check the teaching suggestions for other necessary materials, such as hymnals, paper, pencils, art materials, and so on.

Prepare necessary handouts. A folder for each participant's handouts is helpful, but not essential.

Keep the key idea firmly in mind. Make sure all activities point participants towards this goal.

Pray for God's guidance. Prior to making preparations for the session, allow time to pray for each participant and for yourself.

Unit 1: The Announcement of the Birth of Jesus (Luke 1:39–56)

Key Idea: Luke presents the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament and the hook on which future hopes are hung.

Advance Preparation

Draw on the material in the “Introduction to Luke” on pp. 1–5 of the study book to prepare a brief introduction to Luke and his Gospel.

Have available a birth announcement to share with your group. Also, have a hymnbook available that contains the hymns “Away in a Manger” and “Song of Mary,” or print the words to the two hymns on newsprint.

Opening (15 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray the following prayer or a prayer of your own:

Holy God, there is great excitement as we begin this new study of Luke’s Gospel. Be present with us in all of our study and reflection in order that we can truly encounter Jesus the Christ as Luke presents him to us in his Gospel. For we make our prayer in Jesus’ name, Amen.

2. Introducing “Luke” and the Purposes of His Gospel

Welcome participants to this study of the Gospel of Luke. Spend a few moments introducing the author of this Gospel and his purpose for writing the Gospel that bears his name.

3. Looking at a Birth Announcement

Pass around the birth announcement that you have provided. Talk about the fact that the baby whose birth is announced was the fulfillment of hopes and dreams of parents and that those parents have great hopes and dreams for the baby’s future.

4. Singing a Hymn

Using hymnals or a sheet of newsprint with the words, have the participants sing “Away in a Manger.”

Presentation and Exploration (30 minutes)*5. Looking Back and Forward*

Call attention to the second full paragraph on p. 9 of the study book. Share the fact that Jesus did fulfill many hopes of the Old Testament and that he opened up new chapters in God's salvation history.

6. Picture Study

Call attention to the picture on p. 10 of the study book. Have group members focus on that picture as you or a member of the group reads Luke 1:39–45. Ask participants how they think each of the women must have felt as they came together. Then call attention to the implications of Elizabeth's greeting of Mary (see pp. 10–11 of the study book).

7. Mary's Song

Now read or have someone else read Mary's song from Luke 1:46–56. Call attention to the two stanzas of the song (vs. 46–49 and vs. 50–55), noting the particular focus of each stanza. (See pp. 12–13 of the study book.)

Response (10 minutes)*8. Personal Reflection/Sharing*

Remind the participants that in the baby born to Mary, God has come near to us. Elizabeth was overwhelmed when she realized that the mother of her Lord had come to her. Ask: How much more overwhelmed should we be when we realize the implications of the coming of Jesus for ourselves and for our world?

Have group members pair up with a person sitting close by and share any feelings and thoughts they have when they ponder these implications.

Closing (5 minutes)*9. Singing a Hymn*

Close your session by singing (or reading the words of) the hymn, "Song of Mary."

10. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 4:1–30 and Unit 2 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 2: The Temptations: Who Is Jesus, Part One (Luke 4:1–30)

Key Idea: Through his response to temptations and the words of his sermon in Nazareth, Jesus reveals once and for all who he is and what his ministry will be like.

Advance Preparation

Provide a small piece of paper or index card, plus a pencil or pen, for each participant. Also have newsprint and a marker available.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray aloud the following prayer or compose a prayer of your own:

Holy God, be present with us during our study this day. As we study passages that reveal to us who Jesus is and what his ministry will be like, may Jesus become real to us, and may his life and ministry become a model for our own lives of faith and discipleship in the world. For it is in Jesus' name that we pray, Amen.

2. “Who Is Jesus for Me?”

Ask participants to think about the question, “Who is Jesus for me?” Distribute small pieces of paper or index cards, along with pencils or pens, and ask participants to summarize their answer to that question in one sentence. Finally, ask them to share their answer with the person sitting next to them.

3. The Scripture in Context

Put today's Scripture passage in context by having group members turn to Luke 3 in a Bible. Note the two passages that immediately precede today's lesson. The first is the account of Jesus' baptism found in 3:21–22. Note that Luke affirms that at his baptism, Jesus was infused with the Holy Spirit and he was declared the “son of God.” The second is Luke's genealogy of Jesus in 3:23–38. Note that Luke traces Jesus' roots all the way back to Adam, thus connecting Jesus fully to the human family and the human condition.

Presentation and Exploration (35 minutes)

4. Jesus “Defines” His Ministry

Divide into two groups. Assign Luke 4:1–13 to one group and Luke 4:14–21 to the other.

Ask each group to answer these questions:

- What do Jesus’ words and actions in this passage tell us about what it means for Jesus that he is the beloved son, with whom God is well pleased?
- What do Jesus’ words and actions in this passage tell us about how Jesus will act and be in the world as the chosen one, the Son of God?

Allow fifteen minutes for the groups to read and study the material in the biblical passages and in the study book. Then ask one person from each group to share the results of their study.

Summarize by pointing out that Luke 4:1–13 answers the question about who Jesus is and what his ministry will be like by pointing out what it will *not* be like. In Luke 4:14–21, Jesus presents in a positive way the nature of his ministry. Note also that in both instances, Jesus draws heavily on his religious heritage and tradition, especially on the Scriptures, to define his life and work.

5. The Reaction of the Hometown Crowd

Have someone read Luke 4:22–30 aloud. Pose the following question to the group for discussion: “How was the reaction of the hometown crowd similar to that of devil in our earlier passage?”

6. Summarizing What We Have Learned

On a piece of newsprint, summarize what participants have learned about Jesus from this study by making two columns: “Who Jesus Is Not” and “Who Jesus Is.” (Save this newsprint for use in Unit 3.)

Response (10 minutes)

7. Reflections on Our Christian Life and Ministry

Ask participants to spend a few minutes reflecting on what they have learned from this study about the Christian life and ministry. In particular, ask that they think about this two-part question: Who am I as a Christian, and what will my ministry be like?

After a few moments, ask for five or six volunteers to share their response.

Closing (5 minutes)*8. Closing Prayer*

Close with a time of silent prayer in which you encourage participants to pray that they may understand more fully who Jesus is and how Jesus' ministry can define their own ministries as Christian disciples.

9. Assignment

Encourage group members to skim 5:1—9:50 and read Unit 3 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 3: The Galilean Ministry: Who Is Jesus, Part Two (Luke 5:1—9:50)

Key Idea: Through encounters with people who question just who Jesus really is, Luke gives us further clues about the identity of Jesus and the scope of his ministry.

Advance Preparation

Have available the newsprint sheet prepared in step 6 of the previous session. Also have a marker and masking tape for each small group in step 3.

Prepare six “blue clue” cards, using blue index cards or cards cut from blue construction paper. On each card, write one of the following scripture references:

- Luke 4:22
- Luke 5:17–26,
- Luke 7:18–22
- Luke 7:36–50
- Luke 8:22–25
- Luke 9:7–9

Opening (5 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

Holy God, as people of old struggled to know who Jesus was, we too long to know who your Son is. Help us to search out the clues given in Scripture and to learn from them just who Jesus really is and what his ministry was like. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

2. Reviewing and Recapping

Post the newsprint sheet from your study of Unit 2 so that group members can review what they learned in the last session about who Jesus was and what his ministry was like.

Presentation (20 minutes)

3. Distribute “Blue Clue” Cards

Summarize the material on pp. 29–30 of the study book that tells about the children’s TV program, *Blue’s Clues*. Then ask participants to divide into smaller groups and give each group a blue clue card. (If your group is small, you may need to assign each group two passages.) Inform them that they are to

read the Scripture passage printed on the blue clue card to find out what the passage teaches us about who Jesus is.

Allow ten minutes for each group to read its passage and summarize in a sentence or two on the card what the passage teaches us about the identity of Jesus. Then post the cards where all can see and read them.

Exploration (20 minutes)

4. Discussion of Key Insights

As a large group, discuss what clues we glean from the various passages about who Jesus really was and how he saw his earthly ministry.

Compare these insights with the information in the sidebar on p. 34 of the study book, which describes what people in Jesus' time expected from a messiah. Then ask:

- In what ways did Jesus fulfill the peoples' expectations?
- In what ways did he disappoint them?

5. "Our" Expectations of Jesus

Discuss together the following two questions:

- How does Jesus meet "our" expectations of a Messiah?
- In what ways Jesus disappoints us?

Response (10 minutes)

6. Reading and Reflecting

Have someone read Luke 9:18–22 aloud. Suggest that it remains important for each of us to answer the question Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?"

After giving a few moments to reflect on that question, have each person turn to a person sitting next to him/her and respond to the question.

Closing (5 minutes)

7. Closing Prayer

Invite group members to join you in the closing prayer by completing the sentence, "Holy God, we thank you for sending your Son Jesus into the world to"

8. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 9:51–62 and Unit 4 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 4: Journey to Jerusalem: The Call to Discipleship (Luke 9:51–62)

Key Idea: When Jesus “set his face” and was unwavering in reaching his goal, some rejected him and others followed. To those who sought to follow, Jesus laid out the high cost of discipleship.

Advance Preparation

Have available several different translations of the Bible. Also provide copies of a hymnal that includes the hymn, “Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said,” or copy the words of the hymn on newsprint.

Opening (5 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray aloud the following prayer or one of your own:

Holy and loving God, in Jesus Christ you have shown us what we are to be like and what we are to do. Empower us to live our lives following his example. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

2. A Key Verse

Have participants turn to Luke 9:51 in their Bibles and read the verse silently. Then have two or three different people read the verse aloud (from different translations or paraphrases if they are available). Note that this verse is a turning point in the Gospel of Luke.

Presentation (25 minutes)

3. Responses to Jesus’ Call to Discipleship

Relate to the group that the Scripture passages for today record two different reactions to Jesus’ radical call to join him on the road to discipleship. Divide into two groups, one to look at Luke 9:52–55 and the other to look at 9:57–62. Each group is to read the passage and note the “response” that the individuals involved made to Jesus’ call. Ask them also to think about possible reasons why the people in the assigned passage responded as they did.

Allow ten minutes for the participants’ reading and reflection, then give them five minutes to prepare a report to the larger group. The report should summarize the responses to Jesus’ call and the possible reasons for that response.

Bring everyone back together, and allow ten minutes for sharing the group reports.

Exploration (10 minutes)*4. Discussing the Responses*

Discuss together why you think the Samaritans responded as they did to the request for Jesus to visit their village. Ask: In what ways was their response indicative of the response of others later in Jesus' ministry?

Then discuss what reasons you think Jesus must have had for responding to the three people who were willing to follow. Ask: What was Jesus trying to say to those followers, and all of us, about what is involved in following him?

Response (15 minutes)*5. A Simulation*

Pretend that your group is the Evangelism Committee of your church. For some time now, your committee has been seeking to reach out to attract new members to your church. Some members of your committee discourage the use of a survey form to ask new members how they want to get involved in your church, arguing that requiring completion of a form that indicates the importance of getting actively involved will discourage people from wanting to join your church. Prepare a response to that group of people in light of Jesus' words in Luke 9:57–62.

Closing (5 minutes)*6. Praying a Hymn*

Provide hymnals or display on newsprint the words of the hymn, "Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said." Then read aloud the last three sentences on p. 47 of the study book (beginning with "To follow . . ."). Close by reading or singing "Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said" as a prayer that calls each of us to deeper commitment.

7. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 10:25–37 and Unit 5 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 5: The Good Samaritan: A Way of Life (Luke 10:25–37)

Key Idea: In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus encourages us to act kindly toward our neighbor, but he also expands our thinking about just who our neighbor is.

Advance Preparation

Provide newspapers, scissors, and masking tape for every two participants.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

O God, we turn now to a very familiar Scripture passage. Help us to hear it anew and afresh in this session and help us to learn from it the deep, deep meaning of what it means to serve our neighbor in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2. Recalling the Parable

Ask group members what comes to mind when they hear the phrase, “the Good Samaritan.” Ask: How does your familiarity with the parable both help and hinder your hearing its message?

Presentation (10 minutes)

3. Hearing the Parable through Certain Ears

Assign each person one of the characters in the parable—the Lawyer, the hurt man, the robbers, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan. Then read the parable aloud slowly and with great feeling, asking each person to “hear” it from the perspective of their character.

Exploration (20 minutes)

4. Discussing Feelings and Insights

Ask all those who listened as a particular character to gather together to discuss the parable. Each group should answer these questions as part of their discussion:

- How did you feel as you heard the parable as a whole read?
- How did you feel when your particular character was at the forefront?
- How would you justify your actions in the parable?
- Who in our society today might be represented by your character?

After ten minutes, have each group share their insights and feelings with the larger group.

Response (15 minutes)

5. Searching for “New” Neighbors

Have each person choose a partner and look through newspapers to find at least one example of a “neighbor” that we are called to help and assist. Encourage the group to broaden their vision to include those that seem to be the most unlikely recipients of our care and concern.

Prepare a display of the various articles on a wall or bulletin board. Give members of the group time to browse the articles. Encourage them to continue broadening their vision of who the neighbor is we are called to love and serve.

Closing (5 minutes)

6. Closing Reflection/Prayer

Encourage participants to reflect on at least one individual or group of people that they feel God is calling them to love and serve. Then encourage them to spend a few minutes in silent prayer, praying for those persons and for themselves as they seek to reach out to them in love and service.

7. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 12:13–34 and Unit 6 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Also, choose three people to give a special report on one of Luke’s major teachings of Jesus related to money. Assign each person one of the following scripture passages:

- Luke 12:13–21
- Luke 12:22–32
- Luke 12:33–34

Ask them to prepare a five minute report on Jesus’ words, using the format:

- “Here is what I used to believe about money”
- “After hearing Jesus teach, I now believe”

Unit 6: The Dangers of Money (Luke 12:13–34)

Key Idea: Luke’s Jesus has much to say about money and about how we as Christian disciples use our money.

Advance Preparation

Provide hymnals that contain the hymn, “We Give Thee But Thine Own,” or copy the words on newsprint. Have small pieces of paper or index cards and pens or pencils for each participant.

Make copies of the following “Money Quiz” for the participants.

Money Quiz

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Agree / Disagree | 1. Jesus had a lot to say about money. |
| Agree / Disagree | 2. I think often about Jesus’ words when I am making economic decisions. |
| Agree / Disagree | 3. I believe the church should have more to say about money and how it is used. |
| Agree / Disagree | 4. I believe my minister should preach about money more often. |
| Agree / Disagree | 5. I believe most members of my church let Jesus’ teachings about money have little effect on how they use their financial resources. |

Opening (15 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

Holy God, we say with our lips that all that we have in life comes from you, but our actions do not reflect such a belief. Help us to enjoy the money and other material things that we have, but help us also to use them wisely and share them with those less fortunate. For it is in Jesus’ name that we pray, Amen.

2. “Agree/Disagree” Exercise

Distribute copies of the “Money Quiz” and encourage participants to mark their answers honestly. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers to such a quiz.

After individuals have marked their responses, let them share their answers with two other people. Participants should be allowed to “justify” why they marked each response as they did.

Presentation (15 minutes)

3. Reports on Jesus' Teachings About Money

Call on the three people who have prepared to present the teachings of Jesus regarding money. As a reminder, each person will have five minutes to share Jesus' words using the format:

- "Here is what I use to believe about money"
- "After hearing Jesus teach, I now believe"

Encounter (10 minutes)

4. Considering the Effects of Jesus' Words on Our Use of Money

Ask group members to think about how taking seriously Jesus' words about money could affect the way they use the financial resources available to them. List some of their responses on newsprint.

Response (10 minutes)

5. Personal Commitment to Change

Distribute small pieces of paper or index cards and a pen or pencil to the participants. Encourage them to think about one concrete change they would like to make in the way they utilize their financial resources as a result of hearing Jesus' words in this session. Ask them to write this down. (Assure them that this is a private exercise and that they will not need to share their responses with others.)

Closing (10 minutes)

6. Hymn of Commitment

As a paper bag is passed through the group to collect the index cards or pieces of paper, sing or read together the words of the hymn, "We Give Thee But Thine Own." At the conclusion of the hymn, seal the bag as a way of indicating that the personal responses will be kept confidential.

7. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 14:1–24 and Unit 7 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 7: Table Manners (Luke 14:1–24)

Key Idea: By sharing a story of Jesus at the table at a Pharisee’s house, Luke gives us clues to understanding the person and work of Jesus through the people with whom he eats and what he says and does.

Advance Preparation

Provide copies of a hymnal that includes the hymn, “Now to Your Table Spread,” or make a copy of verse 1 of the hymn on newsprint. Also provide inexpensive paper plates and pens or markers for each participant.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. *Praying a Hymn*

As the opening prayer, sing or read aloud verse 1 of the hymn, “Now to Your Table Spread.”

2. *Sharing Special Times at the Table*

Ask three or four people to briefly describe a special time they have spent at a table for a meal. They should share such things as: who was present, what was the occasion that prompted the meal, what foods were served, what the conversation was about, and what made the meal special.

Presentation and Exploration (35 minutes)

3. *Setting the Scene*

Set the scene for listening to the scripture passage by explaining that it is about a meal Jesus shared at the home of a Pharisee.

4. *Group Study/Encounter with the Scripture*

Divide the participants into four groups, and assign each group one of the “scenes” of the mealtime encounter in Luke 14:

- Scene 1: Luke 14:1–6
- Scene 2: Luke 14:7–11
- Scene 3: Luke 14:12–14
- Scene 4: Luke 14:15–24

Ask each group to read the assigned scripture passage carefully and refer to the commentary in the study book in preparation for a simulation. Allow fifteen minutes for the study.

5. A Simulation

Inform each group that they are to act as a “team of directors” to stage the scene they have just read as a drama. They should talk about how they will portray the scene, what dialog they think is important enough to be included, and how they will set up the transition to the next scene. After ten minutes, let each group present their scene.

Response (10 minutes)

6. Writing Down New Insights

Distribute inexpensive paper plates and pens or markers to the participants. Encourage them to think through the study they have done today and the scenes of the drama they have seen, and ask them to write down one significant insight they have gained or new idea they have learned about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Set the plates out on a table for everyone to browse in order to profit from what other people have learned from this study of “Table Manners.”

Closing (5 minutes)

7. Prayer

Close with the following prayer or a prayer of your own:

O God, you often sat at table with your friends and your enemies. Help us to learn from you important lessons about humility and honesty and integrity. Help us to extend to all people the invitation to join us at your table and in your church. For we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

8. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 15:1–32 and Unit 8 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 8: Parables of the Lost (Luke 15:1–32)

Key Idea: Through telling three parables about “lost” things, Jesus tells us about the free, amazing, almost foolish grace of God.

Advance Preparation

Have available hymnals that contain the hymn, “Amazing Grace,” or print copies of the words to the hymn on newsprint. Also, purchase or have made wooden or paper crosses to distribute to those present this week. Have paper and pens or pencils for each participant as well.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. Singing a Hymn

Sing the hymn, “Amazing Grace.”

2. Prayer

Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

Holy God, your love for us is so amazing, and even more amazing is the good news that you forgive us when we do wrong and you welcome us home when we stray away. Thank you for your amazing love and grace, O God. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Presentation (10 minutes)

3. Setting the Context

Read Luke 15:1–2 to determine the setting for the three parables we will hear today.

4. Telling the Stories with Body Language

Ask your group members to divide into two equal lines facing one another. As the first two parables (vs. 3–7 and vs. 8–10) are read slowly, designate one side to be the “responders” and the other to be the “audience.” The responders are to use their acting talents to express on their faces and with their bodies the emotions that occur among the people involved in the story, as the story is read. The audience will observe them.

Then, reverse the teams as you read the third parable (vs. 11–32).

Exploration (15 minutes)

5. *Triad Discussion*

Have the group divide into groups of three to discuss the following questions:

- How do you think the three parables would have been heard by the tax collectors and sinners who had gathered to listen to Jesus?
- How do you think the three parables would have been heard by the Pharisees and scribes who heard them, too?
- With whom would each of the groups who heard the parable relate in the third parable (the father and the two sons)?
- What would have to happen in order for *both* groups of people to hear the parables as good news?

Response (15 minutes)

6. *Writing a Prayer of Confession*

Remind group members that the author of the study book says on p. 59 that parables “invite us into a different world so we can gain perspective on our own worldviews and critique them.” In light of that statement, ask the participants to reflect on Jesus’ message in the three parables and then to write a personal prayer of confession asking for forgiveness for sometimes “shutting out” others from their presence and even from the fellowship of the church.

On the back of their sheet of paper, they may want to write a note to themselves stating how they hope to act differently in the future toward those they have shut out before.

Closing (10 minutes)

7. *Praying a Hymn*

Once again, sing the hymn, “Amazing Grace.” Before singing, ask each person to read and reflect silently on the words, noting which phrases have more meaning now that he or she has engaged in this study of the three parables of Jesus in Luke 15.

8. *Assignment*

Distribute wooden or paper crosses to each person and ask them to hold them in their hands when they read Luke 23:32–49 and Unit 9 in the study book. Also, encourage them to bring the crosses to the next session.

Unit 9: Reflections from the Cross: The Death of Jesus (Luke 23:32–49)

Key Idea: For Luke, the final three saying of Jesus on the cross, along with the responses spoken and unspoken by those who witnessed the crucifixion, sum up the central beliefs of the Gospel and set the stage for the church’s future ministry as recorded in the book of Acts.

Advance Preparation

Have hymnbooks available that contain the hymns “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and “Were You There?,” or copy the words of the hymns on sheets of newsprint. Have additional crosses for any new participants or for those who forgot to bring theirs back. (See Unit 8.) Also, have newsprint and a marker available for use during the session.

Opening (5 minutes)

1. Praying a Hymn

Ask each person to take out the cross given at the end of the last session. (Distribute crosses to those who did not receive one last time.) Encourage the participants to focus one eye on the cross while they read and/or sing the words to the hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” Allow a few moments of silence for reflection and/or prayer after singing the hymn.

Presentation (15 minutes)

2. Hearing the Scripture with New Ears

Encourage group members to pretend that they have grown up in an almost completely secular culture and have never gone to church school or to worship. Ask them to listen with those ears as you or another member of the group reads slowly and clearly Luke’s account of the crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 23:32–49).

Now ask what questions group members have about this “new” story they have just heard. Record the questions on newsprint.

Exploration (25 minutes)

3. Study and Reflection on Jesus’ Last Words

If your group is large enough, divide them into three smaller groups of at least four people each. Ask each member of every group to assume the identity of one of the following people—a Jewish leader, a Roman centurion, one of the criminals hanged with Jesus, and a follower of Jesus. Then assign each group one of the following sections of Luke 23 to read and explore: vs. 32–38, vs. 39–43, and vs. 44–49.

Have one member of the group to read the assigned scripture passage aloud. Then let each person respond to the passage as if they were the person whose identity they have been assigned.

After ten or fifteen minutes, each group should be asked to share any insights they have gained with the other two groups.

Response (10 minutes)

4. Personal Plans for Witnessing to the Risen Christ

Luke tells us that all of Jesus' acquaintances stood at a distance and watched the crucifixion. They heard Jesus' words that God forgives, that God saves, and that God is present. Yet, they remained at a distance.

We who are Jesus' followers today, our author reminds us, are those who stand at a distance from it, having encountered it second-hand through our reading and study of Scripture. Yet, we are also called to obey and witness to this one who was crucified and later rose.

Ask each person to again take their cross and spend five minutes contemplating how they will obey and witness to this one whom they have encountered in Scripture. Then, encourage them to share their plans with one other group member.

Closing (5 minutes)

5. Praying a Hymn

Again, ask participants to take out their crosses and focus on them as they sing "Were You There?" for the closing prayer.

6. Assignment

Encourage group members to read Luke 24:13–35 and Unit 10 of the study book in preparation for the next session.

Unit 10: Along the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35)

Key Idea: Luke’s Gospel ends with the story that Jesus, the crucified one, is alive and that he appears to two followers on the road to Emmaus.

Advance Preparation

Bring a loaf of uncut bread to this session. Also, have hymnals with the hymn, “Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread,” or copy the words of the hymn on a sheet of newsprint.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. Prayer

Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

O God, we give you thanks that the crucifixion was not the last word in our Lord’s story, but that he rose and appeared to his followers, thus giving us hope for resurrection and new life as well. Help us to live as your resurrection people. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

2. Setting the Scene

Inform the group that Luke 24:1–12, which precedes the passage for this study, is an account of the women visiting the tomb on the morning of the third day. The incident highlighted in this session takes place on the evening of that same day.

Presentation (10 minutes)

3. Hearing the Scripture Read

Have the members of your group close their eyes and listen attentively as you or another member of the group reads aloud Luke 24:13–35, pausing after each major scene of the story. During the pauses, encourage participants to ponder how they would be feeling at that particular moment.

Exploration (20 minutes)

4. Sharing How the Emmaus Road Travelers Would Have Felt

Ask for volunteers to share insights about the feelings of the two disciples at various times during the story. One person can share how they would have felt at the beginning of their journey. Another can share how they would have felt when the “stranger” joined them and asked, “What were you discussing?” Another can share how they would have felt when Jesus shared with them how the death of the Messiah was predicted in the Scriptures. Yet another can share how they would have felt when

Jesus broke the bread and their eyes were opened. A final person can share how they would have felt when they arrived back in Jerusalem and were able to tell the eleven and other close followers about their encounter with the risen Christ.

Response (10 minutes)

5. Passing Bread/Sharing Jesus

Pass around the loaf of bread that you have brought to the group session. Ask participants to hold the bread for a moment and to think about the time when they first came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then they should break off a piece of bread to eat as they pass the bread to the next person, saying the words, "May Christ be known to you in breaking bread!"

Closing (10 minutes)

6. Concluding the Study

As this study of Luke's Gospel concludes, encourage group members to think about how their understanding of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus has changed during the study.

7. Singing a Hymn

Conclude the session and this study by singing together the hymn, "Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread."

8. Closing Prayer

Ask a member of the group to lead in a closing prayer, expressing gratitude for this study and for the new insights they have into who Jesus is.