

STUDY
GUIDE

THE ESSENTIAL JESUS | YOUTH EDITION | DOUG FIELDS

BASED ON THE BOOK BY WHITNEY T. KUNIHOLM + SCRIPTURE UNION

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Published by CrossSection
940 Calle Negocio #175
San Clemente, CA 92673
800-946-5983
crosssection.com

Scripture Taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®.
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Book + Jacket design by Crosssection

Set in Gotham & Scala

First Edition: February 2014

Printed in the USA

ISBN ### (paperback)

ISBN ### (kindle)



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Essential Jesus Study Guide, the all-in-one resource for individual study, family discussion, and small group interaction! In the following pages you'll be invited into the grand story of Jesus. It's our prayer that somewhere in this story you'll find out where your own story intersects with Jesus.

Jesus is amazing! Everywhere that Jesus went, he drew a crowd and amazed people. What made him so amazing? That's the journey we are inviting you on.

Please know that there's no ONE WAY to use this book and start the journey with Jesus. You can do whatever you want with the words that are contained within these pages!

BUT... before you dig in, we want to share some things that may be helpful to you. You can skim these first few pages or spend a little time thinking thru how you want to approach this journey.

Big Picture: There are 30 Old Testament passages that point to Jesus. These are followed by 70 more passages that paint different images of Jesus. The story of Jesus is told from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

Details: We're organized the readings into 20 sets of 5 readings each so you can more easily discover what the Bible says about Jesus.

Nothing is dated so you can use it at any time of the year and you can read it in 100 days or 1000 days... again, it's all up to you.

Each reading is flexible enough for you to race thru a daily reading or spend an hour or so digging-in and answering the questions and really thinking thru the passage and how it relates to your life.

There's no one Bible translation that you must use. Read whatever translation you have (or your church recommends), but most of the verses that we've highlighted for you to think about (meditate) or memorize are from the NIV (which we chose because it's the most popular and widely read translation in the world).

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Again, there's no one way to read the Bible, but here are some ideas that might help you in your journey.

Select a place that's comfortable for you where you won't be easily distracted.

If reading at the same time each day is helpful for developing a habit, go that route.

Get a copy of The Essential Jesus Daily Planner, that's our popular punch-out card that helps you track your 100 day reading progress.

Try to find another person to take The Essential Jesus Challenge with you (parent, friend, youth pastor), or read it with a small group (Bible study, home group, Sunday School class, etc...). Reading the Bible on your own, and then discussing your insights and questions with others will transform your time into a powerful spiritual experience.

HOW EACH OF THE 100 READINGS ARE ORGANIZED

We tried to create a simple structure for you to follow that might help you beyond your 100 readings. Our reading method consists of 5 actions: (1) Pray it, (2) Read it, (3) Think about it, (4) Try it, (5) Write it. Once you learn this simple method, you can use it anytime you read a Bible passage. Here's how it works:

- **PRAY IT:** before you read, ask Jesus to help you understand his Word.
- **READ IT:** read the Bible passage slowly and thoughtfully. If you have time, read it more than once... take the time to "take it in."
- **THINK ABOUT IT:** this is a basic, primer question to get you thinking about what you just read. You can answer in your mind, talk about it with a friend, or write your answer in your journal.
- **TRY IT:** we want you to learn from God's Word and do something that connects to what you just read. Many followers of Jesus... uh, well, they don't follow. The read, puff up with knowledge and sit there. We want you to put your faith into action in very real ways. If you don't like our suggestions... try something else.
- **WRITE IT:** there's something powerful that can happen when you put your thoughts, ideas, dreams and prayer down on paper. We're big fans of journaling and want to challenge you to write stuff down.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Combining your personal Bible reading with group discussion is the best way to take The Essential Jesus Challenge. Here are some tips to enhance your group experience.

If this is a new group for The Essential Jesus Challenge, use your first meeting to answer some basic questions: who will lead or facilitate, what's the best time, place and frequency, will childcare be needed? After the logistics are set, everyone will need the following: 1) an easy-to-read version of the Bible, 2) a copy of The Essential Jesus Daily Planner and/or, 3) a copy of this Essential Jesus Challenge Guide.

When you meet, keep in mind the following principles:

- **BE PREPARED.** Encourage every member to read the passages for that week prior to the meeting.
- **BE WELCOMING.** You might start each session with singing and worship, or refreshments and fellowship. Leave time at the end for prayer.
- **ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION.** Start by allowing members to share what they learned from reading the passages on their own during the week. Then use the questions in the Group Discussion Guide to continue the dialog. No one should monopolize the conversation; everyone should have an opportunity to participate.
- **LEARN AND LIVE.** Encourage members to share examples of how they've tried to live out what they've learned. That's when the Bible will really come alive.

DON'T SPEED... RACE... OR RUN THROUGH THIS BOOK

As you take The Essential Jesus Challenge, please know that our goal for you isn't to race through these readings so you can say "I finished!" Our goal is that you'll gain more knowledge and love for Jesus so you'll say, "I know Jesus better!" The bigger goal is to get to know the "star" of the Bible's greatest story—Jesus. As you read through these 100 passages you'll be able to discover for yourself who Jesus is and what makes him so special.

Our prayer for you is that over the next few months, the Bible's greatest story of God's love shown in Jesus will come alive for you as never before. Please don't allow The Essential Jesus Challenge be the end of your journey in the Bible. Let it become the beginning of a lifetime adventure of connecting with Jesus through the Bible and prayer.



WHO IS JESUS?

The most important questions in life don't have to do with curfew, dating, how far is too far, or what's for dinner? You know that and that's why you're wise enough to be holding this book.

There are a lot of great questions to ask about purpose—what am I supposed to do with my life? Question of philosophy—if God is loving, why does pain/suffering exist? Relationships—why are people so difficult to get along with? It's probably safe to assume you've asked these questions and you've got many more great ones waiting to be answered.

But, there's one question that is more significant than all the others—Who is Jesus? Why is this so important? Well, because Jesus claimed he was God. He claimed to be both God and human while on the earth. He said he was the fulfillment of God's promised Messiah—the one and only Savior of the world. If that is actually true, this that's a really big deal and all the other questions get in line behind the question of “Who is Jesus?” So, was Jesus who he said he was?

We think the best way to find out if Jesus really is God, then we ought to explore the most complete source of information we have about Jesus—the Bible. As you read through these 100 passages about Jesus, you'll quickly see Jesus is the main character of the storyline that runs through the Bible from beginning to end. Jesus is what the Bible is all about.

In the first five readings, we'll consider the thoughts of three people who were very close to Jesus: John and Peter, two of his closest followers (disciples), and Paul, who had a fascinating encounter with Jesus while trying to hunt him down and kill him. Each of these five readings describes Jesus in very general ways. Later in our journey, we'll get into more specifics about Jesus' life (which is fascinating!). But for now, let's start with the big picture.

1 IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD... THE WORD IS JESUS

PRAY IT:

Jesus, as I begin this journey of reading Your Word and exploring Your ways, please help me to see who You really are.

READ IT:

John 1:1-18

THINK ABOUT IT:

Why do you think Jesus is referred to as the true light? What are some helpful and/or attractive elements of “light”?

TRY IT:

When you walk by and notice a light switch today, consider these words: “Jesus is my true light.”

WRITE IT:

Before you finish, take a little time to write your thoughts, questions, concerns, and/or prayers here...

The other writers of the Gospels begin their books with practical details of Jesus' life—who his ancestors were (Matthew), how his ministry got started (Mark) and how he was born (Luke). In this reading, John jumps right in by calling Jesus “the Word”... an interesting title highlighting something very important: **Jesus was different than other humans.** Jesus is not simply just a great teacher, healer, celebrity or leader. The essential truth about Jesus is that he was “God in the flesh”... “God on earth” (verse 14). If you want to know what God is like, simply look to Jesus. Why? Because the Word [Jesus] was God (verse 1).

MEMORIZE IT:

JOHN 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2

HUMBLE JESUS

PRAY IT:

Jesus, speak to me as I interact with your Word. Help me to see what you would have me see... I don't want to miss anything that you'd have for me.

READ IT:

Philippians 2:1-11

THINK ABOUT IT:

How difficult is it for you to look toward the interest of others? Do you think it's even possible to have the same mindset as Jesus (verse 5)?

TRY IT:

Identify one person in your life who you could serve today? How might you serve this person in the spirit of humility? Why might humility be an important character quality?

WRITE IT:

Before you finish, take a little time to write your thoughts, questions, concerns, and/or prayers.

The Apostle Paul (the author of Philippians) challenged Christians to be less selfish and more loving, compassionate, joyful and united (verses 1-4). In this challenge, Paul gives one of the most amazing descriptions of Jesus in the entire Bible (verses 5-11). Let's consider what he wrote about Jesus:

- Jesus is God (verse 6).
- Jesus became a human being (verses 7-8a).
- Jesus humbled himself (verse 7).
- Jesus obeyed God (verse 8).
- Jesus was exalted by God (verse 9).
- Jesus will be acknowledged by everyone (verse 10-11).
- Jesus became obedient to death—even death on a cross (verse 8).

Remember reading John 1:1-18 (see page XX)...

we're not talking about an ordinary man.

MEMORIZE IT:**PHILIPPIANS 1:8**

For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

PRAY IT:

Jesus, you are amazing! I commit to read your Word and think about your ways today. I open my mind and my heart to you. Speak to me and may my heart be ready to hear you.

READ IT:

Colossians 1:15-23

THINK ABOUT IT:

Make a list of all the things that “Jesus is” according to these verses. Which one from this list makes you think, “Hmmm?”... and which one makes you think, “That’s right!”?

TRY IT:

Somewhere on these pages, draw a picture of something that would remind you that Jesus is to be the head of the church (verse 18). This isn’t art class—you’re not being graded. Have fun with it!

WRITE IT:

What else would you like to know about God? Make a list. What answers does Jesus provide? Remember, Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God (verse 15).

The book of Colossians was written to reduce some of the negative impact false teachers were having on new believers. These teachers created confusing ways for people to relate to God. Their teaching sounded impressive, but the central focus of Jesus was missing. To this day, theology and solid teaching are important to the Christian faith, but if Jesus is not at the center of it all, the teachers have missed the point.

MEMORIZE IT:**COLOSSIANS 1:15**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

4

LOOK-A-LIKE

PRAY IT:

Jesus, I have so much to learn about you and your character and I'm so hungry to know you better and thirsty to experience your love. My prayer is that during this time I will draw closer to you.

READ IT:

Hebrews 1:1-4

THINK ABOUT IT:

Why would God want us to know what He's like? Why might knowing the character of God be important?

TRY IT:

Ask someone this question: "What do you think God is like?" Just listen. Don't judge. If the person returns the question to you, simply say, "I think he's just like Jesus." See where the conversation goes from there.

WRITE IT:

How would you describe what God is like? Write it out here:

The writer of Hebrews helps us understand that if we want to know what God is like, we can simply look at Jesus. Jesus is the "exact representation" of God (verse 3). Ever wondered what God thinks of the world? Look at Jesus. Ever been curious about what God likes and dislikes? Take a closer investigation of Jesus and you'll find out. Want to know what God thinks about you? Again, look at Jesus—see how he loves.

Although Jesus was human, he was no ordinary human. As you read about Jesus, you might consider God saying to you, "This is who I am... I want you to know me."

MEMORIZE IT:**HEBREWS 1:3**

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

5 THE CHURCH

PRAY IT:

Jesus, what a wonderful thing it is to know that you love me. I'm so very grateful and I look forward to learning more about the your love for me.

READ IT:

1 Peter 2:4-10

THINK ABOUT IT:

How does Peter describe “followers of Jesus” in this passage?

TRY IT:

Find a smooth stone and put it in your room as a reminder of these verses—Jesus is the main stone of the church.

WRITE IT:

Begin thinking about how you typically use the term “church” Do you normally refer to the building you attend... or do you think of “church” as God’s people? How might that impact the way you use that word?

Following Jesus makes you one part of a really big group called the Church (big “C”). To help describe the Church, Peter uses a picture of bricks and cement, but gives it a spiritual meaning—it’s a “spiritual house” made up of Jesus and his followers. In other words, the Church isn’t a building; it’s a “gathering of people who belong to God” (verse 9). The important part to understand is that Jesus is the foundation of this house... he’s the most important element to this gathering (verse 6).

MEMORIZE IT:

1 PETER 2:5

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

ABOUT SCRIPTURE UNION

Scripture Union is an interdenominational Christian ministry with a twofold mission: helping people of all ages meet God in the Bible and prayer, and reaching at-risk children with God's Word.

Scripture Union produces Bible reading programs for churches and groups, including The Essential 100 Challenge and The Essential Jesus Challenge, and publishes Bible reading guides for individuals, including Encounter with God® and Discovery®. Scripture Union also conducts Bible-based outreach programs for at-risk children including SuperKids® summer missions, and PrimeTime® after school programs. Scripture Union was founded in 1867 and has national ministries in 130 countries.

For more information: ScriptureUnion.org

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