

*The Layperson's  
Introduction to the  
New Testament*

Leader's Guide  
By Timothy Brock

# JUDSON ADULT ELECTIVE SERIES

Educational Ministries  
American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.

JUDSON ADULT ELECTIVE SERIES (JAES) provides an alternative to traditional uniform series Bible study. Each topical study helps adults grow as disciples of Christ in one of three areas: Christian faith and heritage, Christian life and work, and Christian witness and mission.

**Book:** Morgan, Carl H., *The Layperson's Introduction to the New Testament* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1991). This book may be purchased through Judson Press by calling 1-800-458-3766 or visiting [www.judsonpress.com](http://www.judsonpress.com).

**Leader's Guide:** Brock, Timothy, *Judson Adult Elective Series (JAES) Leader's Guide for The Layperson's Introduction to the New Testament* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press).

JUDSON  
P. O. Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851  
(1-800-458-3766)  
[www.judsonpress.com](http://www.judsonpress.com)

## INTRODUCTION

### *THE LAYPERSON'S INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT*

by Carl H. Morgan

Welcome to the leader's guide for the book, *The Layperson's Introduction to the New Testament*, by Carl H. Morgan.

#### **Purpose**

This course in the Judson Adult Elective Series is a thirteen-session study designed to provide adults with a basic overview of the content of and processes associated with the writing, collection, and translation of the materials included in the New Testament.

#### **Basic Assumptions**

This leader's guide was developed to facilitate "discovery learning" through both personal study and active classroom participation. Discovery learning assumes that persons are responsible and will participate in the learning process. The leader's responsibility is to help in that process. The lesson plans are designed with this in mind.

To that end, it is important that you, as the leader, encourage the class members to read the assigned material in the text prior to each session. Class members should be encouraged to participate fully in all classroom activities and discussions. Throughout the study, it is also suggested that individuals be recruited to present the results of independent research in the group context.

Try to create a warm and open environment in which class members actively integrate personal experiences, background information from the assigned readings, biblical insights, and informed opinions into a meaningful whole. To that end, you will prepare the materials needed for each session, introduce learning activities, provide transitional statements, encourage honest sharing, and facilitate guided discussions.

#### **Leader Preparation**

As you prepare to lead this study, first read the entire text, taking notes as you read. Begin to reflect on the discussion questions at the conclusion of each chapter. Then read the entire leader's guide. As you study this guide, begin to "customize" each of the sessions according to the demands of your specific situation. Note that each session is designed for a sixty-minute time frame. If you do not have sixty-minute sessions, select only those suggested learning activities and discussion questions in any particular session that would be appropriate for your class. Use the questions at the conclusion of the concurrent chapter of the text as the focus of discussion.

Pray that the “Good News” of the New Testament will inform your Christian pilgrimage in new and exciting ways as you and the members of your class discover the challenge of “Kingdom Living.”

*Tim Brock*

## Contents

Session 1—What is Kingdom Living? .....	1
Session 2—Good News!: An Invitation to Kingdom Living .....	5
Session 3—The Missionary Letters: Instruction in Kingdom Living, Part 1 .....	8
Session 4—The Missionary Letters: Instruction in Kingdom Living, Part 2 .....	11
Session 5—The Missionary Letters: Instruction in Kingdom Living, Part 3 .....	14
Session 6—Stories of Kingdom Living: The Synoptic Gospels and The Acts of the Apostles, Part 1 .....	16
Session 7—Stories of Kingdom Living: The Synoptic Gospels and The Acts of the Apostles, Part 2 .....	19
Session 8—Role Models and Leaders in The Kingdom: The Pastoral Epistles and Hebrews .....	22
Session 9—Challenges to Kingdom Living: Practical Advice to Churches in Transition .....	25
Session 10—Life, Love, and Last Things: Symbolism and Kingdom Living .....	28
Session 11—The New Testament Canon: Measure of Kingdom Living .....	31
Session 12—Transmitting the Good News of Kingdom Living .....	34
Session 13—What is “Kingdom Living”? A Review of the Course .....	38
Handout #1: The Missionary Letters Reading Guide .....	40
Handout #2: The Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles Reading Guide .....	42
Handout #3: The Epistle of Barnabas .....	43

# SESSION ONE

## WHAT IS “KINGDOM LIVING?”

Text: *pages ix–x and 1–10*

Scripture: *Luke 4:16–30*

Objectives:

- *To introduce the text.*
- *To provide an overview of the course.*
- *To develop definitions of the concepts, “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom Living.”*

### LEADER PREPARATION

Prior to the session, read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passage, and the lesson plan in this guide. Prepare a brief lecture on the basic premises of the first chapter as outlined in this guide. Make a copy of the course overview (Step 3) for each class member, or list the overview on newsprint and display during the thirteen-week session. On a second sheet of newsprint, write the list of “Defining Terms” suggested in Step 2 of the lesson. (Save this newsprint for use with Session 13.) Have available newsprint and markers.

### BEGINNING THE SESSION

15 minutes

#### 1. **Introductions and prayer.** 10 minutes

Introduce yourself to the group and open the session with a prayer of beginnings. Ask class members to respond to the following statement: “The primary goal that I hope to attain through active participation in this course of study is . . .” After sharing your own response, ask participants to introduce themselves and share their personal goals. Give the class members a few minutes to read the introduction, pages ix and x.

#### 2. **Introduce the text.** 2 minutes

Call attention to the text. Explain the goal of the text (“to show the New Testament as part of the ongoing life of the witnessing church”) and the arrangement of the material (“probable chronological order”). This information is found on page x of the introduction.

#### 3. **Provide a course overview.** 3 minutes

Display the following course overview:

**Session 1—What is “Kingdom Living?”**

Read the introduction and chapter 1 of the text.

**Session 2—Good News!: An Invitation to Kingdom Living**

Read chapter 2 of the text.

**Session 3, 4, and 5—The Missionary Letters: Instruction in Kingdom Living**

Read chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the text.

**Session 6 and 7—Stories of Kingdom Living: The Synoptic Gospels and The Acts of the Apostles**

Read chapter 6 of the text.

**Session 8—Role Models and Leaders in The Kingdom: The Pastoral Epistles and Hebrews**

Read chapter 7 of the text.

**Session 9—Challenges to Kingdom Living: Practical Advice to Churches in Transition**

Read chapter 8 of the text.

**Session 10—Life, Love, and Last Things: Symbolism and Kingdom Living**

Read chapter 9 of the text.

**Session 11—The New Testament Canon: Measure of Kingdom Living**

Read chapter 10 of the text.

**Session 12—Transmitting the Good News of Kingdom Living**

Read chapters 11 and 12 of the text.

**Session 13—What is “Kingdom Living”? A Review of the Course**

**DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

**40 minutes**

**4. Set the context.** 5 minutes

Present a brief lecture on the basic premises of the first chapter of the text. Include the following points:

—Certain aspects of the life and teachings of Jesus assumed major importance in the preaching of the early church, and thus became the core of the whole of the New Testament.

—Almost all of the teachings of Jesus centered upon the concept “Kingdom of God.” It is, therefore, important to understand fully what Jesus meant when he used this term.

—Jesus’ understanding of the “Kingdom of God” was radically different from first-century Jewish expectations for a “Kingdom of Israel.”

**5. Define the concept.** 10 minutes

Display the newsprint sheet with the list of “Defining Terms”:

**Defining Terms**

material prosperity

patriotism

the letter of the Law

justice

Good News!	healing
nationalistic	universal
limited by geographic boundaries	a cross
acceptance	service
freedom	grace
a sword	a palace
descendants of Abraham	transcendent
an empty tomb	timeless
the spirit of the Law	repentance
powerful	empowered
miraculous	spiritual
signs	transformation
spiritual kingdom	descendants of Adam
a present reality	a future hope
sacrificial	earthly kingdom
political	ethical living

(Note: A “defining term” is a symbol, an action, or a characteristic used to describe a concept.)

Ask the group to select terms from this list that would be characteristic of first-century Jewish expectations for a “Kingdom of Israel.” Refer them to pages 5 and 6 of the text and the section “The Kingdom of God in the Hope of the Jews.” Place an asterisk beside each of the terms selected by class members. When all appropriate terms have been marked, allow class members to contribute other terms that describe this expectation. Record these additional words on this sheet of newsprint. Based on this discussion, ask at least two group members to offer a one-sentence definition of the term “Kingdom of Israel.”

**6. Examine the Scriptures.** 5 minutes

Ask a class member to read Luke 4:16–30. Then comment that this passage has been called the “Inaugural Sermon of Jesus.” Based on his understanding of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus here began to share his understanding of the “Kingdom of God.”

Discuss the following questions:

- What was the response of Jesus’ audience?
- Why do you think that they responded in this fashion?

**7. Define the concept.** 15 minutes

Call attention again to the list of “Defining Terms.” Based on their understanding of the text and the passage from Luke, ask participants to select terms that are characteristic of Jesus’ teachings about the “Kingdom of God.” Refer to pages 6 and 7 of the text, the section “The Kingdom of God in the Teachings of Jesus.” Place a plus sign beside each of the terms selected. When all appropriate terms have been marked, allow participants to contribute other terms that are descriptive of the concept. Record these additional words on the newsprint.

Using the results of the preceding discussions, lead the class to develop a definition of the concept the “Kingdom of God.” Record this definition on a blank sheet of newsprint and save for display during Session 13 of the study.

**8. Examine the text.** 5 minutes

Lead the class members in comparing their definition of the “Kingdom of God” with the definition proposed on page 7 of the text. Ask: What are some of the similarities and differences between the two definitions? Finally, state that when an individual accepts God’s free gift of the Kingdom of God, he or she is subject to the standards of kingdom ideals. To order one’s entire life by kingdom ideals is to participate in Kingdom Living. In the next twelve sessions, we will explore how the early Christians participated in Kingdom Living and how we may do the same today.

**CLOSING THE SESSION**  
**5 minutes**

**9. Assignment.** 2 minutes

Encourage the class to read chapter 2 in the text (pages 11–18) before the next session.

**10. Close with prayer.** 3 minutes

Conclude with a brief prayer thanking God for the coming of the Kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **SESSION TWO**

### **GOOD NEWS!: AN INVITATION TO KINGDOM LIVING**

Text: *pages 11–18*

Scripture: *Acts 2:14–41; 7:1–60; 17:16–34*

Objectives :

- *To explore the form and content of first-century oral gospel.*
- *To compare the role of preaching in first-century and modern contexts.*

#### **LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passages, and the lesson plan in this guide. List on newsprint the six major emphases of the oral gospel (page 12 of the text). (Note: Omit the Scripture references included in the text.) Prepare the group assignment sheets suggested in Step 4. Have copies of Handout I, The Missionary Letters Reading Guide, (found in the back of this guide) ready to distribute to the class at the end of the session.

#### **BEGINNING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

**1. Open with prayer.** 2 minutes

Ask a class member to open the session with prayer.

**2. Discuss “gospel.”** 8 minutes

Ask the members of the class to explain the following statement: “There was a gospel before me for reflection and discussion. Then ask: How was this “gospel before there were Gospels” related to the preaching of the early Christian church?”

#### **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

**40 minutes**

**3. Set the context.** 5 minutes

Display the newsprint listing the six major emphases of the oral gospel, or the *kerygma*. Briefly explain each element of the outline. Comment on the evangelistic purposes that underlie the oral gospel.

**4. Study the Scripture.** 25 minutes

Tell the class that one primary source of examples of first-century oral gospel is the book of Acts. In fact, fully one-third of this book is a record of the sermons and speeches of the early Christian evangelists. Using the six major emphases of the oral gospel as a point of reference, we will now analyze three of the sermons recorded in the book of Acts.

Divide the class into three groups with no more than seven in a group. If the class is too large for three groups, divide into as many groups as necessary and give some groups the same assignment. Give each group an assignment sheet with the following information and questions:

### **Scripture**

- Group 1—Acts 2:14–41
- Group 2—Acts 7:1–60
- Group 3—Acts 17:16–34

### **Questions for all groups:**

- Who was the evangelist?
- To whom was this sermon addressed?
- What was the purpose of this sermon?
- Does this sermon contain each of the six emphases? If not, which are missing? Why?
- What were the results of this sermon?

Allow approximately 15 minutes for small group discussion. Have the class reconvene as a group, and ask a representative of each of the small groups to report on the assignment. List the responses of each group on newsprint, comparing and contrasting answers.

### **5. Compare New Testament and modern-day preaching. 10 minutes**

Ask class members to recall a sermon, which has had a significant impact on his or her life. Allow time for reflection on the context, content, and topic of that particular sermon. In light of this reflection, the study of the text, and the study of the Scriptures, lead the class in a discussion of the following question: How has the nature and role of preaching changed since New Testament times?

## **CLOSING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

### **6. Introduce the next session. 5 minutes**

As a transition to the next session, make the following statement: The evangelistic sermons of the first generation of Christian preachers produced many converts. These new Christians naturally began to struggle with practical issues of Kingdom Living. They needed instruction and guidance. The first New Testament writings, the Missionary Letters of Paul, provided some of this basic instruction.

### **7. Assignment. 3 minutes**

Explain that the next three sessions will deal with the earliest New Testament writings, the Missionary Letters of Paul. Ask class members to read chapter 3 of the text (pages 19–30) in preparation for the next session. Distribute copies of Handout I, The Missionary Letters Reading Guide. Encourage the members of the class to take notes using this chart as they read the assigned materials and to bring these notes with them to the next session.

Ask a member of the class to prepare and give a brief report on Paul's missionary activities as outlined in chapter 3 of the text (pages 19–21 and 25–28) during the next session.

**8. Close with prayer.** 2 minutes

Close the session with prayer, thanking God for the message of the “gospel before there were Gospels” and the way that this “good news” informs our lives today.

**SESSION THREE**  
**THE MISSIONARY LETTERS: INSTRUCTION IN KINGDOM LIVING**  
**Part 1**

Text: *pages 19–30*

Scripture: *Galatians 2:1–21*

Objectives:

- *To identify a number of issues and problems associated with the growth of the early Christian church.*
- *To understand the often tenuous relationship between Judaism and first-century Christianity.*
- *To identify Paul’s instruction and guidance with regard to these specific issues and problems.*

**LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passage, and the lesson plan in this guide. Put on newsprint the information from Handout I, The Missionary Letters Reading Guide, (found in back of this guide) to be displayed during Sessions 3, 4 and 5. Have available markers. If possible, obtain a wall map of the first-century Mediterranean world that can be used to trace Paul’s missionary journeys. (Note: If such a map is not available, refer to page 23 of the text.) Contact the class member that you asked to report on Paul’s missionary activities outlined in chapter 3 (pages 19–21, 25–28) and offer your assistance if needed.

**BEGINNING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

**1. Share concerns and celebrations.** 5 minutes

Have a time of sharing celebrations and concerns that have been a part of Kingdom Living experienced during recent days. Ask a member of the class to lead in prayer, addressing these concerns and celebrations and asking for God’s guidance in today’s session.

**2. Set the context.** 5 minutes

Tell the class that last week we heard about the nature of the oral gospel as revealed in the evangelistic sermons of the early Christian preachers. We also heard that this preaching resulted in many new converts who needed instruction and guidance in practical issues of Kingdom Living. In the next three sessions, we will focus attention on some examples of this instruction and guidance as recorded in the first New Testament writings, the Missionary Letters of Paul.

Briefly share the objectives of today’s session with the group.

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

45 minutes

### 3. **Examine the text.** 10 minutes

Ask the designated class member to share the report on Paul's missionary activities as outlined in chapter 3 of the text. After the report, emphasize the fact that the early missionaries first shared the gospel with a primarily Jewish audience. Eventually, they broadened their witness to include an increasingly Gentile audience.

### 4. **Chart the course.** 10 minutes

Display the newsprint chart of Handout I. The reading guide focuses on three questions:

- To what type of audience did Paul address this letter?
- What were the specific issues or problems faced by this audience?
- What words of instruction and guidance did Paul offer?

Ask the members of the class to answer these questions for each letter, assisted by their reading notes. Record their responses on the newsprint chart. Address any other questions about the assigned readings.

### 5. **Examine the Scripture.** 15 minutes

Call attention to the information recorded with regard to the Galatian churches. Tell the class that it is not surprising to learn that the first letter written by Paul addressed a major issue that threatened to block the growth of the early church. That issue, with both practical and theological implications, was a major dispute about the appropriate relationship between the Jewish faith and the developing Christian faith. This issue is often phrased in terms of a polarity: obedience to the Law versus acceptance of God's gift of grace. Ask a class member to read Galatians 2:1–21 aloud.

Then discuss the following questions:

- What do we learn about the background of the “Law-versus-grace” dispute from this passage?
- What experiences in Paul's background uniquely equipped him to address this dispute?
- What was Paul's position in the dispute?
- How is the “Law-versus-grace” debate related to the differences noted between the Jewish notion of the “Kingdom of Israel” and Jesus' teaching about the “Kingdom of God” as discussed in Session 1?

### 6. **Discuss “Law versus grace.”** 10 minutes

Ask the class to think of specific examples of how the “Law-versus-grace” debate expresses itself in modern Christianity.

Then, in light of the study of both the text and the Scripture, discuss the following questions:

- How do you interpret the relationship between Law and grace?

—How does your interpretation of this relationship inform your understanding of Kingdom Living?

## **CLOSING THE SESSION**

**5 minutes**

**7. Assignment.** 3 minutes

Explain that the next session will deal with Paul's instructions to a primarily Gentile audience and the unique problems that they faced as they struggled with issues of Kingdom Living. Encourage the class members to read chapter 4 of the text (pages 31–41) and use Handout I to take notes on their reading.

Ask a member of the group to give a brief report on Paul's missionary activities as outlined in chapter 4 of the text (pages 31 and 37) during the next session.

**8. Close with prayer.** 2 minutes

Close with prayer thanking God for the gift of grace and the challenges of Kingdom Living.

## SESSION FOUR

### THE MISSIONARY LETTERS: INSTRUCTION IN KINGDOM LIVING

#### Part 2

Text: *pages 31–41*

Scripture: *1 Corinthians 7:1–40; 11:2–34; 12:1–31*

Objectives:

- *To explore the pattern of evangelism and growth in the early Christian church.*
- *To identify a number of issues and problems associated with the growth of the early Christian church in the Gentile context.*
- *To identify Paul’s instruction and guidance with regard to these specific issues and problems.*

#### LEADER PREPARATION

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passages, and the lesson plan in this guide. Contact the class member that you asked to report on Paul’s missionary activities outlined in chapter 4 and offer your assistance in the preparation of the report if needed. Prepare the group assignment sheets suggested in step 5 of the lesson. Have available the newsprint chart of Handout I, The Missionary Letters Reading Guide, markers, and the map used to trace Paul’s missionary journeys.

#### BEGINNING THE SESSION

**5 minutes**

1. **Open with prayer.** 2 minutes

Open the session with prayer, or ask a member of the class to lead in prayer.

2. **Set the context.** 3 minutes

Provide a brief introduction to the session by comparing with the previous session. Explain that during the previous session we heard about Paul’s instructions and guidance for an audience of first-century Jewish Christians who struggled with theological issues related to the “Law-versus-grace” debate. During this session we will hear about Paul’s instruction and guidance for an audience of primarily Gentile Christians, former pagans, who needed practical advice in Kingdom Living.

#### DEVELOPING THE SESSION

**50 minutes**

3. **Examine the text.** 5 minutes

Ask the designated class member to share the prepared report on Paul’s missionary activities outlined in chapter 4 (pages 31 and 37).

**4. Chart the course.** 10 minutes

Display the newsprint chart of Handout I. Ask class members to share the results of their reading. Record the responses on the chart. Ask: How does an understanding of such things as authorship, audience, and purpose help us to a deeper comprehension of the gospel message? Address any other questions about the assigned readings.

**5. Examine the Scripture.** 20 minutes

Call attention to the information recorded on the chart with regard to Paul's letters to the church at Corinth. Explain that one of the primary problems in the church at Corinth was Gentile misunderstandings and perversions of Christian teachings. Today we will examine passages of Scripture that address three examples of such misunderstandings. During this session, we will discuss Paul's suggestions about how these issues in the life of the Corinthian Christians should be informed by the principles of Kingdom Living.

Divide the class into three groups with no more than seven in a group. If the class is too large for three groups, divide into as many groups as necessary and give some groups the same assignment. Give each group an assignment sheet with the following information and questions:

**Scripture:**

- Group 1 — 1 Corinthians 7:1–40
- Group 2 — 1 Corinthians 11:2–34
- Group 3 — 1 Corinthians 12:1–31

**Questions for all groups:**

- What specific problem is addressed in this passage?
- How did Paul suggest that this problem should be resolved? Be specific.
- Did Paul intend for his advice to be taken literally by the first-century Corinthians?

Allow approximately 10 minutes for small group discussion. Have the class reconvene as a group and ask a representative of each of the small groups to report on the assignment. List the responses of each group on newsprint, comparing and contrasting answers.

**6. Discuss Paul's instructions.** 15 minutes

Ask the following question: Should Paul's words of instruction and guidance to this group of first-century Gentile Christians be interpreted literally by Christians today?

If the answer to the question is yes, then how would Paul's instruction and guidance with regard to irregularities in worship be used to inform Kingdom Living in the modern context? (1 Corinthians 11:2–34)

If the answer to the question is no, then how should Paul's instruction and guidance with regard to spiritual giftedness be used to inform Kingdom Living in the modern context? (1 Corinthians 12:1–31)

## **CLOSING THE SESSION**

**5 minutes**

**7. Assignment.** 3 minutes

Explain that the next session will deal with a series of missionary letters written by Paul during a period of imprisonment. Encourage participants to read chapter 5 of the text (pages 43–54) and use Handout I to take notes as they read. Ask a member of the group to prepare a brief report on Paul’s missionary activities outlined in chapter 5 of the text to be given during the next session.

**8. Close with prayer.** 2 minutes

Close the session with a prayer, thanking God for the instruction and guidance in Kingdom Living provided in the writings of the New Testament.

**SESSION FIVE**  
**THE MISSIONARY LETTERS: INSTRUCTION IN KINGDOM LIVING**  
**Part 3**

Text: *pages 43–54*

Scripture: *Philippians 2:1–11*

Objectives :

*To explore the pattern of evangelism and growth in the early Christian church.*

*To identify issues and problems associated with the growth of the early Christian church.*

*To identify Paul’s instruction and guidance in Kingdom Living with regard to these specific issues and problems.*

**LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passage, and the lesson plan in this guide. Contact the person asked to prepare and report on Paul’s missionary activities outlined in chapter 5 and offer your assistance if needed. On newsprint, write Philippians 2:1–11 from a modern translation. This passage will be used as a unison reading in step 7. Have copies of Handout II, The Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles Reading Guide, (found in the back of this guide) ready to be distributed at the end of the session. Have available a copy of Handout I on newsprint, a map of Paul’s missionary journeys, and newsprint and markers.

**BEGINNING THE SESSION**  
**10 minutes**

**1. Share concerns and celebrations. 8 minutes**

Spend a few minutes sharing celebrations and concerns that have been a part of Kingdom Living during recent days. Ask a group member to lead in prayer, addressing these concerns and celebrations, and asking God’s guidance in today’s session.

**2. Introduce the session. 2 minutes**

Tell the class that we will be examining the words of instruction and guidance contained in the Prison Epistles, four missionary letters written by Paul during a period of imprisonment in the city of Rome.

**DEVELOPING THE SESSION**  
**40 minutes**

**3. Examine the text. 5 minutes**

Ask the designated class member to share the prepared report on Paul’s missionary activities as outlined in chapter 5.

**4. Chart the course.** 15 minutes

Display the newsprint chart of Handout I. Ask the class to share the results of their assigned reading. List the responses on the chart. Tell the class that a major theological theme contained in these letters is Christology—the study of the doctrine of Christ. Ask: How do these letters contribute to your understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ? Address any questions about the assigned readings.

**5. Examine the text.** 20 minutes

Begin by reviewing the objectives of Sessions 3 through 5. Tell the class that one of the theological themes evidenced in the Prison Epistles is Christology. As we have progressed through the study of the Missionary Letters, other themes and issues have been consistently addressed. Using the newsprint chart of Handout I and the reading notes of the class members, ask the class to identify the common threads. The following examples may be used to stimulate the discussion:

— Defense of apostolic authority. In several letters, Paul felt obligated to provide evidence of his claim as an apostle.

— The “Law-versus-grace” debate. This issue was a major concern of the letter to the Galatian churches and to the church at Rome.

As the group identifies other themes and issues, list the responses on newsprint.

Ask class members to share their most significant learning or discovery during the study of the Missionary Letters.

**CLOSING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

**6. Assignment.** 5 minutes

Explain that the next two sessions will focus on the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts. Encourage class members to read chapter 6 of the text (pages 55–67). Distribute copies of Handout II, The Synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles Reading Guide. This chart can be used for taking notes on the assigned reading.

**7. Close the session.** 5 minutes

Tell the class that the New Testament literature is filled with hymns and fragments of hymns once used in early Christian worship. One of the most significant of these hymns is recorded in the second chapter of the book of Philippians. The author of our text called this the “Kenosis” or “emptying” passage. This hymn is a beautiful statement of how Jesus Christ understood and modeled Kingdom Living.

As a closing benediction read in unison Philippians 2:1–11 that you have put on newsprint.

**SESSION SIX**  
**STORIES OF KINGDOM LIVING:**  
**THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
**Part 1**

Text: *pages 55–67*

Objectives:

- *To understand the unique nature and purposes of the Synoptic Gospels—the oral gospel in written form.*
- *To trace the development of the Synoptic Gospels.*
- *To explore and analyze the unique contributions of each of the Synoptic Gospels to our understanding of the gospel message.*

**LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text and the lesson plan in this guide. Prepare a lecture on the “Synoptic Problem” and the “Two-Document Theory” as described on pages 56–60 of the text. Resource materials listed in the bibliography of chapter 6 may be helpful in your preparation. List on newsprint the information from Handout II, The Synoptic Gospels and The Acts of the Apostles Reading Guide. Display this chart during Sessions 6 and 7. Put the diagram on page 60 on newsprint to be used in Step 2. Have available newsprint and markers.

**BEGINNING THE SESSION**  
**15 minutes**

**1. Share the good news.** 5 minutes

As you begin a study of the “Good News” of Kingdom Living as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, ask the class to share some good news that they have received in recent days. When everyone has had an opportunity to share, ask one of the participants to lead the group in a prayer of thanksgiving celebrating this good news.

**2. Option 1—Set the context.** 10 minutes

As an introduction to Session 2, the class was asked to explain the following statement: “There was a gospel before there were Gospels.” As an introduction to this session, ask class members to once again explain their understanding of this statement. Allow time for reflection and discussion. Then ask: How is the “gospel” related to the Synoptic Gospels?

**Option 2—Examine the text.** 10 minutes

Ask a class member to read the Avery Dulles quote on page 56 of the text. Then ask the following question: Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

60. (Note that these topics are probably the most “technical” aspects of the text. Following the outline of the material in the text, paraphrase and simplify as you present this information. Allow opportunity during the course of the lecture for participants to ask questions. Refer to the diagram as you explain the “Two-Document Theory.”) When you feel that most of the participants have a working knowledge of the problem and the theory, move to the next section of the lesson.

**4. Chart the course. 25 minutes**

Display the newsprint chart of Handout II. This chart addresses seven questions:

- Who is the author of this material?
- What do we know about the author?
- When was this material written?
- From what place did this material originate?
- To what type of audience did the author write?
- What sources were used in the writing of this material?
- What unique aspects of the gospel message are recorded in this material?

Ask the class members to share their responses to these questions using their reading notes. List the responses on the chart. After the class has responded to the previous questions, discuss the following questions:

- What unique aspects of the gospel message are recorded in each book?
- How are these unique emphases related to the character of the author? To the character of the audience?

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

**5 minutes**

**5. Introduce the next session. 2 minutes**

Tell the class that during this session, we heard about the historical/critical study of the Synoptic Gospels. We learned about authorship, dating, audiences, and unique emphases in these works. In the next session, we will apply this learning as we read and compare several passages from these three Gospels.

The phrase “historical/critical study” means that in order to understand a book, chapter, verse, or even a word in the Scriptures we have to understand the historical setting from which it came and ask “critical” questions about the text or the setting. The word “critical” is used in the positive sense of the word. We are asking questions so that we can understand not to “criticize.”

For example, Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:4–6 that men should not cover their heads while praying or prophesying and that women who pray and prophesy should have their heads veiled. To properly understand this concern of Paul’s we need to understand that the culture in Corinth at that time was quite different from our own. Prostitutes shaved or cut their hair. They were not veiled. Paul was concerned about women in the church who were apparently unveiled and had cut their hair. He was concerned about their witness in public. Also, in those days, Jewish men prayed with their heads covered. That practice changed in the fourth century.

Some of the critical questions we might ask today are as follows: Are these verses literally applicable in our society? Is there a general principle that is applicable to us beyond the literal veiling of women? These and other questions that we might ask would help us understand the original meaning of the text and interpret it for today.

**6. Assignment. 2 minutes**

Ask class members to study the following passages: Mark 1:1–11; Matthew 3:1–7; and Luke 3:1–22. Ask them to look for similarities and differences in the passages. If available, a Gospel Parallel would be helpful. Gospel Parallels, sometimes called Gospel harmonies or Gospel synopses, are books that take the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), or all Four Gospels, and place similar passages side by side to compare the wording.

For example, a Gospel Parallel places Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed found in Matthew 13:31–33, Mark 4:30–32, and Luke 13:18–21 side by side so that they can be compared.

Three books that may be available in a church library or a local library are *Gospel Parallels*, edited by Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979; *A Synopsis of the Gospels, The Synoptic Gospels with the Johannine Parallels*, by H.F.D. Sparks, published by Fortress Press, 1964; *A Harmony of the Gospels*, by Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest DeWitt Burton, published by Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904.

**7. Close with prayer. 1 minute**

Close the session with a prayer.

**SESSION SEVEN**  
**STORIES OF KINGDOM LIVING:**  
**THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
**Part 2**

Text: *pages 55–67*

Scriptures: *Mark 1:1–11; Matthew 3:1–17; Luke 3:1–22*

Objectives:

- *To trace the development of the Synoptic Gospels through an historical/critical study of selected passages in each gospel.*
- *To explore and analyze the unique contributions of each gospel to our understanding of the gospel message.*

**LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passages, and the lesson plan in this guide. If possible, obtain three copies of a Gospel Parallel, a Bible study tool that will be used in Step 3. If copies of a Gospel Parallel are not available, make sure that each of the small groups has at least three copies of the same version of the Bible. Prepare the group assignment sheets suggested in Step 3. It may be helpful to copy the pages in this guide on which the assignments are listed. Display the newsprint chart of Handout II and the newsprint copy of the diagram of page 60 of the text.

**BEGINNING THE SESSION**

**15 minutes**

**1. Share celebrations and concerns. 5 minutes**

Ask the class to share celebrations and concerns that have been a part of Kingdom Living during recent days. Ask a member of the class to lead in prayer, addressing these concerns and celebrations and asking God's guidance in today's session.

**2. Review the previous session. 10 minutes**

Briefly review the material shared in the last session dealing with the Synoptic Problem and the Two-Document Theory described on pages 56–60 of the text. Use the newsprint chart of Handout II and newsprint copy of the diagram from page 60 in this review. Ask if there are any questions related to this material.

**DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

**40 minutes**

**3. Examine the Scriptures. 35 minutes**

Tell the class that now that we have a working knowledge of the historical/critical approach to the study of The Synoptic Gospels, we will use that knowledge to analyze selected passages in each gospel.

Divide the class into three groups with no more than seven in a group. If the class is too large for three groups, divide into as many groups as necessary and give some groups the same assignment. Provide each group with a copy of a Gospel Parallel or three copies of the same version of the Bible. Give each group an assignment sheet with the following information and questions:

**Group 1:**

**Scripture:** Mark 1:1–6; Matthew 3:1–10; and Luke 3:1–14.

Using the verses from Mark as the point of reference, compare and contrast the material contained in these three passages by answering the following questions:

- What biblical story is the subject of these passages?
- What basic information is common to all three passages?
- Both Matthew and Luke have two chapters of material that precede the starting point chosen by Mark. With what material do Matthew and Luke begin their gospel accounts? Why did Mark not include this additional information?
- What information is unique to Luke's account? What is the relationship between this unique information and the character of Luke's intended audience?
- What information is included only in Matthew and Luke? Speculate on the source of this information. Why did Mark not include these verses?

**Group 2:**

**Scripture:** Mark 1:7–8; Matthew 3:11–2; and Luke 3:15–20.

Using the verses from Mark as the point of reference, compare and contrast the material contained in these three passages by answering the following questions:

- What biblical story is the subject of these passages?
- What basic information is common to all three passages?
- Which verses are unique to Luke's account? What is the relationship between these unique verses and the character of Luke's intended audience?
- What information is included only in Matthew and Luke? Speculate on the source of this information. Why did Mark not include these verses?

**Group 3:**

**Scripture:** Mark 1:9–11; Matthew 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22.

Using the verses from Mark as the point of reference, compare and contrast the material contained in these three passages by answering the following questions:

- What biblical story is the subject of these passages?
- What basic information is common to all three passages?
- Which verses are unique to Matthew's account? Speculate on the source of this information. What is the relationship between these unique verses and the character of Matthew's intended audience?

Allow approximately 15 minutes for small group work. Have the class reconvene as a group and ask a representative of each of the small groups to report on the assignment.

**4. Examine the text.** 5 minutes

Ask: In your opinion, does our historical/critical analysis of the Synoptic Gospels confirm the Two-Document Theory as outlined in the text? Why or why not?

**CLOSING THE SESSION**  
**5 minutes**

**5. Assignment.** 1 minute

Ask class members to read chapter 7 in the text (pages 69–77) before the next session.

**6. Close with prayer.** 4 minutes

After a period of silence, say a prayer of thanksgiving for the lives and the messages of the writers of the Synoptic Gospels.

## SESSION EIGHT

### LEADERS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE PASTORAL EPISTLES AND HEBREWS

Text: pages 69–77

Scriptures: 1 Timothy 3:1–13; 4:6–16

Objectives:

- *To explore the roles and qualities of leaders in the early Christian church.*
- *To explore the roles and qualities of leaders in the modern Christian church.*
- *To define the term “Christian leadership.”*

#### LEADER PREPARATION

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passages, and the lesson plan in this guide. Have available newsprint and markers.

#### BEGINNING THE SESSION

**10 minutes**

**1. Open with prayer.** 2 minutes

Open the session with a brief sharing of concerns and a prayer.

**2. Identify committed Christian leaders.** 8 minutes

Ask the class to think about specific persons whom they consider to be positive examples of committed Christian leadership. Ask them to share the name, any official position that this person may hold or have held, if any, and the specific qualities or characteristics that make this person a positive example of committed Christian leadership. List on newsprint and save for use later in the session.

#### DEVELOPING THE SESSION

**45 minutes**

**3. Examine the text.** 10 minutes

Briefly explain the meaning of the term “Pastoral Epistles.” (Refer to page 69 of the text.) Then comment that while offering some personal words of instruction and guidance to his young associates, Paul suggested a more advanced form of organization for the first-century Christian church. Ask: From your understanding of the material in the text, why was a more advanced form of organization needed in the late first-century Christian church? Address any other questions about the assigned reading.

**4. Examine the Scriptures.** 15 minutes

Tell the class that in his first letter to Timothy, Paul acknowledged that at least two offices had already developed in the first-century church. These two offices were the bishop/overseer and the

deacon. Today, we examine the roles and qualifications for these offices. Ask a class member to read 1 Timothy 3:1–7. Then ask the following questions:

- The office of bishop/elder in the first-century church would be comparable to what position in today’s church?
- What does this passage tell us about the role of the bishop/overseer?
- What does this passage tell us about the qualities of the bishop/overseer?

List the responses to these questions on newsprint.

Ask another class member to read 1 Timothy 3:8–13. Then ask the following questions:

- Was the office of deacon in the first-century church comparable to the office of deacon in today’s church?
- What does the passage tell us about the qualities of the deacon?

Finally, comment that Paul also offered some general words of advice to Timothy as an older, more experienced minister to a younger colleague.

Ask a class member to read 1 Timothy 4:6–16. Then ask the following questions:

- What does this passage tell us about the role of the Christian leader?
- What does this passage tell us about the qualities of the Christian leader?

## **5. Compare leadership qualities. 20 minutes**

Call attention to the newsprint sheet containing the names, roles, and qualities of committed Christian leaders identified during Step 2. Then ask the following questions:

- Paul listed two offices of the church in his letter to Timothy. How many different offices or positions did our list of committed leaders include?
- Does one have to hold an office in order to be a committed Christian leader?
- Compare the qualities of Christian leaders contained in the three passages from Paul’s letter to Timothy and those identified on our list of committed leaders. Did we identify any persons who did not meet Paul’s suggested criteria?
- How should Paul’s instruction and guidance to Timothy with regard to the first-century church be applied in today’s church?

After discussing the previous questions, ask: Given your reading of the text, your past experiences with committed Christian leaders, and your interpretation of the Scriptures, what is your definition of Christian Leadership? Write this definition on newsprint.

**CLOSING THE SESSION**  
**5 minutes**

**6. Assignment.** 1 minute

Ask class members to read chapter 8 of the text (pages 79–87) before the next session.

**7. Close with prayer.** 4 minutes

Close the session with prayer, thanking God for the instruction and guidance provided by the committed Christian leaders affirmed during today's session.

## **SESSION NINE**

### **CHALLENGES TO KINGDOM LIVING: PRACTICAL ADVICE TO CHURCHES IN TRANSITION**

Text: *pages 79–87*

Scriptures: *Option 1—Romans 4:1–5; 5:1–1; James 2:14–26*

*Option 2—1 Peter 2:1–12; 2:13–17; James 2:1–9; James 3:1–12*

Objectives:

- *To identify several critical issues and problems faced by the first-century Christian church.*
- *To discover the practical advice offered to the church by first-century Christian leaders.*
- *To explore how this advice might inform twenty-first-century Kingdom Living.*

#### **LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passages, and the lesson plan in this guide. If you choose Option 2 of Step 4, prepare the suggested group assignment sheets. Have available newsprint and markers.

#### **BEGINNING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

**1. Share celebrations and concerns.** 8 minutes

Spend a few minutes sharing celebrations and concerns that have been a part of Kingdom Living during recent days. Ask a class member to lead in prayer, addressing these concerns and celebrations and asking for God's guidance in today's session.

**2. Set the context.** 2 minutes

Tell the class that today we will explore the General Epistles. These letters of instruction and guidance offered very practical advice in matters of daily Kingdom Living at a time when Christians faced active persecution from outside forces and destructive heresies from within their own community of faith.

#### **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

**45 minutes**

**3. Examine the text.** 20 minutes

Lead the class in a discussion of the historical/critical information related to each of the General Epistles by addressing the following questions:

- Who was the author of this material?
- What do we know about this author?
- When was this material written?

- To what type of audience did the author write?
- What were the specific issues or problems faced by this audience?
- What words of instruction and guidance did the writer offer?

List the class responses to these questions on newsprint.

As the group discusses the authorship and dating of these letters, ask them to recall the discussion of the authorship of Hebrews described in the previous chapter of the text. The book of Hebrews did not find a secure place in the canon of the New Testament until a very late date, primarily because the church could not clearly identify its author. The authenticity and inspiration of the Pastoral Epistles has also been the subject of much discussion, as evidenced in chapter 8 of the text. In light of this, ask the following question: With regard to both the book of Hebrews and the Pastoral Epistles, what is the importance and relationship of apostolic authorship and inspiration?

Address any questions about assigned readings at this time.

#### **4. Option 1: Examine the Scriptures. 25 minutes**

Explain to the class that, in addition to the issue of apostolic authorship, the early church was slow to accept the Epistle of James as Scripture on theological grounds as well. One key point of James’s teaching seemed at odds with the apostolically ordained teachings of Paul. In the mind of some early church leaders, it seemed that James famous dictum, “Faith without works is dead,” was in direct opposition to Paul’s teaching that “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9, NRSV).

Lead the class in a discussion of this theological debate. Ask a class member to read Romans 4:1–5 and 5:1–11. Ask class members to share their understanding of these passages. Then ask another person to read James 2:14–26. Ask class members to share their understanding of this passage. (Note that the same Old Testament Scripture was used in defense of both positions.) Then discuss the following questions:

- How do Paul and James really compare on the importance of grace and works?
- How does your understanding of this issue inform your understanding of Kingdom Living?

A similar discussion was suggested in Session 3 of this study. Ask the class to recall that discussion and to consider how their understanding of the “Law-versus-grace” debate has been informed by their study of the Epistle of James.

#### **Option 2: Examine the Scriptures. 25 minutes**

Give a brief background on the First Letter of Peter. Emphasize the fact that the recipients of this letter were facing some form of persecution and were looking to Peter to advise them as they faced this period of struggle. Given this background, ask a class member to read 1 Peter 2:1–2.

Then explain that Peter offered unique counsel. He advised that these first-century Christians should live as resident “aliens” (v. 11) persons with no status, with no inherent rights or privileges. He advised these Christians to approach the task of Kingdom Living with a set of standards much different than the standards of this world. This theme is evidenced throughout the General Epistles. These words of instruction and guidance can also inform our understanding of Kingdom Living as we seek to be resident “aliens” in the modern world.

Divide the class into three groups with no more than seven in a group. If the class is too large for three groups, divide into as many groups as necessary and give some groups the same assignment. Give each group an assignment sheet with the following information and questions:

**Scripture:**

Group 1: 1 Peter 2:13–17

Group 2: James 2:1–9

Group 3: James 3:1–12

**Questions for all groups:**

- What specific instruction and advice did the author give to the readers of this epistle?
- What principle of Kingdom Living is the basis for this advice?
- How can this principle of Kingdom Living be applied in the life of a modern Christian? Create a case study to demonstrate this application.

Allow approximately 15 minutes for small group discussion. Have the class reconvene as a group and ask a representative of each of the small groups to report on the assignment.

After the group reports ask: What does it mean to live as a resident “alien” of the Kingdom of God in today’s America? Allow time for reflection and discussion.

**CLOSING THE SESSION**

**5 minutes**

**5. Assignment. 1 minute**

Ask the class to read chapter 9 of the text (pages 89–99) before the next session.

**6. Close with prayer. 4 minutes**

After a period of silence, say a closing prayer. Ask God to work in mighty ways through the lives of the class members, showing each how to be a resident “alien” of the Kingdom of God.

## SESSION TEN

### LIFE, LOVE, AND LAST THINGS: SYMBOLISM AND KINGDOM LIVING

Text: *pages 89–99*

Scripture: *John 3:1–21*

Objectives:

- *To examine the character of the writer of the Johannine materials.*
- *To acknowledge the simplicity of the Johannine writings.*
- *To develop a basic understanding of the complex spiritual symbolism in the Johannine writings.*

#### LEADER PREPARATION

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passage, and the lesson plan in this guide. Prepare the group assignment sheets suggested in Step 4. Have available a copy of Handout III, The Epistle of Barnabas, (found in the back of this guide) for an assigned report suggested in Step 5. Have available newsprint and markers.

#### BEGINNING THE SESSION 10 minutes

##### 1. **Open with prayer.** 2 minutes

Welcome the class, and open the session with a prayer, asking God to lead us to a deeper appreciation of the powerful spiritual symbolism found in the commonplace experiences of everyday Kingdom Living.

##### 2. **Introduce the study.** 8 minutes

Based on the class members' understanding of the text and previous readings of the Johannine materials, ask the following questions:

- Who does the author of the text suggest was the writer of the Johannine materials: the Gospel, the three Epistles, and the Apocalypse?
- What do we know about the character and personality of this person?
- Why has so much speculation surrounded the question of authorship of these materials?

Address any questions about the assigned reading at this time.

#### DEVELOPING THE SESSION 40 minutes

##### 3. **Set the context.** 15 minutes

Ask a class member to read the Martin Luther quote on page 89 of the text. Ask:

- Is your assessment of the material contained in the Gospel of John consistent with Luther’s opinion?
- Can you provide concrete examples from personal experience to illustrate the understanding of the material?

Allow time for reflection and sharing.

Then comment that it is ironic that both the Gospel and the Apocalypse of John, two books filled with such powerful and mysterious spiritual symbolism, are often the first books of the Bible read by teenagers and new Christians with a very simple and concrete understanding of biblical materials. The Johannine materials seem to be written at two levels of meaning. There is the apparent meaning, readily understood at the literal level. And then, on the other hand, a deeper and more powerful meaning in the teachings about the Kingdom as recorded in the Johannine material. This second level of meaning is masterfully conveyed through metaphor, imagery, and symbolism.

Ask the class for examples of some of the metaphors, images, and symbols found in the Johannine writings. List these on newsprint. Save this newsprint for use in Step 6. (Note: Responses could include such terms as “the New Jerusalem,” “the Lamb of God,” “the Good Shepherd,” “the Bread of Life,” and so on.) Tell the class that today we will examine a familiar passage from the Gospel of John, addressing both the apparent and the symbolic levels of meaning.

#### **4. Examine the Scripture. 25 minutes**

Ask a class member to read John 3:1–21.

Divide the class into three groups with no more than seven in a group. If the class is too large for three groups, divide into as many groups as necessary and give some groups the same assignment. Give each group an assignment sheet or make copies of this section and divide them among the groups.

##### **Group 1:**

Read John 3:1–4. Note that, at the literal level, Nicodemus came to Jesus as an individual, but at a deeper level, he stood as a symbol of the first-century Jewish religious establishment. Describe the nature of this group. Why is it significant that Nicodemus, as a symbol of the religious establishment, came to address this young rabbi named Jesus? At what level of meaning did Nicodemus interpret Jesus’ call for rebirth? How does Jesus’ call for spiritual rebirth relate to his emphasis on participation in the Kingdom of God?

##### **Group 2:**

Read John 3:5–15. In these verses, Jesus said that participation in the Kingdom required that one be “born of water and Spirit.” How would you interpret these two symbols of the Kingdom at a literal level? at a symbolic level? In similar fashion, verses 13–15 introduce imagery associated

with elevation (“ascending into heaven” and “being lifted up”). What are some possible interpretations of this imagery?

**Group 3:**

Read John 3:16–21. Verse 16 is often quoted as the simplest, most concise presentation of the gospel message found in the New Testament. List and discuss possible literal and symbolic interpretations of the phrase “eternal life.” Also note that the symbolism of light and darkness is a recurring theme throughout the Johannine writings. Offer possible interpretations of this light/darkness imagery given the fact that Nicodemus, as a symbol of the Jewish religious establishment, came to question Jesus under the cover of darkness.

Allow approximately 10 minutes for small group discussion. Have the class reconvene as a group and ask a representative of each of the small groups to report on the assignment.

**CLOSING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

**5. Introduce the next session. 2 minutes**

As an introduction to the next session, read the Samuel A. Cartledge quote from page 101 of the text. Then explain that the process of selecting which books would be included in the New Testament canon was not quite that simple. The next chapter of the text and the next session will explore how this process actually occurred.

**6. Assignment. 3 minutes**

Ask the class to read chapter 10 of the text (pages 101–109) before the next session. Ask for a volunteer to prepare a report about the Epistle of Barnabas for the next session. Provide this person with a copy of Handout III, The Epistle of Barnabas. Ask this person to read the epistle and address the following questions:

- What contributions to your understanding of Kingdom Living does this book provide?
- Why do you think this book was not included in the New Testament canon?

**7. Close with prayer. 5 minutes**

Close the session with a prayer. Call attention to the list of metaphors, images, and symbols from Step 3 listed on the newsprint. Ask each class member to select one of them. Then, during a period of silence, ask each person to reflect on the deeper spiritual significance of this symbolism in the experiences of daily Kingdom Living. Lead in a spoken benediction.

## SESSION ELEVEN

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON—A MEASURE OF KINGDOM LIVING

Text: *pages 101–109*

Objectives:

- *To explore the process through which the New Testament canon was formed.*
- *To state the criteria used to select the materials included in the canon.*
- *To review one of the writings of the early Christian church which was not included in the canon.*
- *To explore the relationship between inspiration and canonicity.*

#### LEADER PREPARATION

Read the assigned material in the text and the lesson plan in this guide. Contact the group member who was to prepare a report on the Epistle of Barnabas and offer assistance if needed. Have available newsprint and markers.

#### BEGINNING THE SESSION

**15 minutes**

**1. Share celebrations and concerns.** 5 minutes

Spend a few minutes sharing celebrations and concerns that have been a part of Kingdom Living during recent days. Ask a class member to lead in prayer, addressing these celebrations and concerns, and asking God's guidance in today's session.

**2. Create a "class canon."** 10 minutes

Ask the following questions:

- Which one book in the New Testament has been most meaningful or significant in your Christian pilgrimage?
- What characteristics or qualities have made this selection so meaningful to you?

Ask the class to share their responses. List the responses on newsprint, listing the selected New Testament books in one column and the criteria for selection in a second column. After each person has had an opportunity to respond, ask:

- What other books not included in the Bible have been particularly meaningful or significant in your Christian pilgrimage?
- What characteristics or qualities have made these books so meaningful to you?

List the class members' responses on the newsprint to be used later in the session. Tell the class

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

40 minutes

### 3. Set the context. 5 minutes

Tell the class that we have just experienced, in a simplified fashion, something of the process used to select the materials that would eventually be included in the New Testament canon. Explain the meaning of the term “canon.” (See page 103: “Why Did the Church Feel the Need of a Canon?”) Then state the basic question to be addressed in today’s session: How were these twenty-seven documents selected from the multitude of Christian books in circulation and, having been selected, how were they brought together into one book? (See page 101 of the text.)

### 4. Examine the text. 10 minutes

Have class members turn to pages 107–108 of the text. Ask them to identify and discuss the three principles of selection: apostolicity, usage and conformity to Christian doctrine, and morality. List these principles on newsprint. Then ask the following questions:

- The role of apostolicity in the selection of New Testament materials has been discussed in previous sessions. The canonicity of which books has been questioned on the basis of this criteria?
- How did the principle of usage function in the development of the canon?
- How did the principle of conformity to Christian doctrine and morality function in the development of the canon?

Record summaries of the class responses on the newsprint.

### 5. Explore other resources. 5 minutes

Ask the class member who was to read and report on the Epistle of Barnabas to share the report, addressing these questions:

- What contributions to your understanding of Kingdom Living does this book provide?
- Given these three principles of selection, why do you think this book was not included in the New Testament canon?

### 6. Compare “canons.” 20 minutes

- Call attention to the newsprint sheets containing the “class canon” and the principles of selection for the New Testament canon. As time allows, lead the class in a discussion of the following questions:
- What books included in the New Testament canon were omitted from the “class canon?”

- Compare the criteria used in the selection of the “class canon” to those principles of selection used in the formation of the New Testament canon. What similarities and differences are noted in this comparison?
- It has been said that the only difference between the theological conservatives and theological liberals is found in the parts of the Bible that each chooses not to read. How does this statement relate to the role of usage in the selection of the books in both the “class canon” and the New Testament canon?
- In light of the nonbiblical materials that were selected as a part of the “class canon,” why should the canon of Scripture be closed when the Holy Spirit is still leading inspired disciples to write the story of Christ’s church and to give valuable counsel on church problems and doctrine?

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

**5 minutes**

**7. Assignment.** 3 minutes

Ask the class to read chapters 11 and 12 of the text (pages 111–130) before the next session. Also, ask them to bring several different translations and paraphrases of the Bible to the next session, if possible.

**8. Close with prayer.** 2 minutes

Close the session with a prayer.

## **SESSION TWELVE**

### **TRANSMITTING THE GOOD NEWS OF KINGDOM LIVING**

Text: *pages 111–130*

Scripture: *Mark 16:8–19*

Objectives:

- *To review the process of transmitting the New Testament materials from their original manuscripts to their modern translations.*
- *To explore possible sources of variations and corruptions in the original texts of the New Testament materials.*
- *To compare and contrast the stated purposes and unique contributions of various modern translations and paraphrases of the Bible.*

#### **LEADER PREPARATION**

Read the assigned material in the text, the suggested Scripture passage, and the lesson plan in this guide. Have available several different modern translations and paraphrases of the Bible for use during the session. If possible, include a copy of the most recent translation, the *New Revised Standard Version*. Prepare a brief lecture on the topic “The Transmission of the Text,” (pages 112–115 of the text). If available, photographs or photocopies of several different early manuscripts of the New Testament could be used as media aides in the presentation of this lecture. Have available newsprint and markers.

#### **BEGINNING THE SESSION**

**5 minutes**

**1. Open with prayer. 2 minutes**

Ask a class member to open the session with prayer, asking for guidance and insight during today’s session.

**2. Introduce the session. 3 minutes**

Briefly provide an overview of the class session by sharing the learning objectives with the group.

#### **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

**45 minutes**

**3. Examine the text. 5 minutes**

Present the lecture on the topic “The Transmission of the Text,” as described on pages 112–115 of the text. Emphasize the following:

- No original copy (autograph) of any book of the New Testament is known to exist at the present time.

- Most of our modern translations are based on Greek *uncials* (pronounced “unshulls”) manuscripts written in the fourth and fifth centuries. These manuscripts are, therefore, several generations removed from the original copies.

If you were able to obtain photographs or photocopies of early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, show them to the class during this presentation.

**4. Discuss Greek *uncial* manuscripts. 10 minutes**

Explain that because writing materials were a precious commodity, the Greek *uncial* manuscripts were generally written in all capital letters with no spaces between the words, no punctuation and paragraphs, and no chapters and verses. To illustrate this form of writing, copy on newsprint and display the following sentence, in all capital letters and with no spaces: **GODISNOWHERE.**

Ask class members to read the sentence. (Note: There are two possible readings: “God is now here” and God is no where.”) When both possible readings have been identified, ask the class to comment on the different meanings implied by the two alternative readings. Tell the class that they have just performed a textual critique. Explain that the exercise demonstrated an example of a type of unintentional corruption of the biblical manuscripts called “an error of the eye.” Ask the class the following questions:

- What other types of corruptions of the text were described in the assigned reading?
- In light of these corruptions, both intentional and unintentional, how would you answer the criticism that the Bible is full of errors and contradictory statements?

**5. Examine the Scripture. 10 minutes**

Explain that variations in the ancient Greek manuscripts have led to a number of significant debates among textual critics, biblical scholars who seek to determine which variation is most consistent with the words of the original writer. Then remind the class that in chapter 6 (pages 61–62) a major textual problem with the ending of the book of Mark was described. Ask the class to reread silently the information on those pages. Then ask a class member to read Mark 16:8–20 from a translation (preferably the Revised Standard Version or the New Revised Standard Version) that includes both the shorter and longer endings of Mark. Ask class members to share any related marginal notes included in their translation or paraphrase. Then ask: How does the fact that ancient biblical manuscripts offer three possible endings for the book of Mark affect your understanding of the nature and authority of Scripture?

**6. Discuss “translations” and “paraphrase” 20 minutes**

Ask class members to identify the various translations and paraphrases being used in the class. Describe the differences in a translation and a paraphrase.

A *translation* is a word by word, or literal, (as far as that is possible) translation from the original languages of the Scriptures (Hebrew and Greek) into English. Obviously, it cannot be exactly word for word. This is nearly impossible in any language because sentence structures are different and words have more than one meaning in many languages. The Revised Standard

Version and the New Revised Standard Version are translations. The King James Version is not strictly a translation but a revision of the *Bishop's Bible* of 1568.

*Paraphrases* of the Scripture include *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips, and *The Living Bible*, published by Tynedale. These paraphrases translate meanings more than words. They add a word or two to clarify a sentence or phrase. The problem is that they rely on the author's own understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures. They are, generally, not the work of a group of biblical scholars such as those who have translated the *New Revised Standard Version* or the *New International Version*. Between the translation and the paraphrase is what is called "dynamic translation." The *New International Version*, the *Revised English Bible*, and the *Contemporary Version* are so-called "dynamic" translations. These translations focus less on word-for-word approach and more on phrases that are faithful to the meaning of the original language and conveyed in a style that is more in keeping with everyday, or current, language usage.

The following are illustrations of a translation, a paraphrase, and a dynamic translation of Romans 12:1:

**New Revised Standard Version:**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

**The New Testament in Modern English:**

With eyes wide opened to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him.

**The New International Version:**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual act of worship.

Take an informal poll of the class, asking the members to vote on which translation or paraphrase they prefer. Then ask each person (or groups of two or three persons) to select one translation (other than their personal favorite) to work with during this section of the lesson. Next, ask each participant to answer the following questions about their selected translation:

- What are the stated purposes of this translation or paraphrase of the Bible?
- What unique contributions to biblical scholarship or personal devotional are offered by this translation or paraphrase?

This information can be found in chapter 12 of the text or in the preface of the selected translation or paraphrase.

Allow approximately 10 minutes to study these sources. Then ask the class members to share the results of their research.

## **CLOSING THE SESSION**

**10 minutes**

**7. Preview the next session. 5 minutes**

Tell the class that the next session will conclude this study of the New Testament. Explain that the final session will brief review of the content of each session, a reexamination of the class's definition of the concept "Kingdom of God," a reexamination of the class's understanding of the concept "Kingdom Living," and an opportunity to address any unresolved issues related to the assigned reading in the text or classroom discussions.

**8. Assignment. 2 minutes**

Encourage class members to prepare for the session rereading sections of the text, reviewing their reading guides and other notes, and reflecting upon significant discoveries and learnings.

**9. Close with prayer. 5 minutes**

Lead the class in a time of guided prayer. First, suggest that class members thank God for the privilege of having access to the Bible in our own language. Pause for a moment of silence and reflection. Second, ask them to offer thanks to God for the responsibility of reading and applying the Scripture as they participate in Kingdom Living. Pause again. Finally, suggest that the class members thank God for the lives of the committed Christians who sacrificed and struggled to transmit the divine written word to our generation. Pause again before pronouncing the "Amen."

## SESSION THIRTEEN

### WHAT IS “KINGDOM LIVING”?—A REVIEW OF THE COURSE

Text: *pages 1–130*

Objectives:

- *To review the content of the course.*
- *To develop new definitions of the concepts “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom Living.”*

#### LEADER PREPARATION

Read the lesson plan in this guide. Briefly review the content of the course, recalling the major emphases of each chapter of the text and each teaching session. Display the newsprint saved from Session 1 listing the “Defining Terms” and the definition of the concept “Kingdom of God.” Have available newsprint and markers.

#### BEGINNING THE SESSION

**10 minutes**

**1. Share.** 10 minutes

Class members have been sharing celebrations and concerns that have been a part of Kingdom Living during the course of this study. As the last session of this study begins, ask the class to recall some of these celebrations and concerns.

Then ask: How has God responded to the prayers that we have voiced with regard to these celebrations and concerns?

Then ask a class member to lead in a prayer, thanking God for His presence and guidance in times of both celebration and concern.

#### DEVELOPING THE SESSION

**35 minutes**

**2. Review the course.** 15 minutes

Call attention to the course overview chart that has been on display in the classroom during the study.

Briefly review the content of each session. Trace the development of the gospel message from its oral to its written forms, recalling any specific issues and questions that were addressed. As each session is reviewed, provide class members the opportunity to share any significant learnings or discoveries they may have made.

**3. Define the concept.** 15 minutes

Display the newsprint sheet with the list of “Defining Terms” from Session 1. Remind the class that a “defining term” is a symbol, an action, or a characteristic used to describe a concept. Then, based on the learnings and discoveries made during the course of the study, ask the class to select

terms from this list that are characteristic of a New Testament understanding of the concept “Kingdom of God.” Place an asterisk (\*) beside each of the terms selected by the class members. When all appropriate terms have been marked, allow class members to contribute other terms that describe this concept. Based on this discussion, lead the class to develop a new definition of Kingdom of God. Record this definition on newsprint.

At this point, display the newsprint containing the definition of the same concept that was developed during the first session of the course. Lead the class to compare and contrast the two definitions, listing specific similarities and differences.

**4. Respond to a question. 15 minutes**

Comment that in Session 1, we heard that when an individual accepts God’s free gift of the Kingdom of God, then he or she is subject to the standards of kingdom ideals. To order one’s entire life by kingdom ideals is to participate in Kingdom Living. In view of their current understanding of the Kingdom of God, ask class members to respond to the following question: What does it mean to participate in Kingdom Living in twenty-first-century America?

**CLOSING THE SESSION  
15 minutes**

**5. Respond to a statement. 10 minutes**

Remind the group that during the first session of the study, each person was asked to respond to this statement: “The primary goal that I hope to attain through active participation in this course of study is . . .” Ask each person to recall his or her response to this statement. Ask those who are willing to answer this question: To what extent did you achieve your personal goal?

**6. Close with prayer. 5 minutes**

Have a period of silent prayer, encouraging each class member to thank God for the friendships formed and discoveries made during this course of study. Then close the session and study with the following benediction:

*Now, may the Lord Christ walk ahead of you, to prepare and plan your way. May the Lord Christ walk beside you, companion on your journey as you go. May the Lord Christ be under you, to support and sustain you when you fall. May the Lord Christ walk behind you, to complete that which you must leave undone.*

*May the Lord Christ be within you, to give peace and comfort on the journey. But above all, may the Lord Christ be over you—watching, calling, guiding—now and ever more!*

*Amen.*

**HANDOUT 1**  
**THE MISSIONARY LETTERS**  
**READING GUIDE**

As you work with the material in Chapters 3–5 of the text, use this chart to take reading notes. Think about three questions as you read the material:

- To what type of audience did Paul address this letter?
- What were the specific issues or problems faced by this audience?
- What words of instruction and guidance did Paul offer?

Use your own words to record your understanding of each of these questions with regard to each letter. Begin to note themes and re-occurring issues. Finally, remember to bring this reading guide to Sessions 3–5.

<b>LETTER</b>	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>ISSUES/PROBLEMS ADDRESSED</b>	<b>INSTRUCTION/GUIDANCE OFFERED</b>
Galatians			
1 Thessalonians			
2 Thessalonians			
1 Corinthians			
2 Corinthians			

LETTER	AUDIENCE	ISSUES/PROBLEMS ADDRESSED	INSTRUCTION/GUIDANCE OFFERED
Romans			
Ephesians			
Colossians			
Philemon			
Philippians			

**HANDOUT II**  
**THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
**READING GUIDE**

As you work with the material in Chapter 6 of the text, use this chart to take reading notes. Think about these seven questions as you read the material:

- Who was the author of this material?
- When was this material written?
- To what type of audience did the author write?
- What unique aspects of the gospel message are recorded in this material?
- What do we know about the author?
- From what place did this material originate?
- What sources were used in the writing of this material?

Use your own words to record your understanding of each of these questions with regard to each book. Begin to note contrast in approaches. Finally, remember to bring this reading guide to Sessions 6 and 7.

<b>BOOK</b>	<b>AUTHOR INFORMATION</b>	<b>WRITING BACKGROUND</b>	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>SOURCES</b>	<b>UNIQUE ASPECTS OF GOSPEL MESSAGE</b>
Mark					
Matthew					
Luke					
Acts					

### HANDOUT III THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

The *Epistle of Barnabas*, completed in the middle of the second century, was not written by Barnabas, who is named in Acts and in some of Paul's letters. It was put together by an author/editor who reproduced and reworked older materials from writings that he had gathered. Some of these may have originated with Barnabas, but that is doubtful.

Barnabas transmits instruction in the form of a letter. This author/editor is concerned with correct understanding of how to interpret the past as well as how to live in the present. What follows are a few portions of the *Epistle of Barnabas*.

1:1–2 Greetings, sons and daughters, in the Name of the Lord who loved us, in peace. Seeing that God's righteous acts toward you are so extraordinary and abundant, my joy over your favored and illustrious spirits is unbounded—you have received such grace, such an implantation of the pneumatic gift!

4:9–10 But since I wish to write many things—not as a Teacher would, but as is fitting for a friend to do—and to omit nothing of what we have received, I hurry along. I am your devoted slave.

Wherefore let us walk circumspectly in these last days. For the entire period of our life and faith will be wasted unless now, in the lawless time and in the impending scandals, we resist as befits God's sons. Therefore, lest the Black One make deceitful entrance, let us flee from all that is irrelevant, let us hate completely the works of the wicked way. Do not live monastic lives by retiring to yourselves as though you have already attained the righteous state, but by assembling together, seek out together what is to your mutual advantage.

7:1–2 Understand, therefore, children of joy, that the good Lord revealed everything to us beforehand so that we might know who we ought to praise continually with thanksgiving.

If, then, the Son of God, who is Lord and is about to judge the living and dead, suffered so that his being afflicted might bring us life, let us believe that it was not possible for the Son of God to suffer except on our behalf.

8:1–4 And what do you suppose is the type involved here, in that he commanded to Israel that those men in whom sins are complete should offer a heifer; and when they had slaughtered it, to burn it; and then the children should take the ashes and put them into a container; and the scarlet wool should be wrapped around a piece of wood—again, note the type of the cross, and the scarlet wool and the hyssop; and thus the children sprinkle the people individually in order to purify them from sins? Understand how it is told to you in such simplicity: the calf is Jesus; the sinful men who offer it are those who offer him to be slaughtered. Then men (appear) no longer, (it is) no longer (concerned with) the “glory” of sinners! Those who sprinkle are children, they are those who preach to us forgiveness of sins and purification of the heart, to whom he entrusted and authority to proclaim the gospel. There are twelve (of the latter), for a witness to the tribes, since there are twelve tribes of Israel. But why are there (only) three children who sprinkle? This is for a witness to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they are great before God.

8:5–6 And the fact that the wool is on the wood signifies that the kingdom of Jesus is on the wood, and that those who hope on him will live forever. But why are the wool and the hyssop together? Because in his kingdom there shall be wicked and vile days, in which we shall be saved. For the one whose flesh is distressed is cured by means of the hyssop's vileness!

8:7 Wherefore, the things which have come to pass are clear to us, but hidden to them, because they did not hearken to the Lord's voice.

Robert A. Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, vol. 3, *The Apostolic Fathers, A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Robert M. Grant (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), 80–105. Used by permission.