



AFTER

I BELIEVE

LEADER'S
GUIDE

OVERVIEW

"After 'I Believe'" is a five-session small group series designed to provide a roadmap and encouragement to Christ followers, whether they made that decision of faith recently or decades ago. It walks through important components of the Christian life as well as the common roadblocks that can prevent us from experiencing the blessings of a life led by God.

This Leader's Guide is designed to help you facilitate a small group using the included video messages and discussion questions. Participants will need to purchase a copy of the book *After "I Believe"* by James Emery White, on which this material is based.

There are three main components of this class: video messages, group discussion questions, and assigned reading from the book.

While you're certainly welcome to tailor the structure to whatever would work best for your group, we recommend having each participant do the assigned reading for homework before each meeting. Then, spend 20-30 minutes together watching the video messages and another 20-30 minutes discussing them using the included discussion questions.

In the following pages, you'll find a detailed 5-week guide, including the assigned reading and corresponding discussion questions.

Thank you for leading this group and using this material. We pray that it serves your own spiritual life as much as those you lead.

SESSION 1

PRE-SESSION HOMEWORK:

- Read Chapter 1—"Identities, Deceptions and Myths"

DURING GROUP SESSION:

INTRODUCTIONS / IMPRESSIONS

If this is a new group, spend some time introducing yourselves and discussing what you're hoping to learn from this study. If time allows, have 1-2 people share each week about their journey to saying "I believe."

If this is a pre-existing group, consider if you've already shared about your journey to saying "I believe." If you don't already know everyone's stories, take some time to let 1-2 people share each week. Otherwise, begin your time by sharing your general impressions from the first chapter as well as what you're hoping to learn from this study.

WATCH VIDEO MESSAGE (27:31)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Before you said "I believe", what did you think would happen next? What did you think the Christian life would be like and why?
2. At the beginning, Dr. White clarifies that spiritual exercises are *not* the same thing as *being* spiritual. Why is that an important distinction to make when talking about the Christian life?
3. On pages 15-19, Dr. White paints a picture of the new identity that comes with saying "I believe" - one of an adopted child and saint. Which aspect of your new identity is most difficult for you to embrace? Easiest?
4. With which deception of spirituality do you most identify (pages 20-24)? Why?
5. Which myth do you find yourself most prone to believing (pages 24-30)? Why?
6. Have you fallen into the trap of thinking that discipleship is something you receive? How so?

SESSION 2

PRE-SESSION HOMEWORK:

- Read Chapter 2—"How to Bible"
- Read Chapter 3—"Talking to God"
- Read Chapter 4—"Spending Time with God"

DURING GROUP SESSION:

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Continuing having 1-2 people share about their journey to saying "I believe." Then, share your general impressions from the reading homework.

WATCH VIDEO MESSAGE (19:24)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Jesus needed to spend time with His Father when He is also God?
2. By spending time with His Father, Jesus became redirected, refueled and resolved. Have you experienced that result from your own time with God? If so, share an example. If not, why do you think that is?
3. What time and place are most conducive for you to spend intentional time alone with God? How do you protect them from distractions?
4. Dr. White includes the disciplines of silence/solitude, prayer and reading the Bible in his recommended 7 minutes with God. What comes easiest for you? Most difficult?
5. Share with the group something that God has taught you recently through reading the Bible.
6. As a group, share about some of the obstacles you each face when it comes to prayer as well as some strategies that you have found to really work for you.
7. What have you noticed the effects to be when you spend time with God on a regular basis versus when you don't?

SESSION 3

PRE-SESSION HOMEWORK:

- Read Chapter 5—"Experiencing Life in Community"
- Read Chapter 7—"Becoming a Player"

DURING GROUP SESSION:

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Continuing having 1-2 people share about their journey to saying "I believe." Then, share your general impressions from the reading homework.

WATCH VIDEO MESSAGE (21:18)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Before becoming a Christian, what was your impression of the Church and its community of believers? How, if at all, has your perspective changed now that you're a believer?
2. What are you doing right now to invest in the type of Church community that can be characterized by the four marks Dr. White mentioned (a place where you can love and be loved, know and be known, serve and be served, celebrate and be celebrated)?
3. If you were to do a relational inventory of the people in your life who encourage you toward a deeper relationship with God, who would come to mind?
4. Do you view church with a balanced expectation of wanting *to serve* and *be served*, or do you lean more heavily toward one or the other?
5. What might you do to strengthen the Christ-centered relationships in your life?
6. While having a strong community with other Christ followers is critical, we're not called to cut ourselves off from the outside world. How are you at maintaining that balance in your life?

SESSION 4

PRE-SESSION HOMEWORK:

- Read Chapter 6—"Worshiping in Spirit and Truth"
- Read Chapter 8—"Positioning Your Heart"

DURING GROUP SESSION:

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Continuing having 1-2 people share about their journey to saying "I believe." Then, share your general impressions from the reading homework.

WATCH VIDEO MESSAGE (26:48)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever been to a place that felt sacred? Where was it and what contributed to that feeling?
2. Dr. White said, "We are not truly complete until we have oriented our lives around that which we were created to hold in awe, wonder and majesty." Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Describe your experience with worship. Does this come easily or difficultly for you? How did you learn to worship God, or do you feel like you're still learning?
4. How have you (or haven't you) experienced the benefits of worship that Dr. White described (pages 123-128)?
5. How do you (or can you) make sure you are worshiping God in truth? In spirit?
6. Each person has unique talents and different modes of expression. What form of worship comes easiest to you (e.g. music, singing, giving, praying, writing, etc.)?
7. How might you begin to consider all of life as an act of worship?

SESSION 5

PRE-SESSION HOMEWORK:

- Read Chapter 9—"Achieving Maximum Impact"
- Read Chapter 10—"Keeping in Step"

DURING GROUP SESSION:

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Let anyone who has not had the opportunity share about their journey of faith. Then, share your general impressions from the reading homework.

WATCH VIDEO MESSAGE (29:20)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What comes to your mind when you hear "Holy Spirit"? How did your reading and Dr. White's teaching help you to learn who the Holy Spirit *truly* is?
2. How would you describe the difference it has made to have the Holy Spirit in your life compared to before you said "I believe"?
3. In what ways can you prevent the Holy Spirit from filling your life? Is there an area of life in particular where you have kept the Holy Spirit from intervening?
4. When was the last time you were prompted by the Holy Spirit? How did you respond?
5. You read about the importance of sharing your faith with others. What barriers prevent you from doing this more?
6. If someone were to watch you for a week, how would they know you were a Christian?
7. Dr. White ended with a sobering reminder of the commitment involved in being a true follower of Christ. As you've reflected on that, do you think you're committed enough to follow Him to the cross? If not, how might you grow in your commitment to God?

FINAL DISCUSSION QUESTION: From all that you have learned from the study, what are the top two most important truths you do not want to forget?