Introduction

I invite each one of you to join me as we begin to study 12 names of Jesus. He will be our teacher; He is the One who revealed Himself to us by using powerful metaphors. Jesus meets us where we were to help us understand what God the Father is like.

The disciple John recorded Jesus’ words as He used metaphors, parables, and stories to shed light on His character and purpose. Jesus knew that His message would be better understood by word pictures.

Studying Jesus of Nazareth, who walked the earth more than 2,000 years ago, is relevant today. His ancient truths have been preserved in an unusual way for a divine purpose. My own life has been so dramatically changed by the teachings of Jesus that I am genuinely excited to embark on this study with you. As women, each one of us faces daily challenges and sometimes seemingly insurmountable pressures. Expectations that others place on us and that we place on ourselves can leave us feeling inadequate and lacking in resources to meet increasing responsibilities. But I believe Jesus, in His loving way, is still calling each one of us to learn from Him. He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened down and I will give you rest … take my yoke upon you and learn from me” (Matthew 11:28-30).

In his paraphrase, Eugene Peterson writes Jesus’ words this way: “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill–fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (The Message).

I believe this is truly a matter of victory or defeat!

The power and authority that you and I both need to rise above the daily challenges of life come from God. As I yield to Him by faith and ask the Lord to teach me by the Holy Spirit, I can begin to take my stand in the authority and power of Christ. He is the One who saves me from my sin and self. He empowers me to resist the devil and step into the full life that He desires to give me. Jesus taught the disciples. At the same time, He was teaching you and me. He knew His words were for us as well.

So with great joy and with deep dependence on Christ, I call each of you to come along. I believe you are up for this. I appreciate a quote by Beth Moore, “The enemy of your soul will never have to worry about what kind of damage you could do the kingdom of darkness if he can get you to buy the lie that you’re incompetent, weak and inadequate” (So Long Insecurity, p.259).
Grab Your Camera and a Journal

So grab your camera and snap a picture of yourself or your group. If you can, find a new notebook or journal to use during this study. Paste the photo of you beginning this study in the front of the journal. This will serve as a nice reminder of how we began! Your participation in this study is not only for you but also, by accepting this invitation, you can join together with friends over a cup of coffee or tea to discuss what the Lord is teaching you.

Now let’s take a look at some snapshots that Jesus gave of Himself:

- I Am (John 8:48–59) | September
- Shepherd (John 10:11, 14) | October
- Bread (John 6:35, 48, 51) | November
- Light (John 8:12) | December
- Door (John 10:7, 9) | January
- Son of God (John 3:16–17) | February
- Vine (John 15:1–2) | March
- Resurrection (John 11:25) | April
- Way (John 14:6) | May
- Truth (John 14:6) | June
- Life (John 14:6) | July
- King of Kings (John 18:37) | August

Do any of the names of Jesus in the list stand out to you in a particular way today? Take a moment to reflect on this. If yes, briefly explain in the space provided. Take time to share this in your group.

What are you hoping God will do this year in our study?

_**Let’s come with expectation that God will touch our hearts in a new and fresh way.**_

Take a moment to write a prayer, expressing your heart to God.

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Lesson 1

**Who Do You Think You Are?**

Read: John 8:48–59

Object Lesson: A pile of large stones

Place a pile of rocks in your meeting place, and pass a rock around. Discuss what it might have been like for the people in the crowd to start throwing stones at Jesus. There was no question that they understood that Jesus was professing to be the “I AM.” He was challenging His audience and telling them that He was God. It was clear to the people listening that Jesus said He was “I AM.”

*A thought to consider*

According to John 8:59, the people were furious with Jesus, an expected response to blasphemy for anyone who would suggest equality with God. This same I AM appears in Exodus 3:14. Read this together. God speaks to Moses, “I AM who I AM”. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

In John 18:4–6 we see Jesus referring to Himself in the same way at the moment of His arrest. “Who is it you want?” When they replied that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth, He answered them, “I AM He.” The Bible tells us that they drew back and fell to the ground. Jesus knew who He was. When the moment came to show His authority, Jesus was very clear about who He was.

Was Jesus just a really nice guy?

Did you ever hear someone say that Jesus was just a good man who gave us a perfect example to follow?

Jesus professed to be I AM. If He only _thought_ He was, He was mistaken or even crazy. If Jesus _knew_ he was not God and
professed it, He would have been lying. Jesus not only lived out of His authority and pure love but also He appeared after His resurrection to the 11 disciples and others to show them that He truly had the power and authority to follow through on His promises. These eyewitness encounters ignited the disciples and their friends. Lit by the fire of the Holy Spirit, they were set into blaze with the life-giving message of hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or He was Lord of all. This argument dates earlier than C.S. Lewis, but he explains it well in his 1952 book *Mere Christianity*. Josh McDowell reiterates it again in his work *Evidence that Demands A Verdict* (1999), and Mark Mittleburg and Lee Strobel are current authors that have studied long and hard to dig into truth to show us that Jesus was, indeed, who He professed to be: the I AM. This lesson is foundational to our entire study.

We must build our faith on the ROCK. How do we do that? We must be brave enough to ask the hard questions. I often think of the man who brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus. He said to Jesus, “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

Jesus had created the very rocks the crowd had chosen to throw at him, rocks that could cry out to praise Him if He had chosen. What irony! Jesus, the very ROCK, cornerstone, and foundation of our faith is the focus of the rest of our study. He is the I AM. It all begins here.

**Discussions Questions**

1. Describe the scene when authorities came to arrest Jesus (John 18:4–6).
2. Why do you think they fell to the ground?
3. Is it important to you that Jesus professed to be I AM?
4. What would you say are the bedrock elements of your faith? What is at the deepest foundation of your beliefs about God? Draw some large rocks in your journal and label them with the bedrock beliefs that you feel are at the foundation of your faith.

**Memory Verse**

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58).

**Action Point**

Begin praying for someone you know who may not believe that Jesus is the I AM of God. Look for an opportunity to show an act of kindness to them. Continue praying for this person, asking God to show you how to love them as He does.

**Prayer Suggestion**

Lord Jesus, You taught us in your Word the foundation of truth that we would need to find You. Teach us to understand who You are and how we can have a solid foundation to our faith. Help us to love those who might not know You. We love You and worship You, Jesus, the I AM.

Amen.

**Read: John 10:1–33**

**Object Lesson:** Large walking stick

Place a large walking stick in your midst. Imagine Jesus, the Shepherd, walking with this stick. Where are the sheep? Is this image comforting? Psalm 23 tells us that the staff is a comforting image to the sheep. Perhaps when we are so busy leading, it is a reminder to us that we need to follow our Leader, the One who knows the way better than we do.

**A thought to consider**

Jesus describes a shepherd in John 10: “The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” Jesus personalized it: “I know my sheep and my sheep know Me.”
“My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow Me... no one can snatch them out of My hand.”

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

The story of the relationship of Jesus the Shepherd is the story that Jesus used to bring me into a relationship with Himself. I remember hearing this story for the first time on a summer night in 1968 at Vacation Bible School. The picture that the storyteller held up captivated me: Jesus, stretching out over the rocky cliff, was giving his life to reach and save the one lost lamb. (Luke 15:3-7)

I remember knowing that I was that lamb. I already knew that lying and stealing and being mean to the girl that lived in the house up the street was that part of me that I did not like. God allowed me to know that I was a sinner and that I needed a Savior.

What does John 1:10 say about recognizing Jesus? Jesus was not recognized by the world. Are we also guilty of not recognizing Him around us every day? Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear” spoke of lifting a veil from our eyes to help us see the truth. We need to ask God to help us discern His voice above all the other voices in our lives.

The idea of sheep following is a beautiful picture. I don’t picture them stressed or arguing but with full confidence, they follow the Shepherd. Why? Because they trust Him, and they know He has built that relationship leading them in the past to all they need.

Aishata was a beautiful Muslim Ivoirian woman I met in 1996 in Bouake, Cote D’Ivoire, through a missionary colleague of mine. Aishata told us that she had been having a reoccurring dream since childhood: a man in a long, white robe was carrying a lamb. She never understood this dream. While she was growing up, her relatives advised her to keep a white lamb as a good luck charm. I was able to tell her my story, and Aishata asked Jesus to be her Savior and good Shepherd (John 10:14). I love the way Jesus continues to call His sheep to Himself.

**Discussion Questions**

1. How do we discern the voice of God in our lives?
2. Read Psalm 23 and list in your journal the ways that the Lord, our Shepherd, cares for us as His sheep:
3. Look up Genesis 48:15. Who is making reference to the Shepherd as early as Genesis? What does he say about him?
4. What does 1 Peter 5:4 say about our Shepherd?

**Memory Verse**

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28).

**Action Point**

Let’s make a special effort to ask God to help us to listen and discern His voice as our Shepherd. Make a note in your journal when you sense that God is leading you and giving you discernment.

**Prayer Suggestion**

May the great Shepherd equip us with everything good for doing His will. May He work in us what is pleasing to Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen

**Lesson 3 Bread**

**Read: John 6: 35-58**

**Object Lesson:** A loaf of homemade bread

Bake a loaf of bread. If you are in a home or church where there is an oven, why not make it into part of your time together? While it is baking, do the lesson and finish your time of study by breaking the bread together.

**A thought to consider:** Jesus is the Bread that does not disappoint. I don’t know about you, but I go into
every recipe thinking it’s going to be amazing. I think I would enjoy cooking more if I didn’t get my expectations up there so high. My eternal optimism can be a handicap, because I expect it to look perfect, taste perfect, and make everyone so happy that they want to hug and kiss me.

Paul reminds us that the hope we have in the Lord does “not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:5).

Listen to His words: “I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).

This morning, I awoke to this amazing thought: I prepare a table for you as your shepherd, but I am also the Bread. WOW! Jesus has something so special for us in this study. He is reminding me that He is both the Preparer of the meal and the Bread. He is the Host and the Meal!! I began to think through our topics, and I see a new truth I have never seen before. I truly believe God woke me up this morning to tell me a secret for YOU!

He is the Shepherd who leads His sheep to water and at the same time the Water.
He prepares a table before us and is at the same time the Bread we eat.
Is it any wonder that Jesus is at the same time the Beginning and the End?
He can be the Shepherd to lead us and at the same time the Lamb of God who died as our sacrifice.

Jesus, You are so beautiful. Your truth is sweet in our mouths and in our hearts.
“Oh, Taste and see that the Lord is Good” (Psalm 34:8)

Discussion Questions
1. Read Psalm 119:103 and Revelation 10:10. Discuss why God says His promises are sweet.
2. Discuss how Jesus satisfies us in ways that no one else can.
3. Discuss the dichotomies in Scripture. (A dichotomy is when something seems to have contradictory qualities yet sheds light in two perspectives.) Brainstorm together ways that Jesus is Host and Meal, Shepherd and Lamb, Path and Light etc...

Memory Verse
“Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).

Action Point
Make two loaves of bread. Take one to a neighbor. Make a special effort to visit a neighbor who may be from another country. Share your bread and its recipe. Show them what the love of Jesus looks and tastes like. Serve the other one to your family and enjoy the delicious gift that God has given you as women to nurture those that God has placed in your life.
Encourage women in your group to share their favorite bread recipes with each other.

Prayer Suggestion
Bread of Life, You are my Source of nourishment. Why do I look so many other places to be satisfied? Come and heal my broken soul and help me to hunger for YOU that I might be truly satisfied. Thank you, Jesus, for all the ways that You have already satisfied me and filled my life with YOURSELF and so many blessings. May I respond to you in total gratitude! Thank you for GIVING us our daily bread and for BEING our daily Bread. Help us to eat and be satisfied and to in turn serve this Bread of Life to those around us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Read: John 8:12

Object Lesson: A lantern or a large, white candle. Place the light in the middle of your meeting area. Light it just
before reading the Scripture. Discuss the properties of light from a fire. What are other sources of light? Use large poster paper to write different positive attributes and contributions of light (seeing, warmth, beauty, comforting glow, illuminating brings out colors, details, protection when moving about in the dark, etc.)

A thought to consider

Imagine what it must have been like for the disciples as they followed Jesus and heard His teaching. He told them that He was the Light of the world (John 8:12) and soon after told them that they were the light of the world (Matthew 5:14–16). Was this a contradiction? Absolutely not! Once again, we see Jesus giving another perspective on the same truth. Perhaps this is one reason that the Old Testament writer reminded us, “Do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

God knew that we would not be able to fully understand His eternal nature, but Jesus painted word pictures to help us.

Let’s go back and look at the properties and advantages of light that we listed in the object lesson. Do these also apply to Jesus as the Light?

In John 8, we see Jesus at dawn, teaching in the temple. They brought the woman who was caught in adultery to him. Read John 8:1–11. Did you notice that it was the older ones who began to walk away first when Jesus said the one without sin should cast the first stone? In the passing of years, perhaps they gained the wisdom to know that they, too, were sinners needing the Savior. Jesus sheds lights. Jesus IS light.

Jesus shines His search light on our hearts and our longings. They are visible to Him and to us as we get to know Him. “All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you” (Psalm 38:9). We may not want to see into our hearts, but as Jesus shines His light into the darkness of our own soul, He is able to show us our need of Him, and He alone can set us free.

Probably one of the most powerful Scriptures referring to Jesus as the Light is a prophecy written 700 years before Jesus was even born. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress ... The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:1–2).

During December, most activities center around celebrations of Jesus’ birth. Some people are trying to survive the holiday season as they grieve the loss of precious loved ones. The true essence of the season is HOPE in the darkness. NO MORE GLOOM for those in distress. May Jesus shine into our darkness and dispel the darkness with His pure, healing light.

Discussion Question

What are some of the prophecies of Jesus that pointed to His birth before He came. Brainstorm together.

(Hint: Here are some places to look)

- Genesis 3:15
- Genesis 22:18
- Genesis 49:10
- Isaiah 9:6
- Daniel 9:25
- Isaiah 11:1
- Micah 5:2

Memory Verse

“When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, ‘I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12).

Action Point

Set aside some extra time to prepare spiritually for your Christmas celebration. Make this a priority. As you prepare your calendars, homes, gifts, and menus, make a spiritual plan. Share in your group some ideas for a more spiritual holiday. Make a spiritual action plan for the holidays to keep Jesus shining His light in and through you as you reflect His love and grace to those around you.

Prayer Suggestion

Jesus, Light of the World, Thank you for coming to penetrate Your light into the darkness and hopelessness of this world. We praise You and ask that You shine that same light into our very souls; shed Your light on any unforgiveness or bitterness that is keeping us from the joy and peace that You desire to give us. We invite You to shine in and through us. Amen.
Read: John 10:7-9

Object Lesson: A door with a knob (or a picture of one)

Brainstorm together about why Jesus may have said, “I am the Door.” Record these responses in your journal. (If space is available, write responses around the image of the door in the study, or cut out a picture of a door and paste it in your journal.)

A thought to consider

Welcome to a new year! It is a privilege to be in this study with you. I am praying that as we continue to look at the metaphors that Jesus gave us about Himself, we will be even more prepared to face the challenges of 2015.

In John 10, Jesus is teaching His followers about what a relationship with Him would be like for generations to come. He says to them, “I am the door of the sheep pen.” As they listened to Him, I imagine that there may likely have been sheep running around. I can picture this well from my years of living in West Africa. On many Sundays while we were singing about the Lamb of God in Jula, “Ala Sagaden,” we could hear the sheep outside the window bleating.

For His audience, it was not hard to imagine the door of the sheep pen and the importance of it for protecting the sheep. The door is emphasized clearly in relationship to both protection and access.

The Bible says that we have access to God through this one door—Jesus. The truth is that it is for anyone who believes and repents! Many people today want to question this truth. “Can’t we just say that Jesus is just one way? Do we have to be so intolerant of other belief systems?”

This is not a new argument! In the Book of Acts, we find Peter in the first century A. D., preaching in Jerusalem. He states clearly to the religious experts of the day: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The Bible says that Jesus is not only the door but also He is standing at the door of our hearts, and only we can open the door.

Jesus’ words are recorded in Revelation 3:20. “Here I AM! I stand at the _______ and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will _________________ and _______________ with him and he with Me.”

The truth that Jesus is not willing that any should perish (Matthew 18:14) is very clear in Scripture. He is inviting all of mankind into a relationship with God. He wants to come in and “eat” with us. I love the thought of Jesus sitting at my table and eating food that I had prepared for Him.

Discussion
1. Read aloud and put these verses into your own words:
   - Romans 5:1–2
   - Ephesians 2:18
   - Hebrews 4:14–16
   - Hebrews 10:19–22
2. Remember Jesus said that He became the door to protect from thieves and robbers (John 10:8). Who do you think are the thieves and robbers that steal and kill?
3. Imagine if Jesus came for lunch today at your house? What would you talk to Him about?
   (Remember that you can talk to Him about all that concerns you! I Peter 5:7 promises this.)

Memory Verse
“I am the door”. Whoever enters through Me will be saved, He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:9–10).
(“also translated “gate”)
Action Point
What area of your life do you sense that Jesus may be asking for new access? Are there doors that you are withholding from Him? Ask Him to help you begin this year with transparency. No shame. No guilt. He is your loving Father who wants to set you free. We have this access through Jesus.

Prayer Suggestion
Dear Father, We are so grateful that we have access to you through the Lord Jesus! We are reminded that we can come boldly to you, confident in Him. We can talk to you freely and trust you with every area of our lives. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you laid down your life to protect us and to give us access to the Father. Help us in our weakness to understand the power of opening up our lives to you. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Reading the principle passage: John 10:34–42; Hebrews 1:3

Object Lesson: An envelope with a letter inside:

Dear Son,
I am so pleased with you.
Love, Father

You may be wondering why an object lesson? Our project emphasis this year encourages storytelling and the orality of the gospel. As you hold up each object, it can enhance the storytelling of the lesson.

Today’s object is to set the tone. Ask the group if they know why this object goes with our lesson.

Hint: Mark 1:9–11 The baptism of Jesus was a time that God the Father communicated His love and pleasure of His Son. Let’s explore that relationship in today’s lesson on Jesus: Son of God.

A thought to consider:
Jesus knew who His Father was. We don’t know the exact moment that Jesus knew WHO He was, but the earliest record of Jesus’ words at age 12 in the temple record Him telling his parents that He “had to be in his Father’s house” (Luke 2:49).
Jesus, the Son of God is by far the most challenging point to share with a Muslim background person. There are many points that we may have in common—Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Mary as mother of Jesus, even Jesus’ Second Coming—but the fact that Jesus is the Son of God is the strongest point of disagreement.

In the gospels, Jesus clearly professes to be the Son of God. Concepts of the Trinity seem complex, but let’s see what the Bible says about Jesus as the Son of God and consider the Father/Son relationship that we see in Scripture. It is important to understand that Jesus professed being the Son of God. Scripture helps us solidify our foundation of understanding in Jesus, Son of God.

Salvation cost God the life of His Son (Romans 5:8). The miraculous virgin birth allowed Jesus to be born supernaturally and to bear the traits of His Heavenly Father. Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen my Father” (Matthew 14:9). Some of the greatest mysteries in Scripture are the subjects of Jesus’ own stories. Jesus carefully wove His Father’s love for Him into the story He told about the owner of the vineyard sending his servants to warn the tenants and finally sending His own son (Mark 12:1–11). Jesus explains that, “He had one left to send, a son whom he loved. He sent him last of all saying that they will respect my son.” When we think of Jesus telling this story, we gain insight into what Jesus knew about His relationship to the Father. Out of that relationship also came Jesus’ total obedience. He finished the story, “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir, Come, let’s kill him ... So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.”

Jesus, Beloved Son of God, came to earth in obedience to His Father to be our Savior. We can praise Him for this incredible relationship that extended to us. Into this family we have been adopted as heirs with Jesus!
Discussion Questions:
(If possible, divide your group into four smaller groups. Each group can read one of the passages and answer the two principle questions to share with the larger group.)
Key passages to consider regarding Jesus as the Son of God:
• Matthew 11: 25-30
• Matthew 16:13-20
• Mark 1:9-11
• Colossians 1:15-20

Principle Questions:
1. What does Scripture reveal about the relationship of Jesus and the Father? What words would you use to describe it?
2. In your passage, is it clear that Jesus is the Son of God? Explain your answer.

(Which Scripture passage does the object lesson come from?) Answer: Mark 1:9–11

Memory Verse: "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.'" (Matthew 16:16-17).

Action Point:
• Make a point to communicate your love and pleasure to a family member.
• Ask God for an opportunity to share with someone the verses about Jesus being the Son of God.

Prayer Suggestion: Jesus, Son of God, thank you for your obedience to your Father, even to the point of death for me. Enable me to fully embrace the magnitude of your love for me. Thank you for adopting me into your family. In your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Lesson 7
I am the Vine

Reading the principle passage: John 15:1–17

Object Lesson: A cluster of fresh grapes. Pass around the cluster of grapes; pull grapes off and eat them. Use as many of senses as possible to connect to Jesus’ lesson.

A thought to consider:
Jesus, our master Teacher, sat with His beloved friends, knowing that He was hours away from being torn out of their lives. In John 15, Jesus uses this vivid and meaningful metaphor to say, “I will continue to be with you and nourish you and sustain you, even when I am gone, If you abide in me.” Perhaps He was passing a cluster of grapes around as he spoke to them.

This mysterious, wonderful truth was not only for first-century, sandal-clad, chosen followers but also for Jesus followers through all generations. That’s you and me!

Trust and abiding seem to go hand in hand. In my daily life, if I am able to trust God consistently with the little things of my life, they seem to have less of a grip on me. He is able to nourish us and be our Source of strength and peace.

Once when I was fretting with the Lord about not being a homeowner, I felt that He stopped me in my tracks. In the quietness of my thoughts, I felt rebuked by the Lord as I sensed He was saying that He is my home. A thought came to me as if He was whispering truth into my mind. “I am your front door, your back door; I am your sidewalk. I am your mailbox. I am your fireplace. If you are at home in me then you are ready for heaven, because I will be your eternal home.”

Perhaps this is what the psalmist felt when he wrote, “I will dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:4).

Dwelling or abiding in the Vine is making our home in Him and pulling all our nourishment from Him. He is the Source of wisdom, peace, guidance, and love.
“All my fountains are in You,” the psalmist said in Psalm 87:7. He is the unending Source of all that we need.

“The Lord is my portion.” (Psalm 73:26 and Lamentations 3:24)

Pass the grapes.

Whatever you may be facing today, take some time to share with your friends in this study what you need from God. He is your Source and your Keeper. He is the Vine; apart from Him we can do nothing.

Sometimes in our greatest times of loss, we gain a new capacity to receive from the Lord. As we are emptied, we long to be filled by something greater. Perhaps much later, those times of pain will become sacred to us, as we see how God cared for us even when we could not care for ourselves.

**Discussion Questions:**

Take some time right now to discuss what it means to “abide” in Christ as a cluster of grapes “abide” on a vine. Feel free to look back over John 15.

Discuss the difference between branches connected to the vine and those cut off.

- Look up the following verses to find parallel insights into an abiding relationship with God the Father:
  1. Psalm 27:4
  2. Matthew 7:16–20
  3. Acts 17:28

Look up the Scriptures and consider writing in your journal about insights on abiding. Share them with each other.

**Memory Verse:** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit: apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5).

**Action Point:** Make a list of activities that you are involved in right now. Take a few quiet minutes on your own to pray over the list. Reflect on whether or not you are relying on God for His strength and creativity, trusting in Him with each activity. Commit your activities to God for His glory.

**Prayer Suggestion:** Oh dear Father, Giver of Life, forgive us for striving so hard without first yielding and trusting you. You are the true Vine, Lord Jesus; I want to abide in You. Fill me today and renew my life. Apart from you I can produce no good fruit in my life. Lord, I want each day to count for you, in the glorious and powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

Reading the principle passage: Take the time to read John 11:1–44.

Object Lesson: A potted spring plant that has a bud ready to open (or a photo of one).

Look at the promising flower. The evidence of the “hope” of the oncoming flowers is a reminder that we have hope of new life in the resurrection and is a good back drop for Jesus’ next story.

A thought to consider:

God keeps His promises. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). His audience was grieving for Lazarus. The putrid, rotting smell of death was already there. It looked hopeless, because Lazarus had been dead for four days. Jesus had another plan. He already knew about the Resurrection when He lifted his head to heaven and talked to the Father.

Jesus said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me” (John 11:41).

This moment was not only important to Mary, Martha, and those watching but also an important moment for Jesus and His Father. The ancient, powerful truth of the Resurrection was about to be displayed for all to see.
Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43). Scripture is so vivid as it describes Lazarus walking out with “his hands and feet wrapped with strips and a cloth around his face.” What a picture!

I love what the disciple Peter wrote about Jesus sometime later. “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24).

When I first arrived in Cote d’Ivoire in 1991, I was expecting our second child. We were coming from a year of French language study to a completely Jula-speaking neighborhood in Bouake. I gave birth early, and our son, Samuel James, lived only through the night. When I awoke, I thought that the ordeal was over and everything would be ok.

When my husband came in to tell me that our baby boy had died, it felt like a dark cloud rolled in over me, and I didn’t know how to get out of it. The pain that I felt was overwhelming. I cried out to God as a regular part of my day, asking Him for a miracle.

One day, my Muslim neighbor told me that I had beautiful feet. I felt embarrassed that her feet represented a harder life and mine looked pampered. We laughed, and I thanked her, but it brought to mind the Scripture “How beautiful are the feet that bring good news” (Isaiah 52:7).

Just before this encounter I was beginning to think the idea of missions was ineffective; I felt completely unable to get out of my grief, and my language was limited to a few phrases. Emotionally I felt paralyzed. I believe at that moment Jesus was calling me out of my grave! “Amy, come out!”

I called out to God for help: “My life is a mess. I don’t know how to do this. Please, God, I want to bring good news to my neighbors. Please help me.”

I remember the first big break in the dark feelings. With a knock at my gate, about 30 Ivoirian women filled my house and began to sing, clap, and sway to the music. After a few songs in Jula, the oldest women stood up and “gave the words.” My husband translated for me; Jula was his childhood language growing up in West Africa.


“Your son came. He didn’t stay. So sorry, so sorry. May God calm your heart. May God help you. Don’t stay in your grief. Don’t be afraid. God will help you.”

On that day, the healing began.

Samuel James would be 23 this month. However, our lives were changed forever. For the first time, the truth of the resurrection became critically important to me, and I experienced God’s ability to bring me back to life. I believe that His Word is able to renew our minds even in their most broken state. The Word of God brings life and health.

He is able to restore us and make us strong, firm, and steadfast as He has promised.

**Discussion Questions:**
Ask for volunteers to share how God has restored them.

Match the six promises below with their references and discuss them:

| Isaiah 58:10–11 | Isaiah 41:10 |
| Psalm 147:3     | Deuteronomy 31:6 |
| Ephesians 1:18–23 | Psalm 29:11 |

- He will heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds.
- He will strengthen you. He will help you. He will uphold you.
- He will make us like a well-watered garden in a sun-scorched land.
- He will never leave us or forsake us.
- He will bless his people with strength. The LORD will bless his people with peace.
- This same power that raised Jesus from the dead is able to work in us.

**Memory Verse:**
Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25).

**Action Point:**
With Easter celebration this month, let’s ask God to give us opportunities to communicate the hope of Jesus’ Resurrection with someone who may not understand it.
Reading the principle passage: John 14
Concentrate on John 14. As you read Jesus’ words, remember that Jesus was eating His last supper with the disciples. Jesus had already washed their feet, and Judas had already left them. This intimate conversation was Jesus sharing His most important thoughts with His friends before He left them.

Object Lesson: a map or GPS
As you hold the map or GPS, discuss the feeling of being lost. Perhaps someone in the group would like to share a time when they got lost and a map, or GPS, or stranger helped them find their way. Make a connection to Jesus being the Way and the ways that He leads us.

A thought to consider:
Imagine for one moment a simple timeline of history. For many Americans, it might look like this:

- Mesopotamian earliest civilizations
- The pyramids in Egypt
- Period of knights, castles, and conquests
- Age of world explorers
- American pilgrims
- Frontier
- Age of inventors
- World Wars
- Man on the moon

(You can discuss in your group what you would like to add to subtract to make a more complete timeline. Feel free to make a timeline of your own in your journal.)

Now go back and put a star where you would put this conversation that Jesus had with His disciples.

Let’s take a moment and think about the impact of Jesus’ life and words.

According to the Bible, Jesus, being God, knew the world before time as we know it began (Colossians 1:16-17). Jesus knew the times and events of history still to come and with full confidence, He told His disciples, “I am the Way.”

The thread of searching, exploring, and inventing already had begun. Creator God built into us the ability to be curious, to problem-solve, and to look beyond to new frontiers. He gave us the capacity to unravel even complex mysteries. But then God, in His infinite wisdom and love, asked us to follow by faith.

Jesus said, “I am going to prepare a place for you, and I will come back.” Bible scholars tell us that this idea of the Hebrew fiancé going to prepare a home and coming back for the bride could be tucked in here. Check out the Greek word, “perusia” if you are curious.

Jesus did not say that He was A way but that He was THE Way. He went on to tell them, “NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME” (John 14:6).

This concept is underscored by Peter when, full of the Holy Spirit, he boldly spoke. “God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Salvation is found in NO ONE ELSE, for there is NO OTHER NAME under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 2:32, 4:12).

Jesus told his disciples that He was the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE just hours before He was arrested and taken from them.
He left them with this powerful truth and through the Holy Spirit, John was able to record these words for us. Over 2,000 years later, with the passing of so many generations and global historical events, Jesus is still THE WAY to the Father by faith.

**Discussion Questions:**
1. What part of John 14 speaks the most to you?
2. Is Jesus being the "only way" a narrow-minded perspective? Talk about this together, asking God to give wisdom. (For more information on this topic, check out Mark Middleburg’s book *Choosing Your Faith: In a World of Spiritual Options* (2008))

**Memory Verse:** “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

**Action Point:** Share your faith with one person this month who may not believe in Jesus as the Way to the Father. Ask God to help you and trust in Him for the words. Speak the truth in love with respect and believe God for the outcomes.

**Prayer Suggestion:** Dear Jesus, In a world with so many voices, offerings, and paths, teach us your ancient and timeless truth. You are the Way, and we follow you. You have gone ahead to prepare the way for us, and you are also our ultimate destination. We love You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

**Reading the principle passage:**
John 14:6 “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

John 8:32,36 “If you hold on to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free...So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Ephesians 4:14–15 “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

**Object Lesson:** A magnifying glass and a mask

As you pass around a magnifying glass, remember that we can see things better as they become clear. Notice the difference magnification makes. When God reveals truth to us, He opens our understanding to help us “see” more clearly. Today, we will be reminded that the truth will set us free.

Slip a small mask over your eyes; notice the difference it makes. (You can find a small mask at a party store or find one online and print it.) Covering part of our face also hides the details that help us to recognize each other. Talk about how we wear masks in our everyday lives. Discuss why we wear masks with each other. How can the love and truth of Jesus help us to remove our masks and live more honestly with each other.

**A thought to consider:** It is recorded 78 times in the New Testament that Jesus started His sentence with: “I tell you the truth ... ”

Here are a few examples to read together:
1. Matthew 5:18
2. Mark 10:29–31
4. John 5:24

Jesus spoke truth. His presence revealed truth, and He is the TRUTH. There was nothing false about Jesus. The pure life and absolute truth of God was complete in Him. The Word of God has this purifying effect on us. Anything inconsistent, distorted and corrupted by sin and the philosophies of this world can be revealed as we get closer and closer to Jesus, the TRUTH.
As we come into the summer months, we now have the chance to race to get everything done that we have been putting off. We may have opportunities to travel and be reunited with family and friends. However, let’s take time to quiet our hearts before God and allow Jesus to speak His truth to us, about us, and about Him. Let’s truly take time to smell the roses!

As our thoughts are focused on His truth, we also will be free to tell ourselves the truth. It will set us free! The greatest hindrance to truth is fear. Jesus’ perfect love casts out all fear.

**Discussion Questions/Journal time:**
Which one of the truths above speaks to your heart today? Share it with your group.

How do you feel about the idea of wearing a mask? Do you think that we wear masks? What is the value and or risk of removing our masks?

Do we have greater potential to feel love if we are truly honest with others? Why or why not?

**Memory Verse:**
John 8:32 “If you hold on to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

**Action Point:**
If you have time, provide a blank mask for each one in your group. Design your mask on the outside the way others may see you, using words, colors, or symbols as you like. Design the way you see yourself on the inside of your mask. If time allows, share with the other group members, and pray for each other.

**Prayer Suggestion:**
“Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long” (Psalm 25:4–5).

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24).

**Read the principle passages:**
John 11:25–26 “I am the resurrection and the LIFE. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the LIFE. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

**Object Lesson:** A bouquet of fresh flowers
Place the flowers in the middle of your study area. (If you want to contrast this at first with a bouquet of wilted flowers this could be a powerful visual lesson.) Ask group members to use words to describe the flowers. Write these words like fresh, colorful, beautiful, lively, and inspiring on a large poster board. Make a connection to our lives when Jesus refreshes us, taking our sin away and renewing our perspective and relationship with Him. Look back over the list. Do you see a connection?

Jesus brings LIFE!

**A thought to consider:**
If you are continuing on in this study you are to be congratulated! We have spent nearly a year together, learning from Jesus and His teachings. Great Commission Women are very dear to my heart. After 20 years of being supported by Alliance Women during while working in Africa, I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to share in this study with you.

As I have prayed through this study I felt that one way for me to encourage you in the Word of God is to disclose how God has made His Word alive to me in my own life. So please bear with me one last time as I share one more piece of my life story with you.
Death seemed inevitable when I felt the end of the gun at my head. I never thought that my life would end like this. It was late afternoon on August 7, 2001. My children and I were eating a light supper in a Lebanese sandwich shop in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire. Five gunmen decided to take me as their hostage, and before I knew it, we were racing down the road in a stolen car.

This was during a time when my husband and I were finally seeing our dreams come true in our work. As God enabled us, we saw more than 20 Ivoirian people pray to receive Jesus and be baptized, being discipled in the Word of God. After 10 years of working there, we were celebrating the life changes that we were beginning to see. Was this the end?

I was stunned when the kidnappers began hitting me with their pistols on the head and slapping me. The Lord was very merciful to me in this situation; after about two hours, the men released me in a dark field. They had used me at gunpoint to rob our mission and, for some reason, decided to drop me off.

As I was recuperating from this event, I was asking God how these events fit in with His promises to keep me from harm. In a new way, I began to see that He is the keeper of my soul. Even if the bullet would have gone through my head, my soul is safe forever with God. Nothing can separate me from Him. My life is hidden with Christ in God.

Jesus said that He came to give us LIFE and LIFE at its FULLEST. I believe as we spend time with Him, we can take on His perspectives about life and His priorities.

The apostle Paul is one person in Scripture that experienced a true life renovation. His life as the man Saul was characterized by violence, arrogance, and religiosity. When he encounters Jesus in Acts 9, Paul’s life changes dramatically! He writes this: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20–21).

It cost Jesus His earthly life to give us eternal life. Jesus took on death for us and He won! The disciple John explains it this way: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has LIFE, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (I John 5:11–12).

True LIFE is found in Jesus, Author and Sustainer, Keeper and Savior. Let’s reach out to Him in a fresh and renewed way to be filled with His LIFE.

**Discussion Questions/Journal time:**

How does Jesus give life to the full? (John 10:10)
What are the obstacles that keep us from experiencing Jesus’ life in us?

**Memory Verse:** John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have LIFE, and have it to the full.”

**Action Point:**
Take time to pray that the obstacles to real LIFE in Jesus would be removed. Look for one practical thing you can do this week to encourage someone who may be struggling. Take time to pray with them; share the Word of God with them.

**Prayer Suggestion:** Dear Lord Jesus, Thank you for giving us LIFE by laying down your own life on earth.
Renew us Lord in our everyday lives by your Spirit to live an abundant life that is full of love, joy and peace. We pray in Your holy name. Amen.

**Reading the principle passages:**
Revelation 17:14 “They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is the Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Revelation 19:16 “On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

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**Lesson 12**
**Jesus - King of Kings**

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**Object Lesson:** A picture of a throne and or a purple cloth

If possible this visual image of royalty helps set the tone for today’s lesson. Brainstorm together; what comes to mind when we think of royalty, e.g. authority, power, honor, worship. Allow time to imagine the throne of Heaven and the honor and glory that is restored to Jesus there. (Feel free to read Revelation 19:1-9 for more ideas.)

**A thought to consider:** Jesus has taught us from multiple sides of the same truth. He is the Bread and the Host of the meal that He prepares for us. He is the Shepherd and the Lamb of God. He is the Door and yet stands at the door knocking, inviting us into relationship with Him. I believe that because He is God, the Beginning and the End, He is able to speak truth in multiple dimensions at the same time.

Today I end this study with this thought:
**The Storyteller of the Kingdom is also the KING of All!**

In the Book of Matthew, Jesus makes more than 50 references to the “kingdom of heaven.” Here a few:
- The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed (Matt. 13:31).
- The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field (Matt. 13:44).
- The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls (Matt.13:45).

In West Africa, the lowest cast is the griot, or storyteller, who travels around and tells the stories and sings the songs at weddings and funerals. Although a very important part of the culture, for some reason, the griot is the least respected in many ways. However, we see here in Scripture that Jesus humbled himself and became the storyteller of the kingdom, knowing all along that HE, HIMSELF, was and is the KING of KINGS. He used storytelling as a way of teaching. That is what we have tried to maintain throughout this study with the use of object lessons. Storytelling is a great way to follow Jesus’ example and tell the stories of JESUS that give life and truth.

Scripture is rich with imagery of Jesus as KING. (Feel free to look up and read these verses aloud in Revelation 5:1-14)
- Jesus is the only one WORTHY to open the scroll. 
- Jesus purchased men and women for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.
- Jesus is Worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing.

Let’s also remember that:
- He will reign forever. (Rev. 11:15)
- He will throw Satan down and conquer ( Rev. 12:9–10, 17:12–14)
- He will strike the nations ( Rev. 19:11–16).

**He is the KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS and deserves all of our worship.**

“Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the Ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (Revelation 15:3–4).

Our King is the Healer and the Restorer of all things!

**Discussion Questions:** Look back over the list of “Kingdom of Heaven” references and discuss what Jesus’ analogies may have been teaching us about the kingdom.

**Memory Verse:** John 18:37

“‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’”

**Action Point:**
As you conclude your time today, review your memory verses and the notes from your study to remind yourself of what you have learned about Jesus. Write a prayer of your own to express what is in your heart to the Lord Jesus.

**Prayer Suggestion:**
Our hearts are filled with praise for all the ways you have revealed your truth to us through your precious Word this year. Reign in our hearts, O KING OF KINGS. We look forward to the day we will with you in Heaven. Until then, we pray that your KINGDOM will come in our hearts and your will be done on earth as it already is in Heaven. “Now to the KING ETERNAL, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (I Timothy 1:17).