

# JESUS

*The God Who Knows  
Your Name*

STUDY GUIDE | SIX SESSIONS

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON  
Since 1798

*Jesus Study Guide*

© 2019 by Max Lucado

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Published in association with Anvil II Management, Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1994, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked AMP are taken from The Amplified Bible. Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 90631. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from The Message. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Scripture quotations marked NCV are taken from the New Century Version®. Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are taken from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Thomas Nelson titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fundraising, or sales promotional use. For information, e-mail [SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com](mailto:SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com).

ISBN 978-0-310-10583-1 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-10584-8 (ebook)

First Printing November 2019 / Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

A WORD FROM MAX LUCADO.....	5
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE.....	7
SESSION 1 GOD WITH US .....	9
SESSION 2 FRIEND OF SINNERS.....	33
SESSION 3 COMPASSIONATE PHYSICIAN.....	57
SESSION 4 GREAT TEACHER.....	79
SESSION 5 MIRACLE WORKER.....	101
SESSION 6 VICTORIOUS SACRIFICE.....	123
LEADER'S GUIDE.....	145



## A WORD FROM MAX LUCADO

Are you open to the idea of a Father, a heavenly Father, who knows you? A soon-to-be home that awaits you? Would you consider this life-changing idea: the all-mighty and all-knowing God has set his affection on you? Every detail about you he knows. Your interests, your hang-ups. Your fears and failures. He knows you.

About his children God says, “The LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought” (1 Chronicles 28:9).

He regards you as “the apple of his eye” (Zechariah 2:8).

He can “empathize with our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15).

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,” King David wrote, “You knew my path” (Psalm 142:3 NKJV).

“He knows the way that I take,” declared Job (Job 23:10).

Do you know this God who knows you? He knows your name. And he can’t wait to get you home. This is the ever-recurring, soul-lifting message of heaven.

“The LORD delights in you” (Isaiah 62:4 NKJV).

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine” (Isaiah 43:1 NKJV).

“I have written your name on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16 NLT).

## JESUS

“The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy” (Psalm 147:11 NKJV).

“The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand” (Psalm 37:23–24 NLT).

Do such words surprise you? Where did we get this idea of a God who does not care, who is not near? We certainly didn’t get it from Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of God. Want to know how God feels about the sick? Look at Jesus. What angers God? Look at Jesus. Does God ever give up on people? Does he stand up for people? Find the answer in Jesus. “The Son is the radiance and only expression of the glory of [our awesome] God . . . and the exact representation and perfect imprint of His [Father’s] essence” (Hebrews 1:3 AMP).

The purpose of this study is simple: *to get to know Jesus*. You will study who Jesus was while he walked on this earth and what that means for your life today. In doing this, you will get to know God, his purpose for you, and his love for you like you never have before.

The Son is the radiance of his Father. Are you ready to meet him?

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The *Jesus Video Study* is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any small group gathering. Each session begins with a brief opening reflection and questions to get you and your group thinking about the topic. You will then watch a video with Max Lucado and jump into some directed small-group discussion. You will close each session with a time of prayer as a group. Each person should have his or her own study guide, which includes video teaching notes, group discussion questions, and between-sessions personal studies to help you apply the material to your life during the week.

To get the most out of your group experience, keep the following points in mind. First, the real growth in this study will happen during your small-group time. This is where you will process the content of the teaching, ask questions, and learn from others as you hear what God is doing in their lives. For this reason, it is important for you to be fully committed to the group and attend each session so you can build trust and rapport with the other members. If you choose to only “go through the motions,” or if you refrain from participating, there is a lesser chance you will find what you’re looking for during this study.

## JESUS

Second, remember the goal of your small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build intimacy and friendship. For this reason, seek to make your group a “safe place.” This means being honest about your thoughts and feelings and listening carefully to everyone else’s opinion. (**Note:** *If you are a group leader, there are additional instructions and resources in the back of the book for leading a productive discussion group.*)

Third, resist the temptation to “fix” a problem someone might be having or to correct his or her theology, as that’s not the purpose of your small-group time. Also, keep everything your group shares confidential. This will foster a rewarding sense of community in your group and create a place where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

Following your group time, maximize the impact of the course with the additional between-session studies. For each session, you may wish to complete the personal study all in one sitting or spread it out over a few days (for example, working on it a half hour a day on three different days that week). Note that if you are unable to finish (or even start!) your between-sessions personal study, you should still attend the group study video session. You are still wanted and welcome at the group even if you don’t have your “homework” done.

Keep in mind the videos, discussions, and activities are simply meant to kick-start your imagination so you are not only open to what God wants you to hear but also how to apply it to your life. So be watching for what God is saying to you as you and your group go through this study on the birth, ministry, healings, teachings, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus. Remember that he is “the God who sees” (Genesis 16:13) . . . and that he knows your name.



---

---

S E S S I O N   O N E

---

---

# GOD WITH US

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

JOHN 1:1-5, 14

## OPENING REFLECTION

---

---

When you were a child, what did you think clouds were made of? Cotton? Pillows? Something springy and soft? When you're young, it's hard to wrap your mind around the idea of air, ice particles, and liquid coming together to form a mass that—were you to touch it—would feel like nothing. To understand the concept of a cloud, it helps to initially put substance around it.

The concept of God can be equally difficult to wrap our minds around, even as adults. He is everywhere. He is outside of time. He is on the earth, but he is outside the earth. What does he look like, exactly? Where does he dwell, exactly? Is he up or down? East or west?

Jesus came to earth as the first tangible presence of God. Paul writes, “Christ himself was like God in everything. . . . He was born as a man and became like a servant” (Philippians 2:6-7 NCV). Jesus was a man, but he was also God. His role is summed up well in the Hebrew word *Immanuel*, which means “God with us.”

God sent Jesus so we would know what he was like and know that he understands us. Jesus was fully human, so he experienced the daily life of a human of his time. He experienced our physical limitations and the emotional pain,

## GOD WITH US

grief, and happiness we've all experienced on this earth. God sent Jesus to tell us he knows what it is like to be a human in this world.

Because of Jesus, God is no longer a confusing, ethereal, unformed being located somewhere in the sky. Instead, God is right here. Near us and with us. *Immanuel*. In this session, you will take a deeper look into the biblical story of how Jesus arrived on earth, why he came the way that he did, and what all of this can teach you about God.

## TALK ABOUT IT

If you or any of your group members are just getting to know one another, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Then, to kick things off for this first session, discuss one of the following questions:

- What comes to your mind when you try to picture what God is like?

— or —

- How do you respond to the fact that Jesus experienced everything you experience here on earth—including the range of human emotions?

## VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Play the video segment for session one. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

## JESUS

### NOTES

Jesus was *fully divine*. All-knowing. All-present. All-powerful. Yet the Bible makes it clear he was also *fully human*. “He was born as a man and became like a servant” (Philippians 2:7 NCV).

There is something about keeping Jesus divine that keeps him distant, packaged, and predictable. But let’s remember that the people who saw him first . . . saw him first as a person.

God had asked Joseph to go out on a limb. he was left with a hard choice: follow his will or the Lord’s. In the end, he knew there was only one option. For the only thing worse to Joseph than a venture into the unknown was denying his Master.

## GOD WITH US

Gabriel had to wonder: *God will become a baby?* The heavens themselves could not contain him. To imagine some mother burping God on her shoulder . . . well, that was beyond what even an angel could imagine.

The hometown of God would be a single-camel map dot on the edge of boredom. His earthly mother, Mary, was a Jewish peasant who had barely outgrown her acne. Joseph was a student of the Bible . . . but at the end of the day just a carpenter.

Fast-forward nine months. Mary and Joseph have made their way to the village of Bethlehem. Jesus will be born in a stable on the outskirts of town. It stinks, like all stables do. The stench of urine, dung, and sheep hangs in the air.

## JESUS

Were it not for the shepherds, there would have been no reception. And were it not for a group of star-gazers, there would have been no gifts. God has led them to Jerusalem with a star. But he leads them to Jesus with Scripture. They are the first Christian worshipers.

At times, that limb on which Joseph sat bounced furiously in the wind. But Joseph just shut his eyes and held on. And you can be sure of one thing: he never regretted it.

God wants us to know he *gets* us. Are your looks run-of-the-mill and your ways simple? So were Jesus'. Do you struggle financially? Jesus knows how you feel. Are you on the lower rungs of the social ladder? So was he. Ever feel betrayed? Christ can certainly relate. Our God gets us.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. What words, thoughts, or images come to mind when you hear the name *Jesus*? Where do these come from? The Bible, your upbringing, a sermon you heard? Explain.
2. Read Philippians 2:6–7. Jesus was fully divine, but he was also all-human. Do you tend to think of Jesus as more divine, more human, or both? Why?
3. Read the angel's announcement to Joseph in Matthew 1:20–25. If you were Joseph, how do you think you would have reacted to this news? How did Joseph actually respond to the angel's message? What does this tell you about Joseph's character?
4. Now read the angel's announcement to Mary in Luke 1:28–38. If you were Mary, how would you have reacted

## JESUS

to this news? How *did* Mary respond to the angel's message? What does this tell you about Mary's character?

5. Have you ever sensed God asking you to step out on a limb, much like he asked Joseph and Mary to do? If so, what was your initial response to the calling? What do you now see was the purpose for your—or someone else's—life for going out on a limb like this?
  
6. Read Luke 2:8–18 and Matthew 2:1–12. What role did the shepherds and the magi (or wise men) play in Jesus' birth? What role did King Herod play in these events?
  
7. What is something new or surprising you learned about the birth of Christ in this session? What do you think is the most interesting or compelling part of this narrative?



## GOD WITH US

8. As you reflect on everything discussed today, why did God send Jesus to earth in the way that he did—as a baby, born to a normal family, and placed in a normal town?

### CLOSING ACTIVITY

Briefly review the outline for the video teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down what it means to you that God chose to become flesh and live among us. How does that help you to know that God understands everything that you are going through? How does it change your perspective of him? What comfort does that provide to you? If you feel comfortable, share what you have written with the rest of the group.



## SESSION ONE

---

---

### BETWEEN-SESSIONS PERSONAL STUDY

Reflect on the material you have covered during your group time by engaging in the following between-sessions activities. This week, you will take a closer look at the story of Jesus' birth as told in the Gospels. Each personal study consists of three days of reflection activities to help you implement what you learned in the group time. The time you invest will be well spent, so grab a Bible (or open your Bible app), a cup of coffee or tea, a pen, and allow God to reveal his truth to you by studying his Word. At your next meeting, share any key points or insights that stood out to you as you spent this time with the Lord.

#### PREPARE THE WAY FOR HIM

The story of Jesus' birth in the Gospel of Luke actually begins with the birth of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. Just as with Jesus, an angel prophesied about the birth of John to his father, a priest named Zechariah. Read the following prophecy found in Luke 1:13-17:

## JESUS

<sup>13</sup> “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. . . . <sup>16</sup> He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

1. What did the angel say that John would bring? What would be his primary purpose as it related to the coming of the Messiah?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. After John was born, “Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied” (Luke 1:67). Read the following portion of that prophecy in Luke 1:76–78:

<sup>76</sup> “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, <sup>77</sup> to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, <sup>78</sup> because of the tender mercy of our God.”

## GOD WITH US

3. What would John do for the Lord? What knowledge would he give to the people? Why would the people receive forgiveness for their sins?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Jesus' birth had been foretold long before the birth of John the Baptist. God had been preparing the world for Jesus' arrival for hundreds of years, as these prophecies relate:

*Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).*

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him (Isaiah 11:1-2).*

*A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:3-5).*

## JESUS

According to these prophecies, how would Jesus be born? What would he be like? Why would he choose to come into this world?

5. Why do you think God chose to announce the coming of his Son—the Messiah—to his people for so many years?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. John the Baptist's purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus by readying the Israelites for his arrival. Why do you think it was important for him to do this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Consider some things that God has prepared you for ahead of time. Why do you think God chose to prepare you in this manner?

## GOD WITH US

8. How do you react when you read that God chose to send his Son into the world to experience *everything* that you experience? How did this make you feel *known* by God?

**Closing reflection:** Pick one passage from today's study and read over it a few times to yourself or out loud. Ask God to reveal any new insights he might have for you from that passage. End your time in prayer, thanking God for the gift of his Word and for choosing to send his only Son into the world. Also ask that God would prepare your heart and your mind for the day ahead.

## MARY AND JOSEPH AND SHEPHERDS . . . OH MAGI!

Jesus' birth included a cast of characters, all of whom played an important role in the story. Spend some time today studying their different responses to Christ's birth and early years.

### MARY

Mary traveled to a town in the hill country of Judea to see her cousin Elizabeth shortly after the angel announced she would give birth to the Messiah. Elizabeth greeted Mary and

## JESUS

quickly recognized (through the power of the Holy Spirit) that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. Soon after, Mary broke into song:

<sup>46</sup> *“My soul glorifies the Lord*  
<sup>47</sup> *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*  
<sup>48</sup> *for he has been mindful*  
*of the humble state of his servant.*  
*From now on all generations will call me blessed,*  
<sup>49</sup> *for the Mighty One has done great things for me—*  
*holy is his name”* (Luke 1:46–49).

1. What is the overall tone of Mary’s song? How does Mary describe God in these verses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How would you say Mary responded to the prophecy of Christ’s birth?

## JOSEPH

Joseph was planning to quietly divorce Mary after he found out she was pregnant. But then an angel came to him and told him about God’s plan:

<sup>20</sup> *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David,*



## GOD WITH US

*do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” . . .*

*<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.*

*<sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus (Matthew 1:20–21, 24–25).*

3. What specific instructions did the angel give to Joseph?

4. How did Joseph respond to the message from the angel?

### THE SHEPHERDS

In a field near the town of Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord appeared to a group of shepherds to announce the coming of the Messiah. The glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11). After the angel had said this:

## JESUS

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them (Luke 2:13–18).

5. What did the shepherds say to each other after the appearance of the heavenly host?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What actions did they take next? How did others respond to what the shepherds said?

## THE MAGI AND KING HEROD

King Herod, the ruler of Judea, had a completely different response when he learned from the Magi that a “king of the

## GOD WITH US

Jews” had been born. Herod saw the birth of Jesus as a threat to his own rule and plotted to kill the newborn . . . though he tried to keep this from the Magi so they would find the child for him. But God had other plans:

*<sup>1</sup> Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”*

*<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. . . .*

*<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” . . .*

*<sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route (Matthew 2:1-3, 7-8, 11-12).*

7. How did Herod feel when he heard about the birth of Jesus? How do you think this affected the entire city of Jerusalem as well?

## JESUS

8. How did the Magi respond when they finally came to the home of Jesus?

### YOUR RESPONSE

Each person in the story responded to Jesus' birth differently. Mary worshiped God. Joseph was obedient. The shepherds spread the news. King Herod felt threatened. The Magi offered gifts and chose to follow God above Herod's orders. We have all likely had similar responses to Jesus and the gospel. Like Mary, sometimes we are moved to worship. Like Joseph, sometimes we are simply obedient with our actions. Like the shepherds, sometimes we want to spread the good news. Like King Herod, we may feel disturbed by the truth. And like the magi, sometimes we decide to give of ourselves and honor Jesus above all earthly authority. Use the space below to write about a time you responded to the gospel like the characters you studied today:

Mary:

Joseph:

## GOD WITH US

The shepherds:

King Herod:

The Magi:

**Closing reflection:** Determine where you are today in your posture toward the gospel. Which character do you resonate with most? Ask God to come alongside you, wherever you are, and be honest with him. If you need faith, ask him for it. If you feel like worshiping, worship him. If you want to give him the gift of your presence, time, or service to others, ask how you can do these things. Know that God is not waiting for you to be in a “good” place in your faith. He wants to talk to you today and can work through you *now* . . . no matter where you are.

## WHY DID GOD DO IT?

It is important to know *how* Jesus came into this world. However, unless you understand *why* he came into this world, the story of Jesus’ incarnation is just that—a story. At the end of this week’s teaching, you considered the question, “Why did God do it?” In other words, why did God send his Son to live on the earth as fully human and fully God? This is what you will look at today.

## JESUS

1. In your own words, how would you answer the question as to *why* God chose to send his Son to the earth in the manner that he did?
2. How would you describe who Jesus is to you? Where did this image or idea come from?
3. The author of Hebrews provides the following insights into the coming of Jesus:

*Now that we know what we have—Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God—let’s not let it slip through our fingers. We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help (Hebrews 4:14–16 MSG).*

List all of the words used to describe Jesus. What has Jesus been through?

## GOD WITH US

4. Have you ever shared something difficult with a friend and he or she responded, “Me too”? How did that experience make you feel? Why?
  
5. Do you believe that no matter what you are going through or have been through, Jesus could say in response, “Me too”? Why or why not?
  
6. What is something you would like to share with Jesus today, knowing that he completely understands what you are facing? How does it feel to bring this to him?

***Closing reflection:*** Use your prayer time to share with Jesus what you wrote in response to this last question. Share it as you would with a friend whom you know would say, “Me too.” Then, sit and be still. Just listen. Did you hear Jesus speak to this pain, confession, or hurt in any way? If so, what did he say? If you didn’t hear anything, that is okay. Just observe how this experience of sharing something intimate with Christ made you feel.

## FURTHER REFLECTION

---

Reflect on what you studied this week: the birth of Jesus, the reactions of the people to his coming, and how you can know that God *gets* you. Journal your thoughts on these topics or write them as a prayer to God, whether you need to ask him questions about what you learned, thank him for what you learned, or ask him what to do next now that you have a better understanding. Also write down any observations or questions that you want to bring to your next group time.



## LEADER'S GUIDE

Thank you for your willingness to lead a group through the *Jesus* small-group study by Max Lucado. What you have chosen to do is important, and much good fruit can come from studies like this. The rewards of being a leader are different from those of participating, and we hope that as you lead you will find your own walk with Jesus deepened by this experience.

The *Jesus* study is a six-session curriculum built around video content and small-group interaction. As the group leader, imagine yourself as the host of a dinner party. Your job is to take care of your guests by managing all the behind-the-scenes details so that as your guests arrive, they can focus on each other and on interaction around the topic.

As the group leader, your role is not to answer all the questions or reteach the content—the video, book, and study guide will do most of that work. Your job is to guide the experience and cultivate your small group into a kind of teaching community. This will make it a place for members to process, question, and reflect—not receive more instruction.

There are several elements in this leader's guide that will help you as you structure your study and reflection time, so follow along and take advantage of each one.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before your first meeting, make sure the group members have a copy of this study guide so they can follow along and have their answers written out ahead of time. Alternately, you can hand out the study guides at your first meeting and give the group members some time to look over the material and ask any preliminary questions. During your first meeting, be sure to send a sheet of paper around the room and have the members write down their name, phone number, and email address so you can keep in touch with them during the week.

Generally, the ideal size for a group is between eight to ten people, which will ensure that everyone will have enough time to participate in discussions. If you have more people, you might want to break up the main group into smaller subgroups. Encourage those who show up at the first meeting to commit to attending the duration of the study, as this will help the group members get to know each other, create stability for the group, and help you know how to prepare each week.

Each of the sessions begins with an opening reflection. The two questions that follow in the “Talk About It” section serve as an icebreaker to get the group members thinking about the topic at hand. Some people may want to tell a long story in response to one of these questions, but the goal is to keep the answers brief. Ideally, you want everyone in the group to get a chance to answer, so try to keep the responses to a minute or less. If you have talkative group members, say up front that everyone needs to limit the answer to one minute.

Give the group members a chance to answer, but tell them to feel free to pass if they wish. With the rest of the study, it's generally not a good idea to have everyone answer every

## LEADER'S GUIDE

question—a free-flowing discussion is more desirable. But with the opening icebreaker questions, you can go around the circle. Encourage shy people to share, but don't force them.

Before your first meeting, let the group members know that each session contains four between-sessions activities that they can complete during the week. While this is an optional exercise, it will help the members cement the concepts presented during the group study time and encourage them to spend time each day in God's Word. Also invite them to bring any questions and insights they uncovered while reading to your next meeting, especially if they had a breakthrough moment or didn't understand something.

### WEEKLY PREPARATION

As the leader, there are a few things you should do to prepare for each meeting:

- *Read through the session.* This will help you to become familiar with the content and know how to structure the discussion times.
- *Decide which questions you definitely want to discuss.* Based on the amount and length of group discussion, you may not be able to get through all of the Bible study and group discussion questions, so choose four to five questions that you definitely want to cover.
- *Be familiar with the questions you want to discuss.* When the group meets you'll be watching the clock, so you want to make sure you are familiar with the

## JESUS

questions you have selected. In this way, you'll ensure you have the material more deeply in your mind than your group members.

- *Pray for your group.* Pray for your group members throughout the week and ask God to lead them as they study his Word.

In many cases, there will be no one “right” answer to the question. Answers will vary, especially when the group members are being asked to share personal experiences.

## STRUCTURING THE DISCUSSION TIME

You will need to determine with your group how long you want to meet each week so you can plan your time accordingly. Generally, most groups like to meet for either sixty minutes or ninety minutes, so you could use one of the following schedules:

SECTION	60 MIN.	90 MIN.
WELCOME (MEMBERS ARRIVE AND GET SETTLED)	5 min.	10 min.
ICEBREAKER (DISCUSS ONE OF THE TWO OPENING QUESTIONS FOR THE SESSION)	10 min.	10 min.
VIDEO (WATCH THE TEACHING MATERIAL TOGETHER AND TAKE NOTES)	20 min.	20 min.

## LEADER'S GUIDE

SECTION	60 MIN.	90 MIN.
DISCUSSION (DISCUSS THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS YOU SELECTED AHEAD OF TIME)	20 min.	40 min.
PRAYER/CLOSING (PRAY TOGETHER AS A GROUP AND DISMISS)	5 min.	10 min.

As the group leader, it is up to you to keep track of the time and keep things moving along according to your schedule. You might want to set a timer for each segment so both you and the group members know when your time is up. (Note there are some good phone apps for timers that play a gentle chime or other pleasant sound instead of a disruptive noise.)

Don't be concerned if the group members are quiet or if they are slow to share. People are often quiet when they are pulling together their ideas, and this might be a new experience for them. Just ask a question and let it hang in the air until someone shares. You can then say, "Thank you. What about others? What came to you when you watched that portion of the video?"

## GROUP DYNAMICS

Leading a group through the *Jesus* study will prove to be highly rewarding both to you and your group members. However, this doesn't mean you will not encounter any challenges along the way! Discussions can get off track. Group members may not be sensitive to the needs and ideas of others. Some

## JESUS

might worry they will be expected to talk about matters that make them feel awkward. Others may express comments that result in disagreements. To help ease this strain on you and the group, consider the following ground rules:

- When someone raises a question or comment that is off the main topic, suggest you deal with it another time, or, if you feel led to go in that direction, let the group know you will be spending some time discussing it.
- If someone asks a question you don't know how to answer, admit it and move on. At your discretion, feel free to invite group members to comment on questions that call for personal experience.
- If you find one or two people are dominating the discussion time, direct a few questions to others in the group. Outside the main group time, ask the more dominating members to help you draw out the quieter ones. Work to make them a part of the solution instead of the problem.
- When a disagreement occurs, encourage the group members to process the matter in love. Encourage those who are on opposite sides of the issue to restate what they heard the other side say about the matter, and then invite each side to evaluate if that perception is accurate. Lead the group in examining other Scriptures related to the topic and look for common ground.

## LEADER'S GUIDE

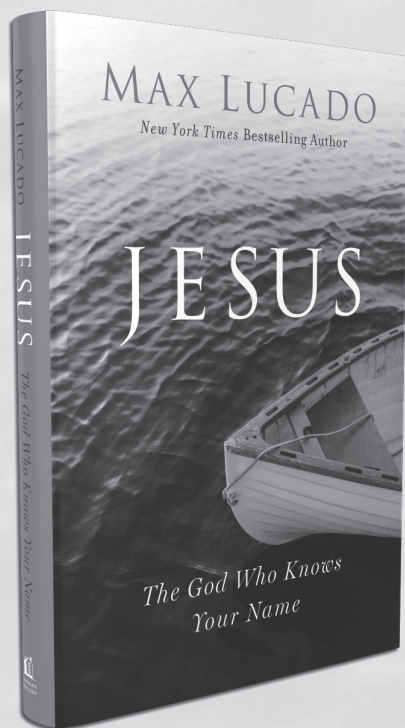
When any of these issues arise, encourage your group members to follow these words from the Bible: “Love one another” (John 13:34), “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18), “Whatever things are true . . . noble . . . pure . . . lovely . . . if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8 NKJV), and, “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19 NKJV). This will make your group time more rewarding and beneficial for everyone who attends.

Thank you again for your willingness to lead your group. May God reward your efforts and dedication, equip you to guide your group in the weeks ahead, and make your time together in the *Jesus* study fruitful for his kingdom.





ALSO AVAILABLE FROM  
MAX LUCADO



*In this seminal work,  
Max explores the life and character of Jesus,  
now with never-before-read content.*

AVAILABLE WHEREVER  
BOOKS ARE SOLD