Reading Jesus Again with Grace and Mercy

A companion to *Jesus Said What?* by DeDe Jones and Jeff Jones

Six Week Small Group and Class Study Guide

This guide helps a group move from reading Jesus Said What? to exploring Scripture together and trying its invitations in everyday life. Each week includes a leader overview, a Bible passage, questions connected to the book, a group activity and a practice for the days ahead. Participants don't need a theological degree or a tidy faith story. They need room to wonder and a willingness to listen.

This six-week version pairs related chapters while keeping time for practice and reflection. Read the assigned chapters before each gathering. On weeks with two chapters, spread the reading across several days so each chapter receives attention. Bring the book and a Bible; a notebook is helpful. Leaders can use this guide as written for a 60-minute session or allow 75–90 minutes for more conversation. The Scripture passages are companion readings selected for this study. Book connections identify chapters and themes without page numbers or requiring a particular edition.

The reading schedule

Week 1 • Introduction and Chapters 1–2 • Hearing Jesus with fresh ears

Week 2 • Chapters 3–4 • Salvation and belonging

Week 3 • Chapters 5–6 • Love that interrupts and grace that sustains

Week 4 • Chapters 7–8 • Humility and the rebuilding of trust

Week 5 • Chapter 9 • A different kind of conversation

Week 6 • Chapter 10 and Epilogue • Living what we've discovered

Preparing to lead

Read the week's chapters and Bible passage before the group meets. Mark one short book passage that connects with the session's focus. You can read it aloud or ask participants to find it; there's no need to prepare a lecture. The guide supplies enough context to begin, while the book and the participants' observations carry the conversation.

Choose three or four of the main questions ahead of time. You won't need every question. Give people time to think before inviting responses, and let a useful conversation breathe. Bring paper and pens for the activities. For a larger class, use groups of three or four and invite brief reports afterward. Offer a quiet writing option for anyone who prefers it.

Each session follows the same timing: welcome and opening question, 5 minutes; Scripture and book connection, 10 minutes; discussion, 20 minutes; group activity, 15 minutes; reflection, homework and prayer, 10 minutes. For 45 minutes, shorten discussion and the activity by five minutes each and close in five minutes. For 75–90 minutes, use the additional questions and allow a fuller activity debrief.

If someone hasn't finished the reading, welcome them into the conversation. Briefly explain the book connection and read the Bible passage aloud. Avoid making preparation a test of belonging, especially in a study about belonging.

Making room for honest conversation

At the first meeting, ask the group to agree to these practices. Return to them whenever needed.

- Speak from your own experience. Leave room for another person's experience to be different.
- Listen to understand. Ask before offering advice, and resist turning someone's story into a theological problem to solve.
- Everyone may pass on a question or activity. Nobody owes the group a painful story.
- Keep personal stories private. Don't repeat someone else's story outside the group without permission. Explain that confidentiality has limits when someone's safety is at risk; follow your church's safeguarding procedures.
- Disagree with care. We can examine beliefs without questioning someone's dignity or treating their identity as a debate topic.
- Share the time. Make space for quieter voices without putting anyone on the spot.

A leader can say, “We don't have to settle every question tonight. Let's stay with what the passage shows us and what we're learning about loving people well.” If a discussion becomes hurtful, pause it, name the impact and return to the agreements. If someone shares a wound, thank them for trusting the group and ask what would help them in that moment. Avoid pressing for details or promising answers the group can't provide.

A simple reflection to use each week

Invite participants to keep a brief record between meetings: What caught my attention in the reading? What did I notice when I tried the practice? What question am I carrying? Begin Weeks 2–6 with an optional one-minute response to the previous week's practice. An unfinished practice can still teach us something.

Week 1

Hearing Jesus with fresh ears

Reading before the gathering: Introduction and Chapters 1–2

Scripture: Matthew 5:43–48

Question to carry: Which teaching or story unsettled an assumption I've carried?

The leader's focus

Help participants name what they've inherited about Jesus and consider how his teaching invites a fresh reading. The goal is curiosity grounded in Scripture. People may be grateful for their upbringing, hurt by it or both. Let them speak without requiring a verdict on their past.

Welcome and opening question 5 minutes

Ask: “What's a saying about faith you heard often growing up, and how do you hear it now?” In a new group, invite names first and review the conversation agreements. Keep responses brief; someone can name a saying without explaining its whole history.

Scripture and book connection 10 minutes

Read Matthew 5:43–48 aloud. Ask participants to notice whom Jesus tells his listeners to love and what he says about God's generosity. Jesus is teaching within Jewish life and Scripture; avoid framing Judaism as loveless or contrasting a harsh Old Testament God with a loving Jesus.

Return to Chapter 1's treatment of enemy-love and Chapter 2's attention to context. Ask someone to identify a passage in either chapter that complicated an easy answer. Read a short selection. Ask: “How does this help us hear the demand of Jesus' words? What does compassion require us to notice about the people affected by our interpretation?”

Leader note: Enemy-love doesn't require giving a harmful person access to your life. Keep protection and boundaries in view. If “be perfect” raises performance anxiety, notice how the passage connects this language with love that reaches beyond familiar circles; Week 3 returns to grace and performance.

Discussion 20 minutes

Choose three or four questions.

1. What assumption about Jesus did the Introduction invite you to revisit? What makes that assumption difficult to loosen?

2. In Chapter 1, enemy-love reaches beyond liking people. What could loving an adversary look like while still resisting harm?

3. What do you notice about the sun and rain in Matthew 5? How does that image challenge the way we decide who deserves goodness?

4. Chapter 2 asks us to attend to context. What changes when we ask who is speaking, who is listening and what happens around a verse?

5. When has a familiar passage sounded different because you came to know someone affected by its interpretation? Share only what is yours to share.

6. What question could help you slow down before using a verse to settle an argument?

Additional question: How can we take Scripture seriously while admitting that our understanding of it may grow?

Group activity 15 minutes

An assumption worth revisiting

Give everyone paper. Allow three minutes to complete two sentences privately: “I've usually heard that Jesus…” and “This week's reading makes me wonder…” Invite pairs to share one thought each for four minutes. Each listener asks a curious question rather than correcting the speaker.

Bring everyone back together. Choose one volunteered assumption and reread Matthew 5:43–48. Ask what the passage supports, what it challenges and what would require further study. Leave an honest question open if the group can't resolve it. Debrief: “What helped us listen? Where did we feel the urge to defend an answer?”

Closing reflection and prayer 10 minutes

Ask participants to name one question they'd like to carry into the week. Introduce the practice below and next week's reading. Pray: “Jesus, help us hear you with fresh ears. Give us patience with one another and courage to examine what we've assumed. Teach us to love wisely, especially when love is difficult. Amen.”

Between gatherings

Read Chapters 3–4. Reread Matthew 5:43–48 on two different days. Notice whether a word or detail catches your attention differently the second time.

Choose one safe practice of enemy-love: pray for someone's well-being, stop repeating a dehumanizing description or support fair treatment for someone you disagree with. Contact isn't required. Write a few sentences about what the practice revealed in you.

Week 2

Salvation and belonging

Reading before the gathering: Chapters 3–4

Scripture: Luke 19:1–10

Question to carry: How could I help someone experience belonging without making them prove themselves first?

The leader's focus

Explore how salvation reaches a person's present life and how belonging creates room for change. People may have treasured conversion experiences or painful memories of being pressured to produce one. Welcome both. This session asks how we communicate Jesus' invitation and how our actions make that invitation tangible.

Welcome and opening question 5 minutes

Invite a brief reflection on last week's practice. Then ask: “When you enter a new group, what helps you feel that there's a place for you?” Encourage concrete answers rather than general claims about being welcoming.

Scripture and book connection 10 minutes

Read Luke 19:1–10. Notice the sequence: Jesus sees Zacchaeus, invites himself to his home, the crowd grumbles and Zacchaeus speaks about generosity and restitution. The story brings welcome and responsibility into the same encounter.

Connect Chapter 3's examination of the phrase “ask Jesus into your heart” with Chapter 4's VIP section image. Ask participants to locate a paragraph about salvation as a changed life or about the conditions we attach to belonging. Read one short selection and ask: “What kind of doorway does our language create? What kind of doorway do our habits create?”

Leader note: The title of Chapter 3 can sound like a dismissal of a meaningful experience. Invite participants to consider what church shorthand communicates and what it leaves unexplained. Belonging also requires protection from harmful behavior. Welcoming a person doesn't remove accountability.

Discussion 20 minutes

1. What has the word “saved” meant to you? What does Zacchaeus' story add to that understanding?

2. Chapter 3 considers how familiar religious language can narrow an invitation. Which phrase has helped you? Which one has needed more explanation?

3. How does Jesus' initiative affect the way you read Zacchaeus' response? Where do you see grace and responsibility meeting?

4. In Chapter 4's VIP section image, what functions like a velvet rope in faith communities? Consider expectations around appearance, family, beliefs or knowing the unwritten rules.

5. Who carries the burden of making belonging happen in your group: established members or newcomers? What would shift that burden?

6. How could someone experience welcome here while still having questions about faith? What would we actually do differently?

Additional question: What distinguishes protecting people from harm from protecting a group's comfort or image?

Group activity 15 minutes

Walk through the doorway

In groups of three or four, choose one imagined newcomer: someone who knows no church vocabulary, a parent arriving alone with children, or someone returning after a painful church experience. Don't assume you know that person's whole story.

Spend five minutes tracing the person's first encounter with your class: finding the room, entering, joining conversation and leaving. List what helps and what could quietly communicate, “You should already know how this works.” Spend five minutes choosing one change your group can make. For example, explain the reading without embarrassment, introduce people by name or avoid inside jokes that leave newcomers outside the conversation.

Share the changes and choose one to try before the next gathering. Assign a volunteer to carry it out. Debrief: “How will we learn whether this helps instead of simply assuming it does?”

Closing reflection and prayer 10 minutes

Invite everyone to finish privately: “I can make room for someone by…” Explain the practice and next reading. Pray: “Jesus, you see people we overlook. Open our eyes to the barriers we've become used to. Help our welcome carry your grace into another person's life. Amen.”

Between gatherings

Read Chapters 5–6. Make one concrete gesture of belonging: learn a name, explain an unfamiliar practice or invite someone into a conversation without demanding agreement. Respect their choice about whether to respond.

Reflect on this question: “Where did I offer welcome freely, and where was I waiting for someone to prove they belonged?” Notice what happened with the group's chosen change.

Week 3

Love that interrupts and grace that sustains

Reading before the gathering: Chapters 5–6

Scripture: Mark 3:1–6 and Luke 10:38–42

Question to carry: Where does love ask me to speak up, and what am I still trying to earn?

The leader's focus

Hold together two movements in the book: love challenges what harms people, and grace frees us from having to prove our worth. Chapter 5 asks when pleasantness becomes avoidance. Chapter 6 asks what happens when religious performance leaves us ashamed or exhausted. Help participants consider how receiving grace can support courageous action without making every problem theirs to fix.

Welcome and opening question 5 minutes

Invite a brief update on the belonging practice. Ask: “When have you felt pressure to keep everyone happy or to be the person who always gets everything done?” Participants can use an ordinary example and may pass.

Scripture and book connection 10 minutes

Read Mark 3:1–6 and Luke 10:38–42. In Mark, notice Jesus' attention to the man who needs healing and his question about doing good. In Luke, notice Martha's worry and Jesus' response. Invite one observation from each passage before drawing connections.

Return to Chapter 5's discussion of table turning and Chapter 6's exploration of grace before growth. Select one short passage from each chapter in advance. Ask: “What is love interrupting in each chapter? How could grace change the way we respond to the pressure to be agreeable or indispensable?”

Leader note: Jesus' disputes take place within Jewish life; avoid portraying Jewish observance as inherently cruel. Table turning doesn't authorize destructive behavior. Martha's work matters, and limited access to rest isn't a failure of faith. Keep attention on the people affected and the support they need.

Discussion 20 minutes

Choose at least one question about each chapter, then follow the group's most useful conversation.

1. Which example in Chapter 5 clarified the difference between being agreeable and being loving? Whose well-being was at stake?

2. What do you notice about Jesus' anger and grief in Mark 3? How could those details guide a response to harm?

3. Chapter 6 examines the feeling that God's love is always under review. Where does that pressure appear in your life?

4. What do you hear in Martha's request and Jesus' response? What burden could be named without dismissing the value of her service?

5. How could knowing you're already loved help you speak honestly, accept help or stop taking responsibility for everything?

6. How can we take responsibility for harm we've caused without letting shame define who we are?

Group activity 15 minutes

A courageous response with room for grace

Present this fictional situation: A dependable volunteer is routinely given last-minute tasks. When the volunteer says they're exhausted, someone responds, “If you really cared about the ministry, you'd find a way.” Others remain silent.

In groups of three or four, spend four minutes identifying the harm and the assumption about worth or faithfulness. Spend five minutes drafting two responses: a leader's response that interrupts the shaming comment, and a volunteer's response that sets a realistic limit. Include a practical change in how work is assigned.

One possible leader response is, “Let's pause. We can't measure someone's care by their availability. We need to share this work and respect the limit they've named.” Invite a volunteer to read a group's response; nobody has to act out being shamed.

Debrief: “What made the response clear? How did it protect the volunteer's dignity? What follow-through would make the words credible?”

Closing reflection and prayer 10 minutes

Allow a quiet minute to identify one pressure to release and one loving action to take. Introduce homework as a manageable practice rather than another demand. Pray: “Jesus, help us recognize harm and respond with courage. Let your grace free us from proving our worth, and teach us to share the burdens we carry. Amen.”

Between gatherings

Read Chapters 7–8, spreading the reading across several days. Choose one practice that fits your circumstances: name a limit and ask for help, respond thoughtfully to a shaming comment, or check privately on someone whose needs have been overlooked. If direct action could increase risk, seek appropriate support first.

Write a few sentences: “What pressure was present? What did I try? How did receiving grace change the way I acted?” You don't need to resolve the whole situation or share identifying details.

Week 4

Humility and the rebuilding of trust

Reading before the gathering: Chapters 7–8

Scripture: Luke 18:9–14 and Genesis 50:15–21

Question to carry: Where do I need to become more teachable, and what makes trust possible over time?

The leader's focus

Connect humility with accountability while allowing wounded people to set the pace of healing. Chapter 7 examines the cost of certainty without compassion. Chapter 8 explores betrayal, boundaries and the slow work of rebuilding trust. Humility can help a person acknowledge harm and accept correction. It must never become a demand that a wounded person distrust their own experience.

Welcome and opening question 5 minutes

Invite an optional observation from last week's practice. Remind participants that they may pass or use fictional examples. Ask: “What makes a person easier to trust when they've made a mistake?” Don't request personal betrayal stories.

Scripture and book connection 10 minutes

Read Luke 18:9–14, beginning with its description of people who trust in their own righteousness and regard others with contempt. Ask what comparison does to the Pharisee's prayer. Keep the focus on our own posture rather than stereotyping Jewish people or judging another religious group.

Read Genesis 50:15–21. Explain that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery years earlier and that this conversation follows a long separation and reunion. Joseph names their intention to harm. Don't use the good that later emerges to suggest the harm was necessary or acceptable.

Connect Chapter 7's treatment of certainty with Chapter 8's discussion of Joseph and boundaries. Read one short book selection chosen in advance. Ask: “What would humility ask of a person who has caused harm? What choices still belong to the person who was hurt?”

Discussion 20 minutes

Choose questions that give both chapters attention. Personal disclosure is always optional.

1. What did Chapter 7 help you notice about the temptation to feel faithful because you're right? What can that temptation obscure?

2. What makes it difficult to say, “I misunderstood” or “I caused harm”? How could humility make repair possible?

3. Chapter 8 distinguishes Jesus from people who claim to represent him. What makes that distinction helpful or difficult?

4. In Joseph's story, why does naming harm still matter when good later becomes possible? What do we miss if we rush to the hopeful ending?

5. What distinguishes forgiveness, restored trust and reconciliation? What pressures arise when we treat them as the same event?

6. What would a credible apology and respect for a boundary look like over time? Who gets to decide whether renewed contact is welcome?

Group activity 15 minutes

Practice receiving correction

Use this fictional situation: A class leader shares a participant's private story publicly without permission. When the participant objects, the leader says, “I was trying to help. You're misunderstanding my intentions.”

In groups of three or four, spend four minutes identifying where defensiveness blocks accountability. Spend five minutes writing a better response that names the action, acknowledges its impact and offers a concrete repair. Include how the leader will respect the participant's choice about contact and future participation.

Invite groups to share a response. Ask what changes in the leader's posture and behavior would need to continue after the apology. Don't ask anyone to play the wounded person or draw on their own experience.

Debrief: “What did humility sound like? Which actions could begin to make trust possible? What stays outside the leader's control?” Emphasize that an apology doesn't entitle anyone to restored access.

Closing reflection and prayer 10 minutes

Invite private reflection: “Where am I being asked to listen, take responsibility or honor a limit?” Allow people to leave with an unfinished question. Introduce homework. Pray: “Jesus, help us hear what we've overlooked and tell the truth about harm. Meet us where trust is wounded, and teach us to honor the time and boundaries healing requires. Amen.”

Between gatherings

Read Chapter 9. Choose one private practice: listen to an experience you've tended to dismiss, identify a boundary or support that matters to you, or consider a responsible repair if you've caused harm. Write what you learned and what still needs time.

You aren't being asked to contact someone who hurt you, forgive on demand or reopen access. If you pursue repair, respect the other person's limits. Share an observation next week only if you wish.

Week 5

A different kind of conversation

Reading before the gathering: Chapter 9

Scripture: James 1:19–20

Question to carry: Which conversation could I approach with more curiosity and less defensiveness?

The leader's focus

Practice listening and speaking truth with care. Chapter 9 brings the book's themes into disagreement. Keep the activity at a manageable level so participants can practice a skill rather than reenact a conflict. Curiosity can deepen understanding while leaving a clear conviction intact.

Welcome and opening question 5 minutes

Invite a brief, optional observation from last week's private reflection without asking people to reveal a boundary. Ask: “How can you tell when you've stopped listening and started trying to win?” Invite observations about our own behavior rather than diagnoses of other people.

Scripture and book connection 10 minutes

Read James 1:19–20 twice, leaving a short pause between readings. Ask what participants notice about the order and pace of listening, speaking and anger. Consider why being angry doesn't automatically make our response just or effective.

Return to Chapter 9's practical guidance on disagreement. Invite participants to locate a passage about listening before reacting or telling truth with care. Read one selection. Ask: “Which practice could change the first thirty seconds of a difficult conversation?”

Leader note: A gentle tone can still conceal manipulation or contempt. Look at whether people have room to speak and whether the truth is being addressed. Nobody owes an endless conversation to a person who is harassing them. Ending an exchange can be a responsible choice.

Discussion 20 minutes

1. What did Chapter 9 help you notice about the goal you bring into disagreement?

2. What happens in your body or thoughts when you feel challenged? How could recognizing that response help you pause?

3. What distinguishes a sincere question from a question designed to trap someone?

4. When have you felt heard even though the other person didn't agree? What did they do?

5. How could you name your conviction and its reasons without reducing another person to a label?

6. What tells you a conversation needs a pause, a different setting or an end?

Additional question: How does an online audience change the way we speak? What would you post differently if care for the people involved shaped the decision?

Group activity 15 minutes

Try the conversation again

Form groups of three: speaker, listener and observer. Choose a low-stakes disagreement, such as whether a class should meet earlier or whether an event needs assigned seating. Avoid debating anyone's identity, dignity or painful experience.

Allow one minute for the speaker to explain a preference. The listener pauses, summarizes the concern and asks an open question. The speaker responds; the listener then states a different preference with one reason. The observer offers feedback: Did the summary fit? Did the question invite understanding? Was the difference clear without a personal attack?

Rotate roles so everyone can practice. Allow about four minutes per round, then debrief briefly: “Which move changed the tone? Which move will take more practice?” For a large class, leaders can demonstrate one round before groups begin.

Closing reflection and prayer 10 minutes

Ask participants to name privately one conversation and one practice they could bring to it. Explain homework. Pray: “Jesus, slow us down enough to hear the person before us. Give us honest words and the wisdom to know when to speak, when to listen and when to pause. Amen.”

Between gatherings

Read Chapter 10 and the Epilogue. In one safe conversation, use a deliberate pause, an accurate summary and a sincere question before giving your response. You can practice in an ordinary planning conversation; it doesn't have to be your hardest disagreement.

Reflect afterward: “What did I learn? What did I still need to say? Did my response serve the relationship and the truth?” If you choose an online practice, draft a response and reread it before deciding whether to post.

Week 6

Living what we've discovered

Reading before the gathering: Chapter 10 and Epilogue

Scripture: Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 12:32–34

Question to carry: What will I carry forward, and how will it change something specific in my life?

The leader's focus

Help the group turn reflection into a sustainable practice of love. Chapter 10 asks what the kingdom looks like in ordinary choices, including our relationships and resources. The Epilogue leaves readers with an invitation to keep listening and living. Make space for unfinished questions alongside concrete next steps.

Welcome and opening question 5 minutes

Invite a brief observation from the conversation practice. Ask: “What idea or moment from these six weeks has stayed with you?” People can name a question as readily as an insight.

Scripture and book connection 10 minutes

Read Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 12:32–34. Ask how the prayer connects God's kingdom with daily bread, forgiveness and deliverance. Then notice that Luke's invitation to generosity begins with reassurance about the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.

Connect these readings to Chapter 10's attention to everyday discipleship, generosity and what we hold too tightly. Invite participants to identify an ordinary choice discussed in the chapter. Then read a short selection from the Epilogue's invitation to continue. Ask: “Where could what we've read take shape in a calendar, a relationship or the use of a resource?”

Leader note: People have different financial means and different demands on their time. Release doesn't always mean giving money or taking on another obligation. It may mean relinquishing control, making room for help or changing a habit. Don't pressure people to announce gifts or commitments publicly.

Discussion 20 minutes

1. How has Chapter 10 affected the way you hear “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”?

2. Which ordinary choice has become more significant as you've read the book? What does love ask of you there?

3. What are you holding tightly that limits your freedom to respond? What would releasing a little of it make possible?

4. How could generosity become a practice you can sustain within your actual circumstances?

5. What does the Epilogue leave open for you? Which question deserves more time rather than a quick resolution?

6. What could this group continue doing together that would help its learning reach beyond this room?

Group activity 15 minutes

Make a next step you can live with

Give everyone paper and five minutes to complete these prompts:

- One insight or question I'll carry forward is…
- One specific action I'll take in the next month is…
- I'll begin by this date…
- I'll need this support or adjustment…
- I'll review what happened on this date…

Examples include arranging a regular check-in with someone isolated, reconsidering a spending habit to make generosity possible, asking an excluded person what would improve access or returning to a Gospel passage with a trusted conversation partner. Choose one manageable action.

Invite optional sharing in pairs. Each listener asks, “Is this specific enough to begin, and does it fit your real life?” Use the remaining time to consider a group action. If the group chooses one, agree on who will begin, whose input is needed and when you'll review it. Participation should remain voluntary.

Closing reflection and prayer 10 minutes

Invite anyone who wishes to finish: “I came with… and I'm leaving with…” Make room for gratitude, tension and uncertainty. Explain the month-ahead practice and discuss whether a follow-up gathering would help. Pray: “Jesus, keep shaping our lives through what we've heard. Let your love reach our ordinary choices and the people who share our days. Give us companions and courage for the next step. Amen.”

After the study

Carry out your next step over the coming month. Return to the question you named rather than assuming the study has settled it. On your review date, ask: “What happened? Whom did it affect? What did I learn, and what needs to change?”

If the group wishes, gather again in four weeks. Spend time listening to what participants tried, including what didn't work. Celebrate practical faithfulness without turning the gathering into a report on who accomplished the most.

Leader tools for difficult moments

When the discussion becomes a debate

Say, “Let's pause and hear what each person is trying to communicate.” Ask each speaker to describe their own understanding without assigning motives to someone else. Return to a specific passage or question. If the conversation keeps circling, name what remains unresolved and move on. You can invite further study without requiring the group to vote on the answer.

When someone shares a painful experience

Say, “Thank you for trusting us with that. Would you like us simply to listen, or is there another way we can support you right now?” Allow a pause. Don't ask the group to explain why it happened, defend the institution involved or offer a forgiveness timetable. Follow up privately if appropriate, and use your church's safeguarding process when safety concerns arise.

When one person takes most of the time

Say, “I'm going to make room for some other voices.” Invite a moment of writing before asking for volunteers; this gives people time to form a thought. Use pairs or small groups when a large discussion makes participation difficult. Avoid putting a quiet person on the spot to balance out a talkative one.

When nobody responds

Wait longer than feels natural. Then ask a more concrete question, such as, “Which word in the passage caught your attention?” You can offer your own brief observation without answering the whole question. Quiet can mean people are thinking, especially when the subject is personal.

When someone hasn't read the book

Give a short description of the chapter's theme and read the selected passage. Invite a response to the Scripture or opening question. Make participation possible without a public explanation for unfinished reading.

When the group asks a question you can't answer

Say, “I don't know enough to answer that well.” Write down the question and identify a useful next step, such as looking at the full biblical passage or asking a pastor about its context. If you promise to follow up, do so. Leaders model humility by taking questions seriously and being honest about their limits.

An optional four week follow up gathering

Allow 45–60 minutes. Begin with a brief prayer and revisit one passage the group found meaningful. Invite each person to share what they tried, what they noticed and what they're still wondering. Ask whether any group action needs adjusting in light of feedback from the people affected. Finish by choosing a next point of connection, which could be another gathering, a shared practice or continuing friendships. Leaving room for unfinished growth honors the invitation of the book.