

# Starter Kit

## 2017: WEEK 5

*This quarter we will study Luther and other reformers, but most importantly we will study all the varying meanings of this word, what it meant to many people throughout the Bible, and what it means to us.*

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## INTRODUCTION: Using the Starter Kit

We have provided twenty-five sessions that can be used for youth meetings or for whatever you need them for. Besides that, there are five group Bible studies. We recommend you use the Habakkuk Bible study very early in your series—even the last week of 2016 if you can.

If you use all the starter kits (you don't have to; you can pick and choose the ones that are best for your situation), you will have twenty-two more weeks in the year. You may create whatever programs you wish for those weeks. Or you could choose to make these starter kits last for two sessions, choosing certain parts for the first week and the rest for the second week.

Twelve of the Starter Kits are based on twelve principles of Luther's reformation, delineated by Thomas F. Fischer, M.Div., M.S.A., found here:

[http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh\\_articles/263\\_luther\\_principles\\_reformation.html](http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/263_luther_principles_reformation.html)  
[http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh\\_articles/263\\_luther\\_principles\\_reformation.html](http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/263_luther_principles_reformation.html)

In between these twelve principles you will find kits based on Bible characters whose lives exemplify the principles.

Here is what we provide in each session:

1. **A brief reading on the topic.** This can be read, but of course should be shared instead in the leader's own words, adding or subtracting details that fit your group. Usually, there are Bible readings and questions worked into the text.
2. **A short devotion** that brings home the principles of the topic of the week. This is intended to be shared with the whole group.
3. **An activity suggestion.** These are simple, requiring few, if any, materials, but we all learn and retain better if we do something physical with what we've heard and seen.
4. **A short skit.** If you have time to rehearse and learn, these can be done on different weeks, or even for other meetings such as church services. But they can also be and done in impromptu fashion, each person reading his/her part expressively. Always allow time to discuss people's reactions after skits.
5. **Very important:** Each week's starter kit includes a page called "**Seven Days of Soul Food.**" Print these out and give copies to each person, or give each person the link if they have online access. These are personal applications that will carry the devotion through the whole week. It is highly recommended that each person begin some sort of prayer journal and use it all year. We general think of journals as being full of writing, but if you don't like to write, you can draw, doodle, paste in pictures that bring the lessons of the week to mind—anything that helps you draw closer to God.

## The Whole Soul

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is one of the foundational texts of faith. It reads, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Jesus enlarges slightly on this text in Matthew 22:37 (capitals show that He is quoting from the Old Testament). And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." Mark 12:29-30 reports Him as saying, "HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH."

Luke 10:27 tells a slightly different story: Jesus asks a lawyer how he reads the Law, and the lawyer says, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."

From all this, we can learn that there are four ways we can express our love for God: heart, mind, soul, and strength, which we can apply to physical strength, or using our bodies to love God.

Each page of the "**Seven Days of Soul Food**" includes suggestions for showing love to God and others in all these ways.



## WEEK 5: Beloved One

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The apostle John didn't name himself when he wrote the stories of the disciples' life with Jesus. He just said, "the one Jesus loved." Today, if someone went around saying, "I'm the one Jesus loves," we would think that person was boasting, implying that Jesus loves him/her more than He loves others. But the fact is, anyone who is truly close to the Lord is always amazed at how much Jesus loves them. That's because we know we are not worthy of such love. We humans, living on this broken world as we do, have the deeply ingrained idea that we must somehow be "worthy" of love. But God *is* love. He considers every single being to be worthy of His love—and He considers sinful humans to be worth the life of His Son.

Jesus thought so, too. That's why He came.

Still, there's truth in the awareness that we don't deserve the kind of overwhelming, unconditional love the Godhead pours out on us. John the Beloved was keenly aware of that.

James and John, sons of Zebedee the fisherman, had a reputation. Apparently, they had a tendency to lose their temper, and when they did, they got loud. Perhaps very loud. Perhaps they were even violent, calling names, throwing things, maybe hitting or getting into fights. Even today we have a saying, "swear like a sailor." It's not necessarily true that people who work on boats and on the sea swear any worse than others, but they do have that reputation. The Zebedee boys were no different.

Have you ever known someone with a quick temper? (Perhaps even yourself?) Have you noticed that although this is a sinful thing, it often goes along with having a particularly sensitive and passionate nature? It's often true, though not always, that people who get angry easily care deeply about things, and just don't know how to channel their energies to help instead of hinder. John was one of those people.

He was one of the followers of John the Baptist, which shows that he was seeking spiritual truth. When John pointed the way to the Messiah, John and Andrew were the two who went to meet Jesus. Note how Ellen White describes him at that moment: "The disciple John was a man of earnest and deep affection, ardent, yet contemplative..." (Desire of Ages, p 139).

Over the first day or two of Jesus' beginning ministry, right after his forty days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness, He collected five disciples. Andrew brought his brother Simon, Jesus Himself called Philip, and Philip brought Nathanael. (John 1:35-51; as usual, John does not name himself.)



## WEEK 5: Beloved One

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We don't know exactly when John's brother James joined them, but it was no doubt soon. For a time these disciples, and gradually others, followed Jesus "part-time." They traveled with Him sometimes, went to hear Him speak when they could, but went back to their daily lives and work.

During this time, John became closer and closer to Jesus. Mrs. White describes his "receptive spirit" and "confiding trust" (Desire of Ages, p. 292).

Yet, when Jesus prayed all night and chose twelve of His disciples to call as full time apostles, (Matthew 4:20 and Mark 1:18), He actually gives James and John their famous nickname, "the sons of thunder."

There are several stories of James and John showing their old nature even though they *do* love Jesus, and they *are* following Him. Luke 9:46-56 will show both their vengeful natures and their desire to be greatest. Read or have someone read this passage.

On at least two occasions that we know of, James and John (once they even got their mother to ask) begged Jesus to give them the highest places in His new kingdom (Mark 10:36; Matt. 20:20). This was after they'd been sent out to do miracles in Jesus' name, after they had been present at the Transfiguration...this was, in fact, near the end of Jesus' time on earth.

How could such a man be called "the Beloved," the "one whom Jesus loved"? How could all the descriptions of him be true?

There is one thing we can be sure of: Jesus does not love any person *more* or *better* than any other. The Bible teaches in Acts 10:34 and Romans 2:11 that God shows no favoritism. 2 Peter 3:9 says God isn't willing for *anyone* perish. He would save us all, if only...if only what? What makes the difference?

(Allow answers.)

So John wasn't the one Jesus loved the best, and he certainly wasn't the one most deserving of love—John was the one who listened the best, the one who leaned on Jesus' shoulder, the one who kept coming back even after he sinned...again!

We can do that!



## DEVOTION

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### DEVOTION

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(Give each person a piece of paper and something to write with. Have them write their name. Now ask them to write “the beloved” after their name.)

What would it be like to be named as “(your name) the Beloved”?

Wouldn't that be wonderful? Can we know what specific actions reformed John, and then imitate those things?

Here is a passage from Ellen White about John. Every principle she mentions here is biblically based, but this is a clear list about this one man.

Even John, who came into closest association with the meek and lowly One, was not himself naturally meek and yielding. He and his brother were called “the sons of thunder.” While they were with Jesus, any slight shown to Him aroused their indignation and combativeness. Evil temper, revenge, the spirit of criticism, were all in the beloved disciple. He was proud, and ambitious to be first in the kingdom of God. But day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the patience. He opened his heart to the divine influence, and became not only a hearer but a doer of the Savior's words. Self was hid in Christ. He learned to wear the yoke of Christ and to bear His burden (Desire of Ages, p. 295-6)

*(Spend a few minutes with these questions.)*

*You could have a scribe write the answers for all to see.)*

List the faults found in this passage, noting the Bible stories that show them to be true. You don't have to look up the actual references unless you have time. On your paper, mark the ones that you think are true of you, too.

Now list the things that made the difference. What did John do that changed him? Mark the ones you do, and circle the ones you are committed to begin.

Do you think John lost his passion?

What did he do about things he cared strongly about, later in his life?

Write down some issue(s) you care passionately about. Write two or three things you could do to make a difference.

*Read together 2 Corinthians 3:16-18.*





## DEVOTION

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Transform. Hmm...there is another word like "reform"! This one implies a complete change. Make a promise to God that you will seek to behold His face continually and trust Him to do the transforming.

### **Activity Suggestion**

Discuss the current situation and affairs wherever you are, and decide on an issue that the group cares deeply about, and which tends to make them angry. Make a list of at least three things the group could do to channel this anger (not necessarily a bad thing by itself) and try to improve and/or heal the issue.

Now have each person take charge of one part of the solution that uses their particular skills. Make a decision to gather and follow up.

## JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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### John 13

## JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27). To put it another way, body+heart+mind=one living soul.

We can't really divide ourselves into different sections, but it's useful to look at these different aspects of ourselves and be sure we have a well-balanced faith that uses all the avenues of a soul. Each of these starter kits will include a week's worth of food for your soul in each of these four methods of understanding and expression.

Write about each of the following in your prayer journal this week. Strive to use language of emotion, thought, physical health and strength, or spirit on the given days.

**Day 1: Thoughtfully and prayerfully read John 13**, paying particular attention to John's part in this story. Now close your eyes and try to imagine being there, seeing the scene play out, having Jesus wash your feet, hearing the words He said. Write in your prayer journal about the experience. Which disciple did you identify with the most, and why? Is there anything you'd like to change?

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**Day 2: Heart:** The story of John contains a lot of emotions, both positive and negative. Do you have strong emotions like this? Have you tried to control them and found that emotions aren't particularly controllable? Try thinking of your emotions as being God-given, and needing to be managed rather than shut down or controlled. List some you have trouble with in your prayer journal and ask God for specific strategies. Be aware this may include asking for help—that's a good thing to do. Prayerfully connect with these emotional themes and consider how God wants to work in your heart this week.

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## JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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**Day 3: Mind:** In what ways do you think John the Baptist and Jesus appealed to John's thoughtful mind. What are some things his story makes you think about? Is there a belief or a principle that you can state clearly? What will you do with it? How does God want to work in your mind this week?

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**Day 4: Strength/body:** Our emotions are strongly centered in our body. They raise and lower blood pressure and pulse, aid or interfere with digestion, and can even help or hinder our general health. Are there stresses you need to find ways to reduce or manage? Try to discover some ways God can help you to strengthen your physical and emotional health this week.

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**Day 5: Soul/spirit:** As you prayerfully ponder the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week, write down the advice you would have given the young John, if you could travel back in time and talk to him. Write down your suggestions for him, and then use them yourself.

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**Day 6: Consider the emotional health** of your family, community, and church. Are there ways you can be part of the solution rather than part of the problem? Make one specific plan, implement it, then write about the results and any changes you'd make next time.



## JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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1. **Day 7: Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned.**
  - a. Write a poem or song or story.
  - b. Create a poster. Write a letter.
  - c. Paint or draw a picture. Make a sign.
  - d. Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings.
  - e. Build something.
  - f. Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s). Make food and give it to someone in need.

Use whatever creativity God has given you. We all have something. Share the love!

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## SKIT

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### SKIT

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A SHORT SKIT (one act only, about 5-10 minutes)

This is a fairly short skit, but it shows clearly the closeness that grew between Jesus and His youngest disciple.

#### CHARACTERS

1. Roman soldiers, at least three
2. Jesus
3. John
4. Mary
5. Mourners at foot of cross, any number

#### PROPS

1. You need something to represent the cross. The simplest thing is to have a sturdy chair or ladder the actor playing the part of Jesus can stand on. Just holding his arms out for the length of the skit will be surprisingly difficult, and give a very tiny touch of the agony Jesus went through for us. It would be safest to have this placed so that the actor's back is near or against a wall.
2. Some dice or small stones and a coat or robe or piece of cloth.
3. Pottery jar or pitcher of red drink. (Or, to save mess, drinks can be imaginary.)
4. Stick with cloth tied around end.
5. Could have something to represent a crown of thorns.

**SKIT**

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Jesus is on "the cross," clearly suffering, having a hard time breathing, near death.

The soldiers are gambling and arguing over the robe, though one can be the centurion who is drawn to faith, if you like. That person can be standing, watching Jesus intently, with a look on his/her face that shows inward struggle.

The people at the foot of the cross are grieving.

John is supporting Mary, Jesus' mother, who is inconsolable.)

**JESUS**

(Pulling in a hard breath—gasps out) Woman!

**MARY**

(Looks up eagerly through her tears and sobs)

**JESUS**

(Tries to nod toward John, and winces) Behold your son!

Mary and John look at each other then back at Jesus.

**JESUS**

(Looks at John) Behold your mother!

**JOHN**

(Choking up) I'll take care of her, Lord.

Jesus (head falls forward, doesn't breathe for a few seconds—mourners lean forward anxiously. Then drags in another breath and lifts head) I'm thirsty.



## SKIT

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### MARY

(Reaches out as if to serve Him.)

### ROMAN SOLDIER

(Dips cloth on end of stick into drink and holds it to Jesus' lips.)

### JESUS

(Touches cloth, then pulls back. Gasps out His final words) It is finished!

(His head drops forward)

### MOURNERS

Mourners break into new tears. After a minute of mourning, John gently turns Mary away.