

A FOUNDATION OF FAITH

BUILDING DEEPER FAITH

Group Leader's Guide

Copyright © 2015 by Wesleyan Publishing House
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

This guide is to be used in conjunction with *A Foundation of Faith* in the Building Deeper Faith series (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015).

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce the contents of this publication for ministry or educational purposes. No portion of this publication may be reproduced for profit without prior written permission of the publisher.

CONTENTS



Introduction	4
Week 1. Realize the Depths of Salvation	11
Week 2. Know God through His Word	14
Week 3. Live to Worship in Everything	16
Week 4. Commit to the Fellowship	18
Week 5. Embrace the Mystery of the Triune God	20

INTRODUCTION



SESSION DESIGN

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

Connect

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Discover

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

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

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

Memorize

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

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

Observe

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

Practice

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

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

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

Close

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

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

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

ICEBREAKERS

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

Getting to Know You

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

Introductions

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

My Worst Moment

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

Alliteration Descriptions

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

The Most Exciting

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

Guess Who I Am

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

Find Someone

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

Name Tag Pictures

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

Secret Pals

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

Meal Deal

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

LEADER'S TOOLBOX

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

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

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

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

Interactive Methods

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Personal Participation Methods

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

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

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

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

Direct Presentation Methods

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Direct Bible Study Methods

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

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

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

Creative and Artistic Methods

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE LEARNING

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

Envelope Method

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

Card Drill Method

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

Push Pin Method

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

Matching Method

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

Clue Word Method

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

Whiteboard Method

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

Guess-a-Letter Method

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

Round Table Method

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

WEEK 1

REALIZE THE DEPTHS OF SALVATION



FOCUS

This session helps believers understand what God did for them when they put their faith in Jesus Christ. It explores the problem of sin, our inability to save ourselves, God's plan to provide salvation through Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness, pardon, and new birth that result from our faith in Christ.

Discovery: You can know that you have become a new person through faith in Christ.

PREPARE

- Read week 1 of *A Foundation of Faith*.
- Study Acts 16:29–31; John 3:3, 16; Romans 5:1–2; and Titus 3:5, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray that God will use this study to transform lives.

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

CONNECT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lead the group in prayer.

DISCOVER

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “What happened when you were saved?” Point out that the Bible describes what God does for us when we believe in Christ.

Read Acts 16:29–31; John 3:3, 16; Romans 5:1–2; and Titus 3:5.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What do these Scriptures tell you about salvation?
- Why do you agree or disagree that a person cannot be saved by becoming a church member?
- Why do you agree or disagree that a person will go to heaven if he or she sincerely follows his or her religion?
- How would you answer the claim that all roads lead to heaven?
- Can a person achieve peace with God through meditation or self-denial? Defend your answer.

Throughout this session, emphasize that there is only one way to have peace with God: through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MEMORIZE

Lead your group in memorizing Acts 4:12. Remind the group that by memorizing Scripture, they can carry part of the Bible with them anywhere.

OBSERVE

The key points to observe in this session are:

- We need to be saved because we have sinned and are under the penalty of death.
- We may be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son.
- When we accept Christ as Savior, we are forgiven and reborn to a new life.
- The authority of God’s Word and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit within our hearts assure us we are saved.

PRACTICE

Challenge group members to tell their story, that is, to tell someone else about how they came to believe in Jesus Christ. Invite them to write the names of a few people whom they'd most like to tell about their faith, and to identify the person they will tell first. Pray that God will open the way for them to tell their story to at least one person this week.

CLOSE

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

WEEK 2

KNOW GOD THROUGH HIS WORD



FOCUS

This session is about the Bible, our authoritative source of truth. This chapter first identifies the reasons we believe the Bible is inspired, then shows how to study the Bible. This session will provide answers to several common questions about the Bible's origins and purpose.

Discovery: You can know God better by knowing the Bible.

PREPARE

- Read week 2 of *A Foundation of Faith*.
- Study 2 Timothy 3:14–17, noting key words and ideas.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray for the spiritual growth of your group as you lead them through this study.

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

CONNECT

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

Lead the group in prayer.

Hint: Remember that group interaction begins prior to the session itself. That's why room arrangement is important and a circle arrangement is often best.

DISCOVER

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “What does it mean that the Bible is God’s Word?”

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What do these verses tell us about the Bible?
- What value do they place on learning and applying the truths of the Bible?
- Why do you (or don’t you) believe the Bible is God’s written word?
- Why do you agree or disagree that Genesis 5:16 is as inspired as John 3:16?
- Compare 2 Peter 1:20–21 and 2 Timothy 3:16. Do you believe the writers of Scripture were inspired in their teaching just as much as the actual words they wrote were inspired? Why or why not? If you answered no, what difference do you see between them being inspired and their words being inspired?

MEMORIZE

Lead your group in memorizing 2 Timothy 3:16–17. Remind group members that memorizing God’s Word builds their strength to resist temptation and helps them make choices that please God.

OBSERVE

The key points to observe in this session are:

- We know that the Bible is inspired because:
 - it is from God;
 - early Christians believed that it was inspired;
 - the Bible is a diverse book but unified in its message; and
 - the Holy Spirit confirms that it is inspired in our hearts.
- God still speaks to us through the Bible.
- We must obey what God tells us through his Word.

PRACTICE

Ask the group, “What can you do this week to improve your practice of Bible reading, study, and memorization?” Encourage group members to put a plan into effect this week.

CLOSE

Consider bringing your session to a close by reading a Scripture passage in unison, such as Psalm 119:33–40. Before you dismiss, remind group members to pray for one another during the week.

WEEK 3

LIVE TO WORSHIP IN EVERYTHING



FOCUS

In this session, you will learn what worship is, why it is important for Christians, and some ways to worship. You'll review the history of worship and its theological foundations, and you'll discover why both public (corporate) and private (individual) worship are important.

Discovery: Worship is something that you do.

PREPARE

- Read week 3 of *A Foundation of Faith*.
- Study Psalm 150:1–6, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray for each member of your group by name.

Hint: Some group members enjoy doing small learning assignments. Consider enlisting a group member to interview three friends on the meaning of the word *worship* and share his or her findings as an introduction to this session.

CONNECT

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

Lead the group in prayer.

Hint: People love to be called by name. Greet each person by name as he or she arrives.

DISCOVER

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask the group members to circle (or point out) the words that suggest variety and intensity during worship.

Read Psalm 150:1–6 and John 4:24.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What methods of worship are included in the psalm?
- What does this psalm tell you about how you should worship God?
- How do people's preferences affect the way they worship?
- How can people avoid calling attention to themselves in public worship?
- How does the Holy Spirit make worship acceptable to God?
- How does "truth" make worship acceptable to God?
- How can we use instrumental music to praise God?

MEMORIZE

Lead your group in memorizing Psalm 150:6. Remind your group that before printed Bibles were common, all Christians relied on Scripture memorization to learn God's Word. Ask how much Scripture group members would be able to rely on if persecution deprived them of their Bibles.

OBSERVE

The key points to observe in this session are:

- It is important for God's people to worship publically (corporately or together) as well as privately.
- Worship styles may vary in intensity and activity.
- The five purposes of worship are to ascribe, align, acknowledge, admit, and admire (see pp. 59–61 of *A Foundation of Faith*).
- *Worship* is a verb as well as a noun. It is something we must do.

PRACTICE

Review the two approaches to personal worship found on pages 55–57 of *A Foundation of Faith*. Challenge your group members to spend fifteen minutes each day in worship and record their experiences to share next week.

CLOSE

Close this session by praying the Lord's Prayer together. Before you dismiss, encourage your group members to maintain a daily time of prayer and Bible reading.

WEEK 4

COMMIT TO THE FELLOWSHIP



FOCUS

John Wesley observed that there is no such thing as a solitary Christian. We really do need each other. This session helps believers see that the Christian life can't be lived in isolation. You'll learn why fellowship, the sacraments, and becoming part of a local church are important for the Christian life.

Discovery: Christians need the encouragement and support of one another.

PREPARE

- Read week 4 of *A Foundation of Faith*.
- Study Ephesians 2:2–6, 11–16, noting your insights.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts that you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need.
- Pray for your group members as they continue to grow in the faith.

Hint: Experience is a powerful learning tool. If circumstances permit, speak with your pastor about having the group attend a baptism or receive the Lord's Supper together as part of this session.

CONNECT

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

Lead the group in prayer.

DISCOVER

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, invite people to name something that is impossible to do alone. Point out that being a Christian is a team sport, since we depend on one another.

Read Ephesians 4:2–6, 11–16.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What do these verses tell you about the church?
- In what ways do these verses confirm or conflict with your ideas about the church?
- What role might you have in the body of Christ? What are you doing to fulfill it?
- How do these verses confirm the fact that Christians are a team with specific goals?
- Why do you agree or disagree that it takes effort to maintain church unity?
- What threats do you see to a local church's unity?
- How might you contribute to the unity of the church?

MEMORIZE

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

OBSERVE

The key points to observe in this session are:

- The Christian life is not a life of isolation, but a life of fellowship in the body of Christ.
- Baptism, Communion, local church involvement, and accountability all require interaction with people and cannot be done properly in isolation.
- Christians need each other for fellowship, encouragement, and assistance.
- The church is not perfect, but it is God's plan to impact the world.

PRACTICE

Ask your group members whether or not they have been baptized. Encourage those who have not to consider baptism. If all members of your group have been baptized, challenge them to consider becoming members of the local church.

CLOSE

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

WEEK 5

EMBRACE THE MYSTERY OF THE TRIUNE GOD



FOCUS

This session explores the Trinity. You will understand the concept that God is three in one by examining Scriptures and reviewing what the early church believed about God. You'll also discover how this concept affects your understanding of God and how to worship him.

Discovery: There is one God who exists in three distinct persons.

PREPARE

- Read week 5 of *A Foundation of Faith*.
- Study Matthew 3:13–17; 28:18–20; and 2 Corinthians 13:14, noting the ways each passage helps us understand the Trinity.
- Review the Observe section of this lesson to identify the concepts you will lead your group to discover.
- Choose an icebreaker.
- Select a teaching method that will help your group arrive at the discovery for this session.
- Pick a memory verse learning activity.
- Gather the materials you'll need. Consider using the chart on page 82 of *A Foundation of Faith* to review the concept of three in one with your group.
- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom for communicating his truth.

Hint: Everyone can use a little encouragement. E-mail, call, or text your group members during the week to tell them you appreciate their participation in this study.

CONNECT

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

Lead the group in prayer.

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

DISCOVER

Review the Scriptures for this session. The key verse is at the opening of the chapter. Before you begin, ask, “Does everything in the Bible have to appeal to our reason?” Point out that because God’s mind is much greater than ours, there are some things about him that are hard to understand.

Read Matthew 3:13–17; 28:18–20; and 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Ask group members to respond to these questions:

- What do these Scriptures tell you about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
- In what ways do these verses confirm or conflict with your ideas about who God is?
- How would you respond to someone who claims Jesus was just an exceptional human being?
- How would you respond to someone who claims Jesus was not a real, flesh-and-blood human being?
- Do you think a person can be a Christian if he or she denies the Trinity? Why or why not?

MEMORIZE

Lead your group in memorizing Matthew 28:19. Consider offering a gift (perhaps a Bible) to anyone who can recited all key verses from *A Foundation of Faith*.

OBSERVE

The key points to observe in this session are:

- The New Testament conveys the idea that God is three in one (the Trinity).
- The Old Testament also conveys the idea of the Trinity.
- The early church affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity.
- The Trinity is beyond human understanding, though we can accept the reality of it by faith.

PRACTICE

Ask group members to reflect on how they interact with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit over the next week and record their insights.

CLOSE

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