

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 1: The Season of Perceiving

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

If your group will receive *Seasons of Our Faith* at the first meeting, the leader should read the introductory material in advance, especially the "Preface" and "How to Use this Study." Be prepared to summarize that information for your group, or plan to read it together as an introduction to the study.

If your group has received *Seasons of Our Faith* in advance, ask them to read the introductory pages and do the exercises in Session 1 before the first meeting. OR, if your group can meet for 10 sessions, use the first meeting as a get-acquainted time and go over the introductory pages together. Assign Session 1 for the next meeting.

Plan to offer light refreshments. Recruit a host who will be responsible for refreshments at each meeting. After the first meeting the host may wish to coordinate with others in the group to share the effort and cost.

Arrange chairs for comfortable seating that will facilitate discussion, ideally a circle so that everyone can see each other, and have enough copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* for each person.

Have nametags available and a thick felt pen.

Check the DVD player in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 1, the song is "Breathe," song 6.

Hymn Option: If you do not have access to a DVD player, you can sing or read the words to the hymn "Breathe on Me Breath of God." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music along with information about this hymn and its author.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

Getting started at the first meeting

As group members arrive, welcome them. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Introduce people to each other.

Begin at the scheduled time. (This is important, or you will establish a habit that will push the starting time later and later with each session.)

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome everyone to the group and thank them for coming.

Announce or discuss when and where you plan to meet each for each group session. Distribute copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* to each person. If you are charging for the material, mention the cost and specifics concerning how the money will be collected. Explain that *Seasons* is a nine-session study.

Express your enthusiasm for this Bible study and the high expectations you have for your time together. Explain that the theme of this study is not the seasons of the year—winter, spring, summer, and fall—but rather the seasons of our lives. This concept of seasons in our lives is about times of change and growth that are opportunities to mature in faith.

Summarize the Preface and How to Use This Study. Then have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 1. Point out that the Key Verse is Acts 17:28a, and that it is found within the Study Passage, Acts 17:16–34. Read aloud the Key Verse and the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask three people in the group to read the Introduction aloud. Summarize in your own words the point of this section.

Getting to know you

Explain that an important goal of this Bible study is for members to grow in depth and quality of their relationships with each other. You may want to mention that it is often difficult for people in today's impersonal world to find and cultivate meaningful relationships.

Read or paraphrase this section and then point group members to the last paragraph. Read it aloud and ask them to write their three words in the space provided. When everyone is done, ask each person to share the words without additional comments, just the three words. In subsequent meetings there will be an opportunity to expand on their words.

Warming up

Read or paraphrase the first two paragraphs. Tell people when to begin and when 60 seconds is up. Give them a moment to list their perceptions in the space provided, then ask them to share their perceptions.

Settling into the season

Paraphrase the first paragraph. Remind group members to use a similar process to *perceive*, but now they will perceive sight as well as sound as they focus on the images and consider the words.

Play "Breathe" (song 6) on the worship DVD. At the conclusion of the song, ask for comments. Point out the question, *How is the theme of this song a reflection on perceiving God?* Give them a moment to write their answer to the question.

Hymn option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of "Breathe O Me Breath of God." After the group sings or reads the words, ask *How is the author of this hymn asking you to perceive God's presence in your life?*

Opening up the Word

The Context

Explain that in each group meeting a Scripture passage will be the focus of the discussion. The purpose of this Bible study is more than just reading and responding to the passage. It will serve as a springboard for exploring ourselves, our relationship to the biblical author, and our relationship with God. "The Context" offers background on the Scripture passage that may give it additional meaning. Have the group read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: Acts 17:16–34

Ask each person to read three verses aloud, going around the circle until the entire passage has been read. Encourage them to focus on these words and *perceive* what God might want to say to them at this time.

Reflection : Stop and simply reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask if anyone would like to respond concerning something that came immediately to mind, perhaps a thought that felt like “God speaking to you” through these verses.

Knowledge : Read the questions under this section and ask for responses. (Remember, Knowledge questions ask the student to remember, list, select, match, or label.)

Comprehension: Read the questions under this section and ask for responses. (Comprehension questions will ask you to describe, summarize, retell, explain, and compare.)

Analysis

Read the questions under this section and ask for responses. (Analysis questions will ask you to explain how the pieces fit together; find gaps in your understanding, and look for further information. You use analytical thinking when you, debate, infer, question, categorize, contrast, differentiate, predict, scrutinize, and interpret. It is at this point that Bloom’s Higher Level Thinking Questions come into play. Higher Levels of Thinking ask you to analyze and apply what you have learned.)

After you have discussed the questions, read the “FYI” and ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 2:1–8. Then discuss the questions.

Application

Read the questions under this section and ask for responses. (Application questions will ask you to use what you know in a real life situation. These questions ask you to apply, demonstrate, and illustrate what you have learned.)

Wrapping it up: Ask the group to read this section to themselves.

Taking the Word home

Allow time to write an insight, then ask if anyone would like to share their’s with the group.

Explain that one way to extend learning will be to memorize a Bible verse in each session. Although this is optional, it will help participants recall the insights of this study throughout the week. Read the Memory Verse together. Encourage participants to recite this verse aloud every morning as they start their day, before they go to sleep, and at other times throughout the day.

Suggest ideas to further explore this season (See “General Instructions for the Leader” above for suggestions.)

Close your time together in prayer. (See “General Instructions for the Leader” above for suggestions.)

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 2: The Season of Believing

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of the *Seasons of Our Faith* Study Guide available.

Have nametags available and a thick felt pen.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 2, the song is "Lord Reign In Me," number 2 on the play list.

Hymn Option: If you do not have access to a DVD player, sing or read the words to the hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Introduce people to each other. Begin at the scheduled time. (This is important or you will establish a habit that will push the starting time later and later with each session.) Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome everyone to the study and thank them for coming. Introduce any new members.

Express your enthusiasm for the previous week's study, and your high expectations for the subsequent sessions. Remind the group that the theme of this study is not the seasons of the year but rather it is about the seasons of our lives. This study will identify key seasons of growth and change in our lives and will focus on our relationship with God. The more we grow in these areas of our lives, the stronger our faith will be as we seek to lead Christ-like lives.

Have the group open their books to Session 2. Point out that the Key Verse is John 6:29 as recorded in the New International Version (NIV), and that it is found within the Study Passage, John 6:22–40. Read aloud the Key Verse and the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask four people to read the Introduction aloud.

Getting to know you

Ask the group to read this section to themselves. Then review the assignment: Either do a “magic trick” or tell about a time when you saw a magic trick that made an impression on you. Give each person a turn. Enjoy the light-hearted nature of this exercise and lead the applause for any magic tricks that are performed.

Warming up

Read the first two paragraphs aloud to the group, ending with the sentence, “What do you believe, or believe in?” Ask the group for their response to this question. Continue reading the next paragraph and ask for responses to the question. Finally, discuss the questions in the last paragraph.

Settling into the season

Ask the group to keep the theme of this session, *believing*, in mind as they view the DVD. Point out the question and ask them to keep it in mind as they view “Lord Reign In Me,” song 2 on the worship DVD. (Use the version *with* words. Maybe your group would like to sing along.) Then discuss the question.

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.” After the group sings or reads the words to the hymn, ask *What is the message of this song that encourages you to believe in Jesus Christ?*

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have group members read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: John 6:22–40 NIV

Ask each group member to read two verses aloud. Go around the circle until the entire passage has been read. Encourage them to focus on what these words say about how we *believe* in God.

Reflection

Stop and simply reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask if anyone would like to respond concerning something that came immediately to mind, perhaps a thought that felt like “God speaking to you” through these verses.

Knowledge

Discuss the first three questions.

Ask group members to read the “FYI” to themselves, then do the exercise in question 4. Finally, share the claims of Jesus that were found in verses 25–40.

Comprehension

Read the questions in this section and ask for responses.

Analysis

Read the questions in this section and ask for responses.

Application

Give group members a few minutes to complete the exercise in this section. (Sharing this prayer with the group is optional, because some may write a private prayer.)

Wrapping it up

Ask the group to read this section to themselves.

Taking the Word home

Ask if anyone would like to share one insight gained from this study.

Have the group read the memory verse for this session aloud.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session's season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

Close your time together in prayer. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 3: The Season of Attending

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of the *Seasons of Our Faith* Study Guide available.

Have nametags available and a thick felt pen. (It is a good idea to use nametags for the first three or four meetings until everyone is comfortable with the names of others in the group.)

Gather all the needed equipment for the "Warming Up" exercise. (see below)

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 3, the song is "Calling Out to You," number 1 on the play list.

Hymn Option: "All to Jesus I Surrender." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Introduce people to each other. Begin at the scheduled time. (This is important or you will establish a habit that will push the starting time later and later with each session.) Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome everyone and thank them for coming. Express your enthusiasm for the previous session, and your high expectations for the subsequent sessions.

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 3. Point out that the Key Verse is Romans 8:26 as recorded in the New International Version version, and that it is found within the Study Passage, Romans 8:18–30. Read aloud the Key Verse and the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask three people to read the “Introduction.”

Getting to know you

Ask the group to read the instructions. Give each person time to share the word and “what it describes about you.”

Warming up

Prior to the meeting collect four radios and set them up in the meeting room. (Ideally the radios will not be visible to the group, but that it is not critical.) Set each radio to a different kind of station (classical, rock, talk, jazz, Christian, etc.) with volume on all the radios at a moderate level. The radios should be all connected to one extension cord or power bar, but not plugged into the wall socket yet. Plan to sit next to the power bar, so you can turn on the switch or plug in the extension cord during the meeting. (You may want to ask someone in the group to be in on this and be the “radio operator.”)

Read aloud to the group: *At this very moment, our room is filled with thousands of radio waves—a cacophony of sounds, a myriad of messages. But it is quiet. How can we hear these messages that no one has yet heard? We need a way to capture the information and interpret those waves.*

Once you have read this, flip the switch on the power bar (or plug in the extension cord) so that all four of the radios go on simultaneously. Wait for a moment, then read the next paragraph: *There's still a problem. Now we have a room full of messages, in fact too many things going on. Too much noise, too many messages. We hear much, but understand very little. We need to focus in on one message. We need to remove noise in order to hear the messages.*

At this point, unplug or turn off one of the radios. Wait about five seconds, then unplug the second radio; after another five seconds, unplug the third radio so that only one (the classical or Christian station) remains.

Listen to the lone radio for about ten seconds, then turn that radio down but not off. Ask, “What thoughts or insights did this exercise give you regarding the idea of *attending* to God?” Write them in the space provided. After some have shared what they wrote, turn the last radio off.

Settling into the season

Ask participants to keep the theme of this session, *attending*, in mind as they view the DVD. Play “Calling Out to You” (song 1) in the version *with* words. The group is welcome to sing along with the music if they are comfortable in doing so. At the conclusion of the song ask, *How did this speak to the idea of attending to God in your life?*

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “All to Jesus I Surrender.” After the group sings or reads the words ask, *What is the author asking Christians to do? How will this action call their attention to Christ?*

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have group members read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: Romans 8:18–30

Ask each group member to read two verses aloud to the group. Go around the circle until the entire passage has been read. Encourage group members to focus on these words and seek to *attend* to what God might want to say to them at this time.

Reflection

Stop and simply reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask if anyone would like to respond concerning something that came immediately to mind, perhaps a thought that felt like “God speaking to you” through these verses.

Knowledge

Read the first question and ask the group to respond for each of the verses listed.

Have someone look up and read Romans 8:20 and 2 Peter 3:9–15; then discuss question 2.

Comprehension)

Analysis) Read the questions in these sections and ask for responses.

Application)

Wrapping it up

Have someone read this paragraph aloud.

Taking the Word home

Ask if anyone would like to share one insight gained from this study.

Have the group read the memory verse for this session aloud.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session’s season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under “General Instructions for the Leader.”)

Close your time together in prayer. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under “General Instructions for the Leader.”)

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 4: The Season of Living

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of the *Seasons of Our Faith* Study Guide available.

Have nametags available and a thick felt pen.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 4, the song is "Draw Me Close," number 5 on the play list.

Hymn Option: If you do not have access to a DVD player, sing or read the words to the hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Introduce people to each other. Begin at the scheduled time. (This is important or you will establish a habit that will push the starting time later and later with each session.) Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome everyone to the study and thank them for coming. Ask if anyone has had news or a particularly important experience since the last session.

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 4. Point out that the Key Verse is John 17:26 as recorded in the New Living Translation, and that it is found in the context of the Study Passage of John 17:1–26. Read the key verse aloud to the group, followed by the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask one person to read the Introduction.

Getting to know you

Ask the group to read the instructions. Give each person time to share the word and “what it describes about you.”

Warming up

Ask group participants to read the Key Verse, John 17:26, to themselves. Then ask them to think of one thought or insight from this verse.

Read the next paragraph to the group. Explain that this is not an art contest, just a chance to begin our thinking about this study in a creative manner.

Settling into the season

Ask the group to keep the theme of this session, *living*, in mind as they view the DVD. Point out the question and ask them to keep it in mind as they view “Draw Me Close,” song 5 on the worship DVD. (Use the version *with* words. Maybe your group would like to sing along.) Then ask how this song encourages us to draw close to God.

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “Take My Life and Let It Be.” After the group sings or reads the words ask, *How does this song encourage you to draw close to God?*

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have group members read these paragraphs to themselves.

The Word: John 17:1–26

Ask each person to read two verses aloud, going around the circle until the entire passage has been read. Encourage group members to focus on the words to understand how we might *live* in God through Christ.

Reflection

Stop and simply reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask if anyone would like to respond concerning something that came immediately to mind, perhaps a thought that felt like “God speaking to you” through these verses.

Knowledge

Ask group members to respond to the questions in this section. (Because there are six questions, you don't want to take too much time for each.)

Comprehension

Read the first two paragraphs to the group and then ask them to follow the instructions for questions 1–4. When participants are finished with the exercise, lead the group in comparing their responses and explaining why they responded the way they did.

When the group has compared responses, read question 5 and ask for responses.

Analysis

Read the paragraph aloud. Then ask three different group members to look up the verses listed and read them aloud. After each person reads ask, *In what way does reading Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17 help us better understand this verse about life?*

Allow time for several responses after each verse is read.

Application

Read aloud and ask for responses to the questions. Spend some time sharing thoughts about applying the concept in our lives.

Wrapping it up

Ask the group to read this paragraph to themselves and write one word in the space. Share the words.

Taking the Word home

Allow time to write an insight, then ask if anyone would like to share an insight with the group.

Have the group read the memory verse for this session aloud.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session's season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

Announce that there will be homework for the next session. See the instructions at the end of Session 4. The person who leads Session 5 may want to have a few extra gifts on hand, in the event that some group members forget.

Close your time together in prayer. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 5: The Season of Serving

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* available.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 5, the song is "To Please You," number 9 on the play list.

Hymn option: "I Am Thine, O Lord," by Fanny Crosby. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

There is an exercise in "Warming Up" in which each person in the group is asked to give a small gift to the person next to them and quote a verse on "love," listed in *Seasons of Our Faith*. (This was "homework" from Session 4.) You might want to have a few extras on hand, maybe just a cookie or a muffin, in the event that someone was absent or forgets.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Introduce people to each other. Begin at the scheduled time. (This is important or you will establish a habit that will push the starting time later and later with each session.) Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome everyone to the study and thank them for coming. Ask if anyone has had news or a particularly important experience since the last session.

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 5. Point out that the Key Verse is John 15:5, as recorded in the New International Version (NIV), and that it is found in the context of the Study Passage of John 15:1–17. Read the key verse aloud to the group, followed by the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask four group members to read the Introduction.

Getting to know you

Read the paragraph aloud and then ask group members to respond. Give them a few moments to think about an instance in their own lives. Choose someone to begin and go around the circle.

Warming up

(See “Prior to the Meeting” above about preparation for this exercise.)

Explain to the group that today’s study uses the passage about the vine and the branches to focus on being connected with Christ by following his command to love through serving. The verses listed in *Seasons* are on the topic of love. As you go around the circle, one at a time give your small gift to the person next to you, say the person’s name and quote a Bible verse. (“Christine, Make your love increase ...”) The first person recites the first verse in the list to the person receiving the gift. That person then turns to the next, gives the gift, names the person, and quotes the second verse, and so on around the circle.

When all the gifts have been given, continue around the circle until all the verses have been read.

Settling into the season

Ask group members to read the paragraph to themselves and then view “To Please You,” song 9 on the worship DVD. Ask them to consider how this song helps us to focus on how we can be pleasing to God, particularly with the theme of this study in mind, *servicing*. (Use the version *with* words. Maybe your group would like to sing along.) After viewing the video ask, *What thoughts have been sparked by this video about serving others and how that might please God?*

Hymn option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “I Am Thine, O Lord,” by Fanny Crosby. (Share with the group that Fanny Crosby was a dedicated servant of God.) After the group sings or reads the words, ask, *How does this song help you understand what it means to be a servant of God?*

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have group members read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: John 15:1–17 NIV

Ask each group member to read two verses aloud to the group. Go around the room until the entire passage has been read. Encourage group members to focus on these words and what God might want to say to them at this time, particularly in the area of *servicing*.

Reflection

After the final verse is read, point out that the next section, Reflection, is an opportunity simply to reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask whether anyone would like to respond concerning something that came to mind immediately, perhaps a thought that God may bring to mind through the reading of these verses.

Knowledge

Ask the group to respond to the questions.

Comprehension

Ask group members to respond to the questions.

Analysis

Ask group members to respond to the first question as it applies to each verse listed, then continue with questions 2 and 3.

Application

Ask group members to read these paragraphs to themselves and then respond to the challenge to list two things to do in the coming week that would be a direct response to Jesus' command. Ask if anyone would like to share one of their intentions for the coming week.

Wrapping it up

Read this paragraph aloud to the group.

Taking the Word Home

Ask if anyone would like to share one insight gained from this study.

Have the group read the memory verse for this session aloud.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session's season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

Close your time together in prayer. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 6: The Season of Enduring

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* available. Even if there are no new members, continue to provide nametags.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 6, the song is "You Are My Refuge," number 7 on the play list.

Hymn option: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Begin at the scheduled time. Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome people to the study and thank them for coming. Ask if anyone has had particularly important news or a significant experience during the past week.

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 6. Point out that the Key Verse is Psalm 46:10 as recorded in the New International Version, and that it is found in the context of the Study Passage of Psalms 46. Read the Key Verse aloud to the group, followed by the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask one person to read the Introduction.

Getting to know you

Tell the group that the topic of this study is the season of *enduring*. As we face challenges and difficulties—in fact, *particularly* in such circumstances—it is appropriate to consider the issue of fear.

(Be sensitive to the comfort level of people in your group when it comes to sharing. It is okay if some are not comfortable in sharing their experience.)

Ask if any group members would like to share about a childhood memory in which they were really scared. You may pose some questions to gather information that will be helpful in the discussion later: *What were the circumstances? Who were you with? What happened that made it such a scary experience? Does the memory of that experience still affect you today? Does it affect the way you act if you find yourself in similar circumstances as an adult?*

Warming up

Read the introductory paragraph aloud to the group, and give them four or five minutes to complete the assignment. When they have finished writing, ask for volunteers to read their psalms to the group.

Settling into the season

Ask group members to read the first paragraph to themselves. As they view “You Are My Refuge,” song 7 on the worship DVD, ask them to consider how this song relates God’s love and concern for our well-being, even when the going gets tough. (Use the version *with* words. Maybe your group would like to sing along.) After the video is over, discuss the questions. Then ask, *How is God a refuge during hard times?*

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” After the group sings or reads the words, discuss the questions.

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have group members read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: Psalm 46 and Ephesians 3:14–21 NIV

This session includes two study passages. Ask each person to read two verses aloud from Psalm 46 to the group, going around the circle until the entire passage has been read. Encourage the group to focus on *what might God want to say to you at this time*.

When Psalm 46 has been read, ask group members for any thoughts or comments about that passage before going on to the Ephesians passage. After any comments, continue going around the circle reading Ephesians 3:14–21.

Reflection

After the final verse is read, point out that the next section, Reflection, is an opportunity simply to reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask whether anyone would like to respond concerning something that came to mind immediately; perhaps a thought that God may bring to mind through the reading of these verses.

Knowledge

Ask the group to share the attributes of God they found.

Comprehension

Discuss the questions.

Analysis

Discuss the questions.

Application

Discuss the first two questions, then ask whether anyone would like to share their answers in questions 2 and 3.

Wrapping it up

Ask one person to read this section aloud.

Taking the Word Home

Allow time to write an insight, then ask if anyone would like to share an insight with the group.

Explain that one way to extend learning will be to memorize a Bible verse in each session. Although this is optional, it will help participants recall the insights of this study throughout the week. Read the Memory Verse together. Encourage participants to recite this verse aloud every morning as they start their day, before they go to sleep, and at other times throughout the day.

Suggest ideas to further explore this season (See “General Instructions for the Leader” above for suggestions.)

Close your time together in prayer. (See “General Instructions for the Leader” above for suggestions.)

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 7: The Season of Praising

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* available. Even if there are no new members, continue to provide nametags.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 7, the song is "Above All," number 4 on the play list.

Hymn option: "Love Divine, All Love Excelling." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Begin at the scheduled time. Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome people to the study and thank them for coming. Ask if anyone has had particularly important news or a significant experience in their lives during the past week.

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 7. Point out that the Key Verse is Ephesians 1:3 as recorded in the New Living Translation (NLT), and that it is found in the context of the Study Passage of Ephesians 1:3–14. Read the key verse aloud to the group, followed by the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask one person to read the Introduction.

Getting to know you

Ask the group to read the instructions. Give each person time to share the word and “what it describes about you.”

Warming up

Read this section aloud and ask if anyone can share about a person they have known who is a model of praising God.

Settling into the season

Ask the group to consider how “Above All,” song 4 on the worship DVD, inspires them to praise God. After watching it ask, Does this song spark any thoughts about how we are to praise God?

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “Love Divine, All Love Excelling.” After the group sings or reads the words ask, What words are being used to praise God in this song? What does the author want you to understand when you sing this song?

Opening up the Word

The Context

Have group members read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: Ephesians 1:3–14 NLT

Ask someone to read two verses aloud, going around the circle until the entire passage has been read.

Reflection

After the final verse is read, point out that Reflection is an opportunity simply to reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask whether anyone would like to respond concerning something that came immediately to mind; perhaps a thought that God may have spoken to you personally through the reading of these verses.

Knowledge

Read the instructions to the group and give them several minutes to complete the assignment. Then review their responses together.

Read questions 2 and 3 and ask for responses.

Comprehension

Spend time looking up or reviewing the actions of God the Father toward us in each verse listed. Continue with the verses in questions 2–4.

Analysis

Guide discussion as group members respond to the questions.

Application

1. Ask for responses to the first question.
2. Give group members a few minutes to complete the exercise in question 2. Encourage them to review the passage with the changes they just made each day during the coming week.
3. Ask group members to read and then write in their own words how their relationship with God makes praise possible.
4. Ask these questions and solicit responses from the group.

Wrapping it up

Note: If your group prepares in advance, ask them to share phrases with “in” that they found in the New Living Translation and other Bible versions. Ask the question about what they learned in this exercise. Then ask about their thoughts as they pondered the privilege of living “in Christ.”

(If your group does not prepare in advance, assign this for homework and be prepared next time to share with the group what they have learned. Ask members to ponder the privilege of living “in Christ” and share their thoughts with the group during the next session.)

Taking the Word Home

Ask if anyone would like to share one insight gained from this study.

Have the group read the memory verse for this session aloud.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session's season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under “General Instructions for the Leader.”)

In closing this session on the season of praising, say in unison the Doxology.

Close your time together in prayer. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under “General Instructions for the Leader.”)

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 8: The Season of Discovering

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* available. Even if there are no new members, continue to provide nametags.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 8 the song is "Your Everlasting Love," song 8 on the play list.

Hymn option: "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

You may want to select a CD or tape to play in the background as people arrive.

Review the exercise below in "Warming Up" to be sure you understand the process, as well as the lesson to be taught. You might want to practice the exercise a few times with four other people prior to the session.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Begin at the scheduled time. Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome people to the study and thank them for coming. Ask if anyone has had particularly important news or a significant experience during the past week.

[If the group was assigned homework, finding “in” phrases, at the last session, review them now before beginning this session.]

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 8. Point out that the Key Verse is Psalm 37:4 as recorded in the New Revised Standard Version, and that it is found in the context of the Study Passage of Psalms 37. Read the key verse aloud to the group, followed by the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask one group member to read the Introduction.

Getting to know you

Read the paragraph aloud to the group. Then ask them to respond to the exercise described in this section.

Warming up

Read the first paragraph and explain that this “experiential parable” will give an illustration of trusting someone else to keep you from harm.

Read or paraphrase these directions: Four people are to play the role of God (in an appropriately humble sort of way). A fifth person who represents each of us, stands in the center of the room, eyes closed, hands together in front. The four “God” people stand in pairs behind the fifth person. The first pair faces each other and firmly grasps each other’s forearms; the second pair does the same. Then, when everyone is ready, the fifth person, keeping eyes closed and hands together, falls backward. The two “God” pairs will catch that fall at about a 45-degree angle. (Suggestion for the people who are playing the “God” role: Be sure that you do, in fact, catch the falling person! Otherwise it could spoil the whole illustration!)

Give a chance to anyone in the group who wants to fall into the trusting arms of “God.” When everyone has had a turn, ask the group to share their feelings.

When the group has shared their feelings about the exercise, note similarities in the process of discovering that one can trust God. Tell the group that this session will explore the season of discovering.

Settling into the season

Ask the group to read the first paragraph to themselves. Then watch “Your Everlasting Love,” song 8 on the worship DVD. As they listen and watch, ask them to consider how this song describes the discovery of God’s presence in a person’s life. After viewing the DVD ask, How does God reveal himself to you?

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus.” After the group sings or reads the words ask them to share their list of reasons why it is “so sweet to trust in Jesus.”

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have group members read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: Psalm 37 NRSV (selected verses)

Ask someone to read two verses aloud, going around the circle until the entire passage has been read.

Reflection

After the final verse is read, point out that the next section, Reflection, is an opportunity simply to reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask whether anyone would like to respond concerning something that came to mind immediately; perhaps a thought that God may bring to mind through the reading of these verses.

Knowledge)

Comprehension) Guide participants through responses to these questions.

Analysis)

Application)

Wrapping it up

Ask a group member to read this section aloud.

Taking the Word Home

Ask if anyone would like to share one insight gained from this study.

Have the group read the memory verse for this session aloud.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session's season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

Close your time together in prayer. Spend time sharing concerns and prayers. Intercede on behalf of those in the group for God's mercy and strength in this season of discovering, in order to grow in our understanding of his provision and love for us. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under "General Instructions for the Leader.")

SEASONS OF OUR FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 9: The Season of Focusing

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

Group style

Leaders may adapt *Seasons of Our Faith* to fit your group's style.

Some groups prefer to go through the lesson together, using the questions for discussion or writing the answers as they go along.

Other groups prepare the lessons in advance and meet together to discuss what they have learned. Note that the starred (*) sections in *Seasons of Our Faith* are especially for the group discussion. (Starred sections are Getting to Know You, Warming Up, and Settling Into the Season.)

Prior to the meeting

Several days before the meeting, remind the person who is preparing refreshments of the meeting time and location.

If you anticipate that new people will join the group, have additional copies of *Seasons of Our Faith* available. If there are no new members, continue to provide nametags unless you are certain that everyone in the group knows every name.

Arrange the room for comfortable seating.

Prepare to show the DVD. Check the equipment in advance and preview the video. Note that the DVD has each song twice, with and without the words. Cue the DVD to the version *with* the words. For Session 9 the song is "Here I Am To Worship." number 3 on the playlist.

Hymn option: "Be Thou My Vision." See www.cyberhymnal.org for words and music and information about this hymn and its author.

As group members arrive

Welcome each person. Invite them to make a nametag and have refreshments. Begin at the scheduled time. Be sure everyone has a copy of *Seasons of Our Faith*.

Praying together at every meeting

Always close the group time with prayer, sharing concerns and prayer requests before you pray. It is possible to practice a variety of prayers. Here are a few ideas

Pray for the person on your right	Pray for people in authority
Pray in pairs or triplets	(world and national leaders, church leaders)
Sentence prayers	Pray for a loved one not in the group
Prayer of thanksgiving	Pray for a non-Christian friend
Prayer of petition	Keep a prayer journal
Pray silently	

Ideas to explore the season further

If group members would like to continue their own personal growth and/or application of this season, give them a few suggestions:

- Meditate on or memorize a hymn that relates to the season. See www.cyberhymnal.org for words, music, and information about hymns and those who wrote them.
- Create a scrapbook page that puts on paper images and/or words of an experience of this season in your life. It may contain words to a prayer, or a hymn or song that you relate to; photos; Bible verses that have made a deep, personal connection within you; some written words of the experience; or questions you may have if this is the season of your faith at this time.
- Write a journal page to record your various thoughts, memories, and conversations about this season.
- What creative ideas can you suggest?

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING THE DISCUSSION

(Use these guidelines hand in hand with *Seasons of Our Faith*)

Getting started

Welcome people to the study and thank them for coming. Ask if anyone has had particularly important news or a significant experience during the past week.

Have the group open *Seasons of Our Faith* to Session 9. Point out that the Key Verse is Hebrews 12:2a as recorded in the New International Version, and that it is found in the context of the Study Passage of Hebrews 11 and 12. Read the Key Verse aloud to the group, followed by the Seed Thought.

Introduction

Ask three or four people to read the Introduction aloud.

Getting to know you

Read the paragraph aloud and ask group members to share one reflection of this time together as a group.

Warming up

Ask the group to try writing a definition of “spiritual ADD” in the space provided, then ask for volunteers who would like to share their definition. When you have come up with a good definition, read the question at the end of the paragraph and discuss the obstacles the ADD person might encounter.

Settling into the season

Ask group members to read this paragraph to themselves. Then watch “Here I Am to Worship,” song 3 on the worship DVD. You may want to play it once more before asking them to consider how this song relates to the topic focusing. Ask if this song sparked any thoughts about how we can best focus on God.

Hymn Option: Share with the group what you have learned about the composer and the history of “Be Thou My Vision.” After the group sings or reads the words ask, How does this hymn encourage us to focus on God? What specific words are used to draw our focus onto God? Then, with those questions in mind, give the group time to meditate on the words of the hymn. After a time of meditation, follow up on the questions, sharing thoughts about *focusing* on God.

Opening up the Word

The Context: Have the group read this opening paragraph to themselves.

The Word: Hebrews 11:1–16 and 32–40; 12:1–11 NIV

Ask someone to read two verses aloud, going around the circle until the entire passage has been read. As they read, encourage group members to focus on what might God want to say to you at this time.

Reflection

After the final verse is read, point out that Reflection is an opportunity simply to reflect on the Scripture passage. Ask whether anyone would like to respond concerning something that came to mind immediately; perhaps a thought that God may bring to mind through the reading of these verses.

Knowledge

Guide participants in responses to questions 1 and 2. Follow instructions for question 3 and ask group members to share their list.

Comprehension

Discuss the questions.

Analysis

Give the group time to write, and then share their definition.

Application

Read Hebrews 12:1–2 to the group and discuss all the questions.

Wrapping it up

Ask participants to read the first two paragraphs to themselves and then view “Here I Am to Worship” again.

Taking the Word Home

Ask if anyone would like to share one insight gained from this study.

Point out the memory verse for those who would like to continue the practice of memorizing Scripture.

Then ask if anyone has explored the last session's season further and would like to share their experience. Offer suggestions on how to further explore this season. (See ideas above under “General Instructions for the Leader.”)

Close your time together in prayer. Spend time sharing concerns and prayers. You might consider using “Here I Am to Worship” to close the prayer time. (Prayer suggestions are listed above under “General Instructions for the Leader.”)