

Starter Kit

2017: WEEK 6

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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INTRO: 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.htmlhttp://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 6: Nothing Except Christ, and Him Crucified

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Read or have someone read 1 Corinthians 2:2. What do you think this means? Allow a moment or two for discussion.

Now read Romans 1:16 and discuss for a moment. These could be called the Apostle Paul's thesis statements. They show the center of his faith, which is all based on Jesus' death and resurrection. Everything else, no matter how important, is second to that. He even says in 1 Corinthians 15:14 that if Jesus did not raise from the dead, then our faith is "in vain".

Some years ago, Seventh-day Adventist pastor and then-conference president Raj Attiken gave a series which asked the question, "Which is most important in Christianity: the teachings of Christ, the example of Christ, or His death and resurrection?"

Take a few minutes, just with a show of hands, to take the five-item questionnaire he passed around:

1. Jesus wished to be remembered most by
 - a. His teachings
 - b. His example
 - c. His death
 - d. None of the above

2. The book of Acts refers to Jesus mostly in connection with
 - a. His teachings
 - b. His example
 - c. His death and resurrection
 - d. None of the above

3. The Epistles refer to Jesus largely in connection with
 - a. His teachings
 - b. His example
 - c. His death and resurrection
 - d. None of the above

4. The book of Revelation refers to Jesus most frequently in relation to
 - a. His teachings
 - b. His example
 - c. His death and resurrection
 - d. None of the above



WEEK 6: Nothing Except Christ, and Him Crucified

5. The central issue in Christianity is
 - a. The teachings of Jesus
 - b. The example of Jesus
 - c. The death and resurrection of Jesus
 - d. None of the above

The attendees were surprised to learn that, counting by number of verses, number of stories, or number of chapters spent on these topics, death and resurrection was far and away the winner every time. In the three synoptic gospels, the parables are mostly kingdom parables until Matt. 14, Mark 6, and Luke 9, respectively. From that point on, they are all about death, resurrection, and grace.

Luke's turning point is particularly poignant. Read or have someone read Luke 9:51. Especially touching in the King James Version, the text reads, "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." This chapter also contains his first prophecy of his death, and ends with sayings such as, "One who sets his hand to the plow and turns back is not fit for the kingdom." Jesus had set His hand to the salvation plow, and He knew it was going to be a horrible time for Him, but He was not going to turn back. No matter what.

All four of the gospels spend several chapters just on the last week of Jesus' life, often called the Passion Week.

Elder Attiken pointed out that all major religions have rules for behavior. They all say we should treat others kindly, they all have some good moral leaders and good moral teachings. (Of course, they may also have false teachings, but then, there are some false teachings around in some forms of Christianity, too.)

Only Christianity has the astonishing teaching of a God who is Incarnated in human flesh and lives, dies, and is resurrected again specifically for the purpose of saving His children who cannot save themselves. This is "the mystery of salvation," into which even angels long to look. Nobody understands it. Nobody has to.

We just have to accept it. And then live our lives in awe-filled gratitude.



DEVOTION

DEVOTION

What does the cross mean to us? In modern times, it has become a beautiful symbol. People make them out of wood or stone and decorate churches and graveyards with them. They make them in gold, silver, or precious stones and wear them. And so we should look to that cross and consider it a beautiful thing—it is the fulcrum of the whole universe and of all time—the moment when all creation moved from being saved from the foundation of the world, that is, in God's plans, to being saved—a done deal—a finished work, waiting only on each person to accept or reject.

But the cross was not originally a thing of beauty. It was the electric chair or gibbet or shooting place of its day. It was one of the many, many cruel ways people have invented for killing each other, particularly for killing those judged to be criminals. It was a horrific way to die, especially after being whipped, beaten, and abused. In Jesus' case, a crown of thorns added to the pain.

Many sermons have made much of the details of Jesus' physical suffering, but His agony was far, far deeper than merely physical, as terrible as that was. Jesus, who had already lived in the strange weakness of human flesh for thirty-three years—thirty-four if you count His time in the womb—was now torn from the connection with His Father that He had had since before time began. It was this which killed the Lamb of God, more than blood loss or inability to breathe on the cross. He didn't know—not for certain—that He would ever live again. He had the best and purest faith the world has ever known, and through that faith He *trusted* that He would see His Father again.

But He didn't *know*. [See *Desire of Ages*, p. 753.]

And He did it anyway. That's how much He loved me. That's how much He loved you. He was willing to die, even if it meant forever, to give us the chance to say "Yes!"

So, of course we see it as beautiful. We look up to it, spend time at its feet, try to live our lives by the principles shown there. The ugly old torture instrument has become the means of life eternal by the side of a mighty Creator who loves us *that much!*

Have everyone close their eyes. Pray for the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit and allow a few minutes for each to try to imagine what it would have been like to be at the feet of the real cross, watching Jesus die, watching His forgiveness of those who hurt Him, watching Him offer life to the thief beside Him even while He Himself was dying, watching His gentle love to John and His mother.



DEVOTION

When all open their eyes, ask those who are willing to share insights or new awareness of the wonders of salvation.

It was for you. Just for you.

Activity Suggestion

Collaborate together on a work of art which shows the cross at the center of human (and universal) history. Perhaps put symbols of death, ugliness, and evil on one side, and symbols of life, beauty, and grace on the other. It could be a three-dimensional creation or a poster or painting—whatever you like. Display your final product in a place where people can be blessed and perhaps it may cause some soul-searching.

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food



Colossians 2:6-15

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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.

1. **Day 1: Read Colossians 2:6-15.** Make a list of the things Paul says have happened to us in and through Christ. (Received, walk, rooted...etc.) Choose one or two that mean the most to you and write about them in your prayer journal.

2. **Day 2: Heart: Which of the things you listed** appeal most strongly to your emotions, and why? Prayerfully connect with these emotional themes and consider how God wants to work in your heart this week.



JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

3. **Day 3: Mind: Which of the things you listed** appeal most strongly to your mind and intellect? How does God want to work in your mind this week?

4. **Day 4: Strength/body: Consider particularly the “death through baptism.”** Why do you think it is important for us to do an actual physical act to show our commitment? Why do others need to see and witness to this with their physical eyes? Are there other things on your list that you think apply to your physical strength?

5. **Day 5: Soul/spirit: As you prayerfully ponder** the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week, how do you plan to strengthen your soul's commitment to God and to the new life Jesus bought so dearly for you?



JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

6. **Day 6: Read the passage one more time**, thinking of your family, your community, and your church. What are some things you want to pray for? Write them down. What are some ways you can work to strengthen others in the things you have learned this week?

7. **Day 7: Use day 7 to create something beautiful** that reflects what you have learned. Write a poem or song or story. Create a poster. Write a letter. Paint or draw a picture. Make a sign. Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings. Build something. 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!!



SKIT

SKIT

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

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

CHARACTERS

1. Jesus
2. Peter
3. John
4. Mary Magdalene
5. Other women
6. Thomas
7. Other disciples—you can have the whole group in this skit. These do not have speaking parts, so no one need be nervous.

PROPS

If you do not have a door or screen or hanging for Jesus to appear from, you can have the actor playing Jesus stand with his back to the group, a little apart, signifying that he is not yet visible.

1. All actors except Thomas and Jesus are grouped together, sitting on chairs and floor, and are excited and agitated.
2. They may be arguing or interrupting somewhat. Some are saying Jesus' body has been stolen, others insist that He might have risen.
3. Thomas is away from others at one side; Jesus is standing to other side, behind door or screen, or with his back to the group.



SKIT

PETER

I'm telling you, the tomb was empty.

JOHN

Yes, we both saw the grave-clothes lying there.

PETER

You didn't even go in! I went in, and I saw the face cloth all rolled up by itself. Would a thief have done that?

WOMAN

We women went there first.

SECOND WOMAN

Yes—an angel told us Jesus had risen!

MARY MAGDALENE

(Not as argumentative) Let's calm down, can't we? I went there while it was still dark, and at first all I saw was that the stone had been rolled away. I ran back and told Peter and John. (They nod and agree.) But when they left, I stayed, and I saw two angels in white.

(Others interrupt, exclaiming that she's crazy, or imagining things.)

**SKIT**

MARY

(Waving her hands for silence) I know what I saw and heard! They asked me why I was crying, and I said I didn't know where my Lord's body had been taken. (Laughs a little.) I was so confused, and crying so hard, I didn't even realize they were angels yet! Then I saw someone else standing there. (Her face shows awe and joy.) I was still crying, and I thought it was the gardener. I asked him if he had taken the body, and then...and then... I am telling you, I saw the Lord! He is risen!

(Some act like they might believe her, but most are still dismissing the whole idea.)

ANY DISCIPLE

Did someone make sure that door is locked?

This is the sort of crazy talk that is going to get us arrested!

(Suddenly Jesus appears, everyone is shocked into silence and very afraid, gasping and backing away except for Mary and women, who rush forward joyfully.)

JESUS

(Raising His hands in blessing and smiling lovingly at them all.) Peace be with you. Yes, it's true. I am here. (Shows his hands and side.)

(Mocking turns to rejoicing.)



SKIT

JESUS

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, now I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit.

(Breathes on them.) If you forgive anyone, their sins have been forgiven. If you retain any, their sins have been retained.

(JESUS leaves, disciples are exclaiming and excited, apologizing to the women. thomas joins group.)

ANY DISCIPLE OR SEVERAL

(Talking excitedly over each other) "We have seen Jesus! The women were right, He's risen!"

THOMAS

Well, I think you're all out of your minds! I won't believe it unless I can see His wounds for myself, and put my fingers in His scars and His side!

(Group freezes.)

Someone says, "One week later."

(Group begins to move again. Jesus appears again. Everyone gasps, but all are happy except Thomas, who is shocked.)

JESUS

Peace be with you. (Looks at Thomas and holds out hands.) Here, give me your hand. Do you want to touch my scars? Do you want to put your fingers in the wound in my side?



SKIT

THOMAS

(Trembling and embarrassed, touches the wounds.)

JESUS

Don't be unbelieving, but believing.

THOMAS

(Falling to knees) My Lord and my God!

JESUS

Now that you've seen me, now you believe?

Blessed are those who don't see, but believe anyway.