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Introduction

Dear Disciplex,

Experience is a great teacher, although sometimes it might seem like the “school of hard knocks!” At such times there may be more wisdom in learning from others’ experience, from those who have been there, done that. That’s what these notes and guidelines are about—they were written in consultation with several experienced teachers of the *Growing Faith* discipleship manual.

It is my prayer that this guide will save you precious preparation time and make your leadership in the discipling process a joyous one. May God bless your obedience to His will and command to “make disciples.” Those who travel this journey with you will grow closer to God and to each other. Rejoice in being part of that process!



Dr. Don Bierle

Lesson 1

Fresh and New: Experiencing Life from Above

Purpose

1. To introduce the format, general content and purpose of the *Growing Faith* study.
2. To communicate the basis for being a Christian.
3. To explain what is new as a result of becoming a Christian.

Opening

1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are leading the group.
2. Explain the purpose of the study as stated in the first section of the Action Plan on page 7 of this Leader's Guide.
3. Hand out *Growing Faith* and read the key points in the introduction on page 5. Emphasize the three levels of participation discussed there, noting that regular attendance is important even if the lessons are not all completed beforehand.
4. Have participants introduce themselves. Encourage an interactive, personable atmosphere by asking them to tell about their vocation or favorite hobby, as well as why they decided to join the study.
5. Explain briefly how to find Bible references. (See 1.a. on page 10 of this *Leader's Guide*.)

Discussion

Lesson 1 is structured around two key questions about Christianity that are clarified and reinforced by Scripture verses and key points.

Question 1: How can I know for sure that I am a Christian?

MISCONCEPTIONS

Encourage participants to identify common misconceptions about what it means to be a

Christian, and invite individuals to read the Scripture responses to these misconceptions from their own Bibles.

Misconception:

I'm a Christian because I believe there is a God.

Scripture Readings:

John 8:41-47; 14:6 (Jewish leaders said they believed in God, but Jesus said they were not of God. Furthermore, no one can be in right relationship with the Father without faith in Jesus.)

1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Peter 3:18 (Jesus died for our sins, providing the ransom for our forgiveness.)

Misconception:

I'm a Christian because I'm basically a good person.

Scripture Readings:

Romans 3:20 (No person can be justified before God by one's own works).

Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2: 8-9 (Salvation is the result of God's grace—a gift, not works.)

Misconception:

I'm a Christian because I attend church and pray.

Scripture Readings:

John 3:16 (Attending church and praying are good things, but these actions cannot make one a Christian. They might even become a form of self-righteousness that one uses to avoid facing the sin problem that separates him or her from God.)

LESSON PLAN

1 John 5:11-13 (Nothing about church, prayer or anything else is mentioned; faith in Jesus Christ is the only prerequisite to eternal life.)

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Invite members to define what it means to be a Christian. Lead into a discussion of what the Bible teaches on this matter. According to the Bible, these are the evidences that show I'm a Christian:

1. I am repentant.
 - I *admit* that I am a sinner—Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19.
 - I *acknowledge* that Jesus Christ died for my sin and was raised from the dead so that I might be saved—Romans 10:9-10.
 - I *commit* my life to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord—Galatians 5:22-25; Matthew 16:24-26.
2. I have the assurance of the Holy Spirit within me.
 - All believers in Christ have the Holy Spirit within—1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19-20; John 7:38-39; Ephesians 1:13.
 - The Holy Spirit testifies within me, assuring that I am a child of God—Galatians 3:26; Romans 8:16.
3. I am experiencing positive changes in my attitudes and actions—1 John 2:9-11 and 3:10.

Question 2: What becomes new when I become a Christian?

The “Bible Discovery” section in Lesson 1 of Growing Faith provides the material for this question. Have individuals read the four key verses (in bold type) and identify what is new for the Christian according to each passage. (See summary on page 13 of Growing Faith.) This question about newness is emphasized again in the next lesson's review.

The supernatural dimension of becoming a Christian is the emphasis here. It is like a transformation or a metamorphosis because it is the result of an act of God in one's life. (This is also covered in the next lesson.)

Closing

Encourage participants to finish Lesson 1 and complete Lesson 2 of Growing Faith before the next session. Remind the class participants to give top priority to reading through the lesson and completing the questions in the text. Secondly, do the “Bible Discovery.” Finally, if there is time, do the “Daily Bible Readings,” a chapter per day and the questions for that chapter. Close in prayer that God will guide each person into a deeper relationship with Him.