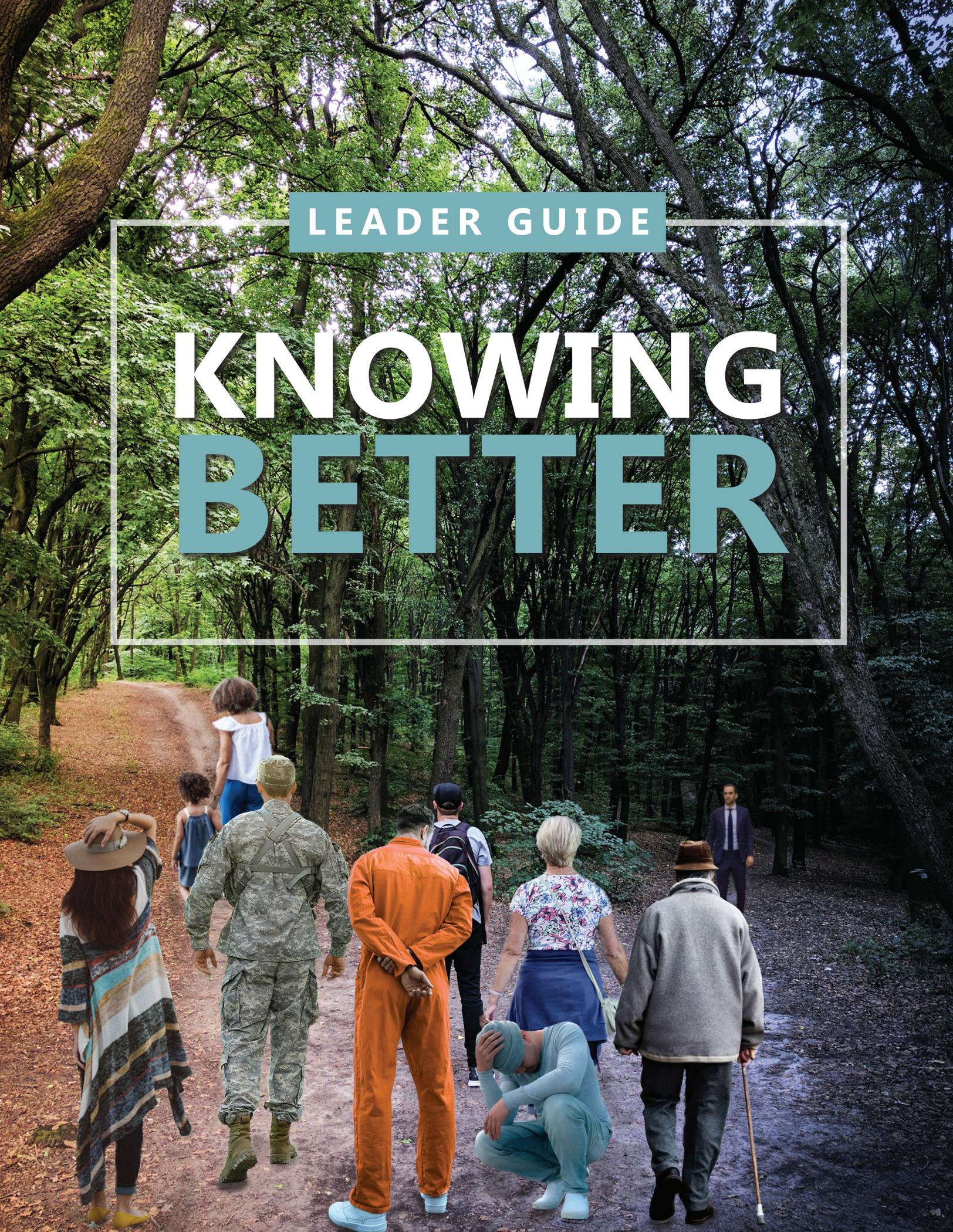


LEADER GUIDE

KNOWING BETTER



LEADER GUIDE

WELCOME

Thank you for being brave and leading a group through the *Knowing Better* study! We want to help you be successful, and go in unafraid. We've created this leader guide knowing it can be intimidating to take charge of a group, even if it's just you and a friend or two. Some of you are seasoned professionals at leading so many of the points in the introduction will simply be reminders for you. **Do make sure and read the section on *Why This Study Is Different*.**

Knowing Better is a 6-week Bible study. Adding a kick-off session makes for seven weeks of notes and questions to use with your group. This study is a very intentional journey to understand how to live out this thing called Christianity. **This is a unique study because, while it's a Bible study, it's also a powerful How-To.** In it travelers will learn how to have an intimate and authentic relationship with God and how to truly walk with, talk to, and experience Jesus. This is impactful whether you're just starting the journey or you've been doing church for decades or somewhere in-between.

The biggest thing to understand about this study is that it was actually written to be done alone (we'll explain why coming up). Yet, there is such power when God's people gather together so we offer this guide to help you and your group grow individually AND to grow together. We pray you have a grand adventure!



WHAT TO KNOW GOING IN

WHY THIS STUDY IS DIFFERENT

The *Knowing Better* study was originally written so anyone could do it on their own. There were a number of reasons for that.

First, one area God wanted *Knowing Better* to be used was with **people who were incarcerated**. In jail or prison, inmates don't always have video access or even Christian pastors, priests, or mentors available to guide or ask questions. (Covid left many with no outside influence.)

Second, when we are in groups, **we aren't always honest or real**. Even in church. We may worry about what others think about us, getting the "right" answers, and what we do or don't know. We fear looking foolish, uninformed, or "out there." It can stifle our authenticity and vulnerability.

Third, some of us have some big stuff that is incredibly hard to share with others. Shame. Guilt. **There are some things so deep they may never be told to anyone but God**. People will definitely not share if that space feels unsafe. When we don't know if you are a gossip, judgmental, or likely to reject us, we won't share until we can be certain of trust. Don't think you know who has these struggles. It may likely be someone in your group.

This study is a journey. It is a walk from the beach to the deep. You will learn to talk to God about everything. You will unpack some hard things. You'll get to the root of issues. You won't do that real and raw if you are worried about having to share that in group. **We will NOT share anything too personal from the daily homework in group**. We will be asking questions in a way that feels safe. There will be opportunity to go deep, but it should never feel required or overly encouraged. If it's meant to happen, it will happen.

THE GOAL

The goal is for people to develop an authentic relationship with God. To understand that Jesus is not just waiting for them in heaven, but walking with them every moment of every day. To experience the joy, peace, and freedom that comes when you truly, deeply know God.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOK

The *Knowing Better* study has five days of homework each week that average around 30 minutes to complete each day (depending on time spent on question reflection and prayer time). Each week ends with a *Wrap Up* day that can be done on a sixth day. Some have used the *Wrap Up* as the group discussion guide. Each week there is a memorization verse and "Knowing Jesus" tips.

Following the six weeks of study are 30 days of devotions that cover the topics and themes covered throughout for individuals to continue their journey after the 6-weeks of study. The back of the book includes room for journaling.

STUFF YOU NEED

Each participant will need their own *Knowing Better* study guide, Bible, and something to write with.

IDEAS FOR YOUR UNIQUE GROUP

WHICH SCENARIO BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SITUATION?

Knowing Better can be used alone, with one, two, or a few getting together, in small groups, or not so small groups. Following are ideas on how you might approach various situations.

Using the study book(s):

ALONE

Both *Knowing Better* and *Fighting Better* Bible studies were designed to use on your own. In some ways, this is the best way. The whole goal of these studies is to not only meet God but to learn to experience Him in life-changing ways. The studies are written conversationally and should be easy to understand even if this is your first introduction to Jesus. The only resources needed are a Bible and something to write with. These are perfect for loved ones who are incarcerated, away at college, or feeling alone. It's also great for yourself if you are in some deep waters and absolutely need something to change in your life. While perfect for gospel sharing and new believers, neither is a "beginner" Bible study. **Both are designed to teach you how to ENGAGE with and EXPERIENCE God in life-changing ways.** Sometimes when we have a great deal of shame, guilt, or doubt, working with others doesn't work. These studies offer a safe place to find answers and hope in the presence of God.

ONE-ON-ONE

If you are a believer who wants to help someone else understand who Jesus is and to know God deeply, a good way is to do the study together. Do the daily work on your own, then get together each week to discuss what was most impactful, interesting, and thought-provoking. Some have used each week's Wrap-Up to spark conversation and questions.

One caution: Make it clear going in that you will not be sharing all your answers. Often people will not answer honestly if they know others will see their responses. Some people will not feel comfortable "getting real" yet. This needs to be a safe place for them to meet God and learn to trust.

WITH A SMALL GROUP

While doing Bible study in a small group is a fantastic way to develop fellowship with our family in Christ, these studies are a little different. Read the bold text in the paragraphs above and the sentences that follow them. In order to truly experience God and the transformed life He has for us, we need to feel safe enough to be authentic, unearth some things that are buried, face things we avoid, and confront uncomfortable topics. There is comfort and safety in doing that with God, but not with everyone else. Leaders will need to be considerate of that dynamic and make sure to maintain a safe small group environment.

FOR JAIL/PRISON/REHAB MINISTRY

Depending on your ministry, situation, and restrictions within the facility you serve, one of the ways mentioned on the previous page may work for you too. Here are some different ways we've seen others use the books with inmates and those in recovery programs.

JAILS

Many churches make the *Knowing Better* study available to the inmates who attend a weekly Bible study hosted by church laypeople. Because inmates are in for different durations of time and new inmates are always coming in, the study is given for the inmates to use on their own. Oftentimes, when a few inmates are working on the study within their pod, others get interested and more want to do it for themselves. One group told us that they used the devotionals (in the back of the *Knowing Better* study) to do a daily group session and encouraged each other to keep going in the main study on their own. Your group will need to make Bibles available to the inmates as well - which you probably are already doing. The thing we hear over and over is that those who never knew HOW to read their Bible learn how to get into it and see how valuable it is in their lives.

PRISONS

One pastor we work with goes into the prison each week and meets with several guys one-on-one who want to visit. When she feels they would benefit, she gives them the *Knowing Better* study to work on at their pace. Each week she checks in and asks what stood out to them that week. Sometimes they've only gotten through a few pages, but they always seem to have something meaningful to share. Sometimes they come back with eye-opening revelations.

One church member faithfully visited an inmate during a 3-year sentence. He gave him the *Knowing Better* study to work on. He was so impacted that the rest of his time there he formed 6-week-long small groups of 5-6 guys and had them all go through it too. More and more guys kept asking him to include them. He took dozens of men through the study during his incarceration.

REHAB

The methods for use in rehab situations will be the same as many of the scenarios we've already mentioned. One story that stands out is a young woman who works with kids in a juvenile detention center. For some of her teens she knew needed God in big ways, she'd make a deal with them: Complete the *Knowing Better* study and she'd give them \$100! She knew it was a big motivator but she put some parameters around it. They'd have to have a conversation with her after each week was completed to report on what they got out of it and she needed to see that all the blanks were filled in. Kids took the challenge. One teen that completed it got the \$100, but I asked if it was truly impactful for him. She had three words for me, "Death to life!"

TIPS FOR A GREAT EXPERIENCE

Leading discussion for your group doesn't have to be intimidating. If it makes you feel better, refer to yourself as the "facilitator." It's okay to admit you don't feel qualified, confident, or even comfortable leading the group. The biggest job is to get the group together and engage. Create a place to be together, love on one another, learn about our great God, and have fun!

ORDER EARLY

Make sure to allow enough time to get your *Knowing Better* books ordered at least a couple of weeks ahead to ensure timely delivery. Especially important if you are ordering a bulk shipment of 15 or more. Packages may come slower than individual books.

KEEP A SCHEDULE

Make sure everyone knows where and when you'll meet. Keeping the time and place consistent helps, yet, if things need to change, making sure you communicate details well alleviates many issues. Also, make a point to start on time even if some haven't arrived. This will ensure punctuality over time and show you value everyone's schedule.

SET THE TONE

Decide ahead of time if you'll offer snacks, beverages, or nothing. Some love putting out a big spread while others find that stressful. Do what is best for you and your group. We're all so used to carrying our travel mugs and bottles of water that it's no big deal to ask them to come with their own beverage. Whatever you decide is fine, just let everyone know the plan.

BE PREPARED

Look through the content that will be covered each week in the leader's guide ahead of time so you know where the discussion is going. You'll know your group best and can tailor any questions you feel aren't quite right or it may spark additional ideas you can plan for. Also, as you work through the study on your own each week, make note of any insights you feel are important to cover that week in group time.

REFLECT

After each gathering, ask yourself what went well. What wasn't so great? Evaluate your time together and see if you need to make improvements or adjustments for the next time.

PRAY

Be in conversation with God about the people in your group and be praying for their unique challenges, gifts, and journey.

WEEKLY GROUP GATHERING

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

Here's a plan that might work for structuring your weekly group meeting. Yet, it's your group so do whatever you need to do to accommodate your resources, circumstances, and time.

WELCOME: 15-30 min.

This is a good time to get any announcements done, have everyone introduce themselves, do ice-breakers, check in with people (briefly), and just get everyone comfortable and settled in.

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today.

Praying in a group, out loud, can be terrifying if you've never done it. If you are in this boat, don't even worry. We've got you. Check out the info in the back of this guide, ***Help for Group Prayers***, on how to pray and prayers that are ready to go that you can use for each week on **pages 21-24**. Read the prayers aloud to open and close your group time. It's a great idea to have group members take turns each week so everyone can experience hearing their own voice praying out loud.

VIDEO: 15-20 min.

There's a video to help kick off the study and then weekly videos that offer some additional thoughts to wrap up the theme each week. Encourage your group to jot down notes from the videos (*note: there is no specific area for video notes within the study book*). The videos are helpful, but totally optional. It's best to watch the video at the beginning, before group discussion, as there are some extra questions pertaining to the video if you want more to discuss. *Note: Watching the videos is not necessary to the main discussion time.* To access the videos, follow the instructions in the study book.

DISCUSSION: 30-60+ min. (Typically, an hour to 90 min. would be ideal).

Go through the questions for that week (on the following pages) along with any questions you may have come up with in your personal study time throughout the week.

PRAY

Ask people to share something they would like prayer for. If you're comfortable, pray for any requests mentioned and for their journey through the study. If you're uncomfortable praying, ask that everyone pray for the group's requests during the week, then use the prayers on pages 21-24 to close.

ENCOURAGE

Remind your participants what to work on for next time, schedule changes if needed, and give lots of encouragement.

STUDY KICK-OFF . DISCUSSION GUIDE

LAUNCH **Note:** This session happens before any work has begun in the study books.

WELCOME your group and pray for your time together (see pg. 22 in this guide for opening prayer if needed). Do introductions and an **ice-breaker** or two to create connections. Here are a few options:

- 1) What was your first vehicle OR what is your dream vehicle?
- 2) If you could eat anything today (without worrying about it's calories or unhealthiness) what would you have?
- 3) What is the biggest mess you ever made or had to clean up?

DETAIL the schedule and expectations of your time together each week and hand out books. Read *“Hey! What you’ll need to know going in”* on page 7 giving time to each bullet point. This is a good time to discuss the time it will take to complete the homework each week and talking through obstacles and how to approach committing to the process (especially for those new to Bible study). Seasoned studiers can share what they’ve found works best for them.

WATCH the video **“Kick Off Session”** and encourage participants to take notes (*if you’ve chosen to use the videos*).

DISCUSS the following questions to get thinking about the upcoming study.

1) Read through the information on the back cover. Based on the text and bullet points, what are you most interested in gaining from this study?

- ▶ Can you offer any insight as to why that’s appealing to you?

2) Have your group read John 17:3 (from various translations if possible).

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (NASB)

- ▶ What does it take to truly KNOW someone?
- ▶ Think about your relationship with God right now and how well you REALLY know Him. Which choice best describes your situation today: **Strangers, Acquaintances, Good Friends,** or in a **Deep, Intense Relationship**. Why is this your situation?

3) On the cover it states that **“knowing God will change everything.”** Is that comforting to you, scary to you, or both? Explain your thoughts?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 1 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

TIME FOR A CHANGE

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What is something most people like that you don't care for at all? (Examples: a famous movie, singer or actor, or popular food)
- 2) What craft, hobby, or project did you attempt that didn't go so well?
- 3) What is one piece of advice you've heard that you believe is important?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today. Focus on this week's theme of change. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 21-24.

WATCH the video “**Week 1 . Time For A Change**” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions in your group related to the past week's theme.

Day 1

▶ Read the verses on page 12 for Week 1, Day 1. How do you feel as you hear that information?

Day 2

▶ We walked through the “salvation message.” What stood out to you most as you worked through that good news?

▶ How did you feel as you thought about Jesus being on the other side of the door?

Day 3

▶ On page 23, it focused on you being “transformed” into the image of Jesus. Does the thought of transformation excite you or scare you?

▶ We also looked at some attributes of Jesus on page 23. From that list, which one would you most want to know is true for you? Why is that important?

★ In the video, Jenn mentioned Jesus' characteristic of MEEKNESS. Based on her paraphrase of A.W. Tozer's take on *meekness*, what are your thoughts on that being not *wimpy*, but *the cool factor*? (See Jenn's paraphrase on the next page to refresh your memory.)

▶ Is understanding that Jesus is God (page 24) something new to you or something you've known?

Day 4

- ▶ How did it feel to picture Jesus in the chair next to you and talk to Him?
- ▶ Have you ever had a moment or an interaction that you knew was God?

Day 5

- ▶ Have someone read Matthew 7:21-23. Since this verse is Jesus calling out church people, does this verse worry you and how you've been thinking about your faith?
- ▶ We looked at the 3 C's of *relationship with God* (page 33). Which of those do you think will be the most difficult for you?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

★ Jenn's paraphrase of A.W. Tozer's description of the meekness Christ examples for us to follow in *The Pursuit of God*.

To be meek means I don't worry about who is greater than me or who has something negative to say about me. Why? Because I have decided that what other people think about me is not worth worrying about. To be meek is not to look at myself as a mouse, feeling inferior, less than. Instead, it makes me strong. It makes me bold because I have accepted who I REALLY am. What God says I am. In one sense, helpless and weak...and at the same time more important than the angels of heaven. In myself, nothing. In God, everything. That's what I'm going to live by. I know the world will never see me as God sees me. That's okay, because I have stopped caring about that. In my meekness, I'll be happy to let God defend me and stop wasting my time defending myself. In my meekness I will be at peace.

WEEK 2 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

PLANT YOUR FEET

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) Do you feel like your feet are too big, too small, or just right?
- 2) Which is a reality for you? “I’d love a foot massage!” “I’m too ticklish/I don’t like my feet touched” or “Feet weird me out?”
- 3) On your perfect day would you rather find your feet in grass, in sand, or in boots in the snow...or somewhere else?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today. Focus on this week’s theme of having a secure foundation. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 21-24.

WATCH the video “**Week 2 . Plant Your Feet**” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you’ve chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week’s theme.

Day 1

- ▶ If you were to start your own journal to capture times “When God Shows Up,” would you have some things to add to it yet? If you’re comfortable, share what you might include.
- ▶ On pg. 40 which of the verses you looked up was most important or meaningful to you?

Day 2

- ▶ Look back and ask someone to re-read the verses on page 41 that you filled in. Do you struggle to believe the Bible is true and from God?
- ▶ How does it make you think differently to consider the Bible as a weapon?
- ▶ Have you ever tried memorizing scripture (or anything)? How did it go?

Day 3

- ▶ Did you view God as “good” before this week? How about now?
- ▶ Could you appreciate Phil’s perspective on not wanting his cancer to be gone during his follow-up visit? How did his story make you think about something as hard as cancer differently?
- ▶ Have someone read Charles Spurgeon’s quote in the margin on page 48 again. Share your thoughts about that.

Day 4

▶ On pages 50-52 we looked at *5 Components of God's Love*. Review them again and tell which one you found most interesting or important. If you're willing, share why.

Day 5

▶ On the bottom of page 55, which verse is easiest to own? Which is the hardest?

▶ Since God's word is always true (according to Proverbs 30:5), that makes all of the statements claimed in those verses valid for every Christ follower. How does that feel if they are REALLY, REALLY true for you?

▶ We learned that the gospel simply comes down to the truth that *God wants me. God is for me*. How does that process in your head?

▶ Looking at your completed foundation on page 56, are there any parts that feel a little shaky for you today?

Video reflection: *(If you watched the video and you have time to discuss)*

★ In the video, Jenn talked about her experience of thinking she had a really strong faith and finding out she didn't at all. Do you fear you could be in the same boat (maybe if it's never been tested)?

★ Jenn talked about the 70 disciples who walked away from Jesus when things got strange. In John 6:68 Peter tells Jesus he and the other 12 disciples aren't going anywhere, saying, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" William Law said, "If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God, it will make in the end no difference what you have chosen instead." Discuss your thoughts about why people leave the faith, why people stay, and where those decisions leave us.

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 3 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE STUFF IN YOUR WAY

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) Do you tend to keep a lot of stuff, pitch stuff easily, or land somewhere in the middle?
- 2) If your house was on fire, what three things would you try to save?
- 3) If you could permanently eliminate one chore from your to-do list, which would it be?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today. Focus on this week's theme of *The Stuff In Your Way*. If you need help there are prayers you can use on pages 21-24.

WATCH the video “Week 3 . The Stuff In Your Way” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1

- ▶ What are some wrong thoughts you've had about God (pages 60-61).
- ▶ Looking back over your life, do you feel you've had more positive or more negative ideas about God? To help you decide, boil down your thoughts to the ONE word you'd use to describe Him.

Day 2

- ▶ What do you think it means by, “*You will live out what you feel is real*” on page 65?
- ▶ Nearly everyone has made a decision they later regretted because they went off of feelings instead of reason or facts (purchasing something you really couldn't afford, agreeing to a task or project you really didn't want to do, going along with your friends or a group even though you knew it wasn't the right thing, or giving into someone else just because you didn't want them to not like you). Share a time, funny or serious, when you let your feelings be in charge.

Day 3

- ▶ Have someone read Isaiah 41:9-10, 13 on page 68. Since God is ultimately declaring this to every believer in Christ, how do your feeling and fears line up to the statements God makes?
- ▶ As you envision yourself living your life dwelling with God — every moment of every day — how do you think your life will change?

Day 4

- ▶ Have someone read Philippians 4:6-7 on page 72. Why do you think God tells us (Christ followers) not to worry?
- ▶ What will life be like when we learn not to worry...about anything?
- ▶ Does that seem possible or impossible? Will you work on following God's command regarding this?

Day 5

- ▶ Have someone read Ephesians 5:4 on page 77, and have someone look up and read Psalm 101:3. What sources of negativity are you seeing that you need to stop allowing into your mind?
- ▶ What are you doing when you seem to have the BEST thoughts?
- ▶ Why do you think focusing on the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40, page 77) could give you good thoughts?

Video reflection: *(If you watched the video and you have time to discuss)*

★ In the video, Jenn talked about how our EXPECTATIONS can be a huge obstacle in our lives. She defined two words: PERIPETIA - the reversal from one state of affairs to its opposite, and ANAGRORISIS - which in Greek means "recognition" or a change from ignorance to knowledge. Have you ever had your life suddenly take a drastic reversal or suddenly became aware of something that changed your life? How did you view God through that experience?

★ Jenn also pointed out how FOCUS can be another big obstacle. Think about where your focus is when things are good in life vs. when they're hard. Do you find that your focus on God and the time you spend with God changes based on circumstances?

If so, how do you NOT let changes in your life become an obstacle and steal your focus on God? (Hard things can often keep our focus on God, yet "the good life" is where we can lose our connection to God.)

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 4 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE REAL JESUS

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What's the first quality or trait that comes to mind when you think of Jesus?
- 2) What Christmas song is most meaningful to you? Why?
- 3) What is the first good memory you can recall?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today. Focus on this week's theme of *The Real Jesus*. If you need help there are prayers you can use on pages 21-24.

WATCH the video "**Week 4 . The Real Jesus**" and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1

- ▶ How have you thought about "the Trinity" before? Or is this a whole new idea to you?
- ▶ In Day 1 we learned that Jesus has a specific role as part of the Trinity. Does the quote on the bottom of page 82 or Jenn's explanation on the top of page 83 make it feel clearer to you?
- ▶ Have someone read the paragraph on the top of page 84. How does knowing that make you feel?

Day 2

- ▶ What part of Psalm 23 (page 86) comforts you most?
- ▶ Page 87 had us imagine ourselves in Christ's flock. We were to see where we were standing and what we were focused on — Jesus or the scary stuff out in the world. How did you see yourself behaving as part of the flock?
- ▶ Did this day's study help you refocus on the Good Shepherd?

Day 3

- ▶ As we traveled to the cross with Jesus you may have had some interesting and moving experiences. You don't need to share details if you want to keep that time sacred between you and Jesus, but discuss any insights or experiences that are bursting to be shared.

Day 4

▶ Jesus is preparing your future home — a room in His Father’s house. What do you imagine seeing as you look around your heavenly room?

▶ On page 94, how did it impact you to see yourself IN Christ? Did that help you understand the idea of dwelling with Him? That He is where you live?

★ In the video, Jenn read Matthew 11:29, *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* She explained that to be “yoked” is to be “willfully aware” of God with you. She also showed how Hebrews 13:5 and Matthew 28:20 report that Jesus is ALWAYS with us. How do you think your life would change if you didn’t allow yourself to believe anything other than Jesus is ALWAYS with you?

Day 5

▶ Have someone read Matthew 16:25. If you threw the book across the room on Day 5, you are not the first. Jesus got in our face and asked us to die to our lives and plans for something better — His plan to take us across to God. He asks us for everything temporary in order to gain everything eternal. If you’re willing to share, how did this day go for you?

▶ Read Philippians 3:3-9. After hearing about Paul, Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s experiences, and how they stood tall in the face of incredibly hard things, how did you feel about facing trials in your life?

▶ When you think about walking into the unknown, making Jesus your everything, do you feel scared, empowered, fearless, or something else?

▶ After looking at different aspects of Jesus this week, how do you feel about Him? How would you describe Him to someone else?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you’d like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 5 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE HARD ROAD

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) Where were you going when it felt like you'd never get there?
- 2) If you had to take a long, hard journey somewhere who would you want with you?
- 3) Physically, what is the hardest thing you've ever done?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today. Focus on this week's theme of *The Hard Road*. If you need help there are prayers you can use on pages 21-24.

WATCH the video "**Week 5 . The Hard Road**" and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ Pay Attention

- ▶ What do you think about Pastor Tadessa's prayer for us in the U.S. on page 105? Did it hit home for you?
- ▶ Read 1 John 2: 15-17. If this life and the stuff in it is just temporary and what God offers is eternal, why do we give the most of our time to the temporary instead of to God?
- ▶ Have you believed the lie that what God has planned won't be as good as what you have planned for your life? (Page 107)

Day 2 ▪ Be Refined

- ▶ What stood out to you in the scriptures about being refined (page 108) or the insight on the refining process (page 109)?
- ▶ What do you understand to be the point of God's refining process in our lives? Why do you think it needs to be uncomfortable or even painful?

Day 3 ▪ Answering Prayer

- ▶ Have you ever seen or experienced something that seemed bad but ended up being a blessing?
- ▶ Have you ever experienced the answer to a prayer that was not answered how you imagined?

Day 4 ▪ It's Personal

- ▶ Have you ever believed in some way that when your life was hard or something bad happened that God was mad at you?
- ▶ Have someone read Psalm 139:16. Discuss what this means to you.

Day 5 ▪ God's Got A Plan

- ▶ Re-read the Good Point on page 120. What do you think it means?
- ▶ As you read Todd's cancer story (pages 122-123), did you understand how he could be so unafraid?

Wrap up

- ▶ Discuss your thoughts about the story of the men on the plane on page 124.

Video reflection: *(If you watched the video and you have time to discuss)*

★ Have someone read Psalm 68:19-20. In the video, Jenn had you visualize carrying a backpack and how many rocks (burdens) you were carrying and how as you travel with Jesus He replaces them with feathers. How was that visualization for you?

★ Jenn told the story of Mama Maggie Gobran and all she gave up to serve the poor in Egypt. She once said, "Don't let success kill your life or steal your life from you. Don't change because of the pressure of the world, you go and change the world." Discuss what you think she means.

She also said, "When you die to yourself is when you find the beauty in you." What do you think she wants you to understand in that?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 6 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

BEING DIFFERENT

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What is something you were initially unsure about or afraid to do, but after you did it you were glad you did?
- 2) Who is someone you view as different and that's a good thing?
- 3) What bad habit have you left behind that has made your life better?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today. Focus on the theme of *Being Different*. If you need help there are prayers you can use on pages 21-24.

WATCH the video “**Week 6 . Being Different**” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ How To Change

▶ Read the definition of Repentance on page 128 and discuss how that goes along with “dying to self”

▶ In order to change your life, on page 130 we looked at the need to get up everyday, die to your life, and then ask Jesus to show you how to live. Discuss how you see this playing out in an average day with work, relationships, and responsibilities to deal with.

★ In the video, Jenn told the story of doctor and scientist Sir James Young Simpson who said that the greatest discovery he ever made was, “That I have a Savior.” All else he'd done in his life couldn't compare to that. If you don't feel that passionately about Jesus yet, what will you do to make sure you give yourself the gift of getting there?

Day 2 ▪ Make a decision

▶ Why is it important that we answer the question Jesus asks us, “Do you want to be well?”

▶ Read the bolded paragraph on page 133 and discuss the point.

Day 3 ▪ From Fear To Power

▶ Think about the stories of David slaying Goliath and Gideon defeating the Midianites (page 135). Why was David more confident going into the battle?

- ▶ Read 2 Timothy 1:7 (page 137). Based on what we learned from David and Gideon, what does that tell you about your ability to leave fear behind?

Day 4 ▪ Confronting It All

This was a heavy day for some of you to be sure. If you feel like the Holy Spirit is nudging you to share something with your group, feel open to do that. The questions we'll go over for today will not go there.

- ▶ Read Joshua 1:9. How does that make you feel?
- ▶ Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Look at your list of what gets demolished on page 140 and how that happens. Share ideas on HOW you take thoughts captive and make them obedient to Jesus.

Day 5 ▪ Be Encouraged

- ▶ Read Romans 15:14. What will be different about you when this is your reality?
- ▶ Read the paragraph at the top of page 145. Discuss how that hits you.

Wrap up

- ▶ How has spending time with Jesus throughout *Knowing Better* changed your relationship with God and impacted your life these past six weeks?
- ▶ What has been your biggest takeaway?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group.

HELP FOR GROUP PRAYERS

OPENING & CLOSING PRAYERS

If you are not used to praying aloud with a group, and members of your group aren't either, you can use the prayers on the following pages. Learning to pray in a group comes with practice so use these to get more comfortable in the process.

WHAT TRIPS PEOPLE UP

There are two basic reasons people have trouble praying in a group. One, they just don't know how to pray, and two, they are afraid of what other people are going to think. Hopefully, the information following will help you work on both of those. It's a process, and the more you do it the more comfortable you'll get. Also, the more you get to know God, the less you'll worry about what others think.

WHAT PRAYER IS

Prayers are simply conversations with God. Prayers do not need to be fancy and definitely not fake. It's just talking to God about life — the good and confusing, the hard and the funny, the tragedies and the blessings — everything. At different times we may want to talk about who God is, what He says, how we're living, the people around us, what's going on in our family, neighborhood, area, nation, or across the planet. We'll pray about what we need, and what we're thankful for. Prayers should always be genuine. It's what you want to talk to God about in the moment. What's important, meaningful, scary, serious, what went wrong, what you want to go right. Sometimes it'll be about your relationship with God.

BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END

How you pray is essentially the same as how you start other conversations in your life, or how you'd write a letter: A greeting, the conversation, and a wrap up. Let's think about each section.

GREETING - Imagine walking in to have breakfast with Your Father (God). What would you say? *"Good morning Father."* Unless we've got something big to talk to Him about, it would be normal to have a little small talk. I find telling God what I was particularly thankful for the previous day, and why, gets me in a good head space. *"Yesterday, I was so excited when my son called and told me how good he was doing! I just see You doing good things in his life!"* or *"I loved that it rained yesterday. It help me stay focused on what I needed to get done inside."*

When Jesus teaches the disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13) He has them start out remembering who God is, *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,"* He wants us to remind ourselves who He is so we will be encouraged, have confidence in Him, and be strengthened in our prayers. Tell God what comes to mind about His holiness, authority, power, character, or something you've witnessed

Him do. *“Father, You are my strength! I can’t even believe how you saved me from ...”* or *“Heavenly Father, you are everything to me. I can’t believe you gave your Son for ME!”* Maybe, *“Father God, you feel like a safe place I run to when ...”*

CONVERSATION - Now you just continue the conversation. Talk about how you want to do things His way instead of your way, pray about what you need, what you need Him to forgive you for, who you need to forgive. Ask Him to keep you safe and evil far away.

It’s okay to ask Him to help you to pray. Talk about what comes to mind. Look back on the last page under *What Prayer Is* for things you might want to pray about. Make things personal. Don’t just say, *“I want to pray for my mom.”* Tell Him why. *“I want to pray that my mom stops drinking and that she can have a better life.”* Being specific gets us invested (in the conversation with God and with others who need Him) so prayer becomes something meaningful, real, and valuable in our lives.

WRAP UP - There’s no set amount of time or words you need to use. In Matthew 6:7-8 Jesus calls out some people who go on and on, repeating words over and over, as if that gets their prayers heard. He says that’s meaningless. He’s not limiting our words, He just wants it to be a conversation and not a ritual. When you’re done, you’re done. Some people end with, *“Amen.”* That simply means, *“Let it be so.”* Others like to say, *“In Jesus Name, Amen.”* That reminds us that without belonging to Christ, we have no place being in God’s presence or asking God for anything (John 14:6). It reminds us of our place, and our blessing.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Like anything, the more you do it the better and more comfortable you’ll get. Above all, remember that prayer is to come into the presence of God so keep Him in mind as you pray and you’ll be just fine.

SESSION PRAYERS

KICK OFF SESSION

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We are joining together to seek out who You are and how our lives might become better by getting to really know you. Help us find You and know You. Bless our time together today. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Your word says that eternal life is knowing You and knowing Jesus Christ who You sent to save us. This week, we’re starting a journey to improve our knowledge of You and our relationship with Your Son. Guide our steps, our discussion, and our understanding. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.



WEEK 1

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We've opened, or reopened the door to Jesus our Savior. Now, we need to get to know Him. To know You. Lead us to understanding. To hearing You. To seeing things from Your perspective. To following Your Son. Come and sit with us and guide us in this time. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We see that a life with You is going to look different than the life we came from. That scares us in some ways. We hear in your Word that you're going to transform us, to change us. We can fear change even when it's for our good. We need you to give us comfort in this decision to follow You. We need You to calm us, give us courage, and confidence as we walk with You. Strengthen us and motivate us for the journey. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.



WEEK 2

OPENING PRAYER

Good and Loving Father, Building a strong foundation for our faith has been our focus this week. As we gather together this week, give us more understanding to solidify our faith in you, in your Word, and in who You are. Let us feel your leading and your presence. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Good and Loving Father, The idea that You want us and that You are for us strengthens us. To know that we can trust your Word is true is somewhat scary, yet gives us hope that there is a guide for our lives. Help us to find our solid footing in these truths. Let us have a firm foundation so we may continue to build our lives on You. Trusting in your love, your goodness, and the plan you have for us, through Jesus, we are encouraged to go forward. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



WEEK 3

OPENING PRAYER

God Almighty, We let so many things get in the way of us having a life free from worry and fear, of life-controlling thoughts, assumptions, and feelings. Father, guide us today as we talk through these obstacles and how to overcome them by your power, instruction, and guidance. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

God Almighty, What an incredible life you promise us that we have been missing out on! You offer a life of peace, free from worry. A life knowing we can rely on you in every difficult situation, assured that you are there with us, to help us. A life where every fear would melt away in the presence and shelter of Almighty God, our Father who loves us. Please don't let us miss out on this amazing life with You. Continue to guide us on this journey until we are able to fully grasp and own every promise you make known to us. In the powerful name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 4

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You sent your Son to save us, to shepherd us, to live with us, and show us how to get Home to You. Help us to never create a false Jesus in our minds, but open our understanding to appreciate all He truly is, and to know Him in life-changing ways. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We learned that Your Son is gentle and a devoted shepherd who laid down His life for us, His sheep, that He deemed as priceless. We also see that He's tough and expects us to give up everything, following His example, in order to have a life that isn't focused on things that will pass away, but on things that are eternal. We see that He expects everything, but that He will give us more than we can ever imagine. Father, keep our eyes on our Good Shepherd, make us strong for the hard roads ahead, and teach us to fully know that Jesus is where we will feel fully alive, fully at Home. Let Jesus be our everything. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 5

OPENING PRAYER

Father God, There are hard roads each of us will walk down in this life here. But You promise to be with us, protect us, and guide us. Father, help us see that we do not need to fear the difficult things of life, or to lose heart in them. Instead, teach us to trust and rely on you, and to remember that You use ALL THINGS for our good. Lead us grow in greater understanding. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, Jesus told us that in this life we would have trouble, yet we can think a lot of wrong things when life does get hard. Father, help us to see that in the difficult things of life that you are there, that you may be using those seasons to change us, strengthen us, grow us, open our eyes, and refine us to make us like Jesus. Father, help us to become better, and not to grow bitter. To lean closer to you and to get all you want us to see and understand from walking the hard roads of life — knowing you are with us every step of the way. In the mighty name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 6

OPENING PRAYER

Father God, Being different than the world is both scary and exciting. Teach us to continue to move out of the world and in with You, from fear to power, to confront all that tries to keep us down, and to find strength and encouragement in You. Open our minds, our eyes, and our ears to this changed life you call us to. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, Living this new life you've given us means we will need to stay close to you, living by Your power and encouragement, surrendered to your plan, purpose, and transformation of us. For too long we've gone our own way and relied on ourselves. Living by your Son's leading and example will not come naturally we fear. Keep us focused on being different and living a life devoted to you. Continue growing our knowledge of You and of who You've created us to be. Protect us, guide us, and love us to Yourself so that we can truly and authentically live the lives you've planned for us — overflowing with peace, joy, and fulfillment in every way, by Your hand and Your plan Father. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

