

12 New Testament Passages
Changed the World

Joseph Bentz

LEADER'S GUIDE

This downloadable leader's guide offers two different tools for group activity and discussion:

Questions of Influence: Because an important focus of *12 New Testament Passages That Changed the World* is the impact these great passages have had on popular culture, literature, film, law, and other areas of life, one set of discussion questions for each chapter will explore the details of that cultural influence.

Questions of Application: These key passages of the New Testament have not only influenced culture and history, but they also have the power to change individual lives. Application questions for each chapter will allow your group to come to terms with what these important portions of Scripture might mean for them.

How To Use This Leader's Guide

The leader's guide may be used in a variety of ways. Some group leaders may want to use it for their own preparation only, while others may choose to print out copies for each group member to reference during meetings.

The leader's guide divides the book into a seven-week study because that time frame works well for many groups, but some may want to slow it down and spend more time on each chapter. That's okay too!

Most will find more questions and suggested activities than they have time to discuss, depending on the length of meetings and the level of participation in each group. Feel free to be selective about which questions and issues are most relevant to your group.

About the Book

Although many people understandably decry the decline of Christian belief in our lifetime, the Bible still has monumental and, in many ways, increasing influence in people's lives. One of many Bible apps, YouVersion, now has more than 200 million downloads worldwide, and recently, its usage has more than doubled or tripled in several countries where Christianity has historically had trouble gaining a foothold, such as Pakistan, Thailand, China, and Bulgaria.

12 New Testament Passages That Changed the World analyzes how certain key portions of the New Testament have changed literature, art, film, music, history, and individual lives. What is it about these crucial words that has shifted civilizations and caused people to stake everything on their belief in Jesus Christ?

Even people who have never opened a Bible have been affected by its stories and messages in profound ways. Most people know what the term “prodigal son” refers to even if they have never read Jesus’s parable about him. They also know what a “Good Samaritan” is, regardless of whether they have read Jesus’s story. When most people see the numbers “3:16,” they know it refers to one of the most famous passages of the Bible, John 3:16. Millions have memorized this verse, and untold numbers of people have come to Christ because of it.

Sometimes the most famous portions of Scripture are also the most abused or misunderstood, such as “Judge not” or “All things work together for the good of those who love God.” Some passages, such as the Lord’s Prayer, are often recited but rarely examined. This book will put these passages in their proper context so readers can not only know the verses but also treat them faithfully and accurately.

SESSION 1

Book Portion

Chapter 1: Does the Bible Still Matter?

Questions of Influence

1. Divide your group into two sides, and assign a leader to each side. Ask one group to prepare evidence for an argument that the Bible's influence is declining. Assign the other group to gather evidence that the Bible's influence is increasing. Groups may use evidence from chapter 1 and from their own knowledge. They must stick to the side of the argument they have been assigned, regardless of their personal opinions.

After giving them ten or fifteen minutes to gather their evidence and consider how they will counter the potential arguments from the other side, ask the two groups to face one another, and moderate a discussion in which each side presents its points and challenges the ideas of the other side. Ask someone to list the major arguments for each side on a white board at the front of the room as the discussion continues. Once all the ideas have been presented, allow people to break out of their assigned positions and share what they actually think about the Bible's popularity and relevance in today's culture.

Did anything that either side presented surprise them or change their perspective?

2. With a time limit of two or three minutes, ask each person in your group to make a list of as many examples as they can of things that have been influenced by the Bible. This could be films, songs, laws, books, or other examples. Afterward, let several people quickly read their lists out loud to see the scope and variety.

What is it about this book that makes it so far-reaching even for people who do not believe it?

3. Review the portions of chapter 1 that show how hard it was for most people to access the Bible in earlier centuries. In some eras, the Bible was available only in Latin—a language most people didn't know—and people did not have access to personal copies anyway. The only way they could know what the Bible said was to hear it read aloud in church and referenced and interpreted in art, drama, or sermons. Even with all those limitations, the stories and teachings of the Bible still dominated mainstream life.
 - Does that surprise you?
 - How did the Bible maintain its influence under such harsh conditions?
 - What implications might that history have for the influence of the Bible today?

4. One trend in Bible technology has been free Bible apps that make the Bible easily accessible on cell phones or other devices. However, a counter-trend is also taking place. Crossway, which publishes the English Standard Version of the Bible, has created a six-volume edition that emphasizes the beauty of the physical book itself and tries to make the reading experience more inviting.

If time allows, watch the short video (approx. 7 minutes) that Crossway has produced to explain their publishing decision: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydtxcJxdmX0>. The video is called “Introducing the ‘ESV Reader’s Bible, Six-Volume Set.’”

- What is your understanding of the reasons the publisher is offering this version of the Bible?
- Do you think it will make a difference for some readers?
- Would you want such a Bible? Is it worth the cost?

Questions of Application

1. Ask your group to share their own experiences with the Bible.
 - What do they love about it?
 - What frustrates them or puts them off about it?
 - Has it comforted them? Inspired them? Scared them?
 - What specific memories do group members have of a time when the Bible had a particularly significant impact on them, whether negatively or positively?
 - What impressions of the Bible have your group members heard from other people? How would they respond to those?
2. Moving forward, what would your group members like their relationship with the Bible to be?
 - Would they like to read it more often? Study it more deeply?
 - Do any of them have specific goals, such as reading through the entire Bible?

SESSION 2

Book Portion

Chapter 2: *The Prodigal Son*

Chapter 3: *The Good Samaritan*

Questions of Influence

1. The parable about the prodigal son is so familiar that many people may come to your group with strong feelings about it or memories and emotions related to the role this story has played in their lives. Take some time to let group members share what this story means to them.
2. This chapter mentions a number of films, novels, news stories, and works of art that draw on the theme of the prodigal son.
 - Which of these have your group members seen or read?
 - What aspects of these treatments of the story do they remember as being particularly meaningful at capturing the story?
 - What failures or limitations in these versions stand out to them?
 - Has anyone experienced works besides those mentioned in this chapter that are influenced by the prodigal son's story?
3. Of the many parables Jesus told, the story about the prodigal son is one of the most famous, even among people who are not followers of Christ. Why?
4. Why do you think Rembrandt's painting had such an impact on Henri Nouwen, as described in chapter 2?

If you were to create a painting based on this parable, what scene would you depict?

In his book about this painting and parable, Nouwen describes the ways in which he learns to identify with each principal character in the story: the younger brother, the older brother, and the father.

- With whom in the parable do you most readily identify?
- Do you see ways in which the other characters also have connections to you?

Copyright © 2019 The Foundry Publishing. All rights reserved. Permission to reproduce for small group use.

5. The story of the Good Samaritan is a simple one. If you have enough people in your group, one way to bring it to life more vividly is to act it out as it is read aloud. You will need someone to be a narrator, a robber, a victim, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan, and an innkeeper. You don't need Oscar-winning performances to make this meaningful. Have fun with it, but watching it unfold could give you a fresh perspective. After your group acts out the parable, ask what stood out to them that they may have overlooked or downplayed in past encounters with the story.
6. What stories have you heard on the news or elsewhere in which someone has been described as a Good Samaritan? In what ways is that term now generally used?
 - List all the places you personally know of that are named after the Good Samaritan.
 - If the Good Samaritan is a kind of “brand,” then what qualities are those organizations hoping will be associated with them?
 - Of the organizations you know, how effective are they at living up to their namesake?

Questions of Application

1. Either together or in smaller groups, whatever works best for your context, go over the prodigal son story and rewrite it as if Jesus were telling it today. *What details might a modern retelling include?*

Ask the group(s) what caused them to include the elements they did.

As a full group, see if you can come to a consensus on the elements of a prodigal son story that are crucial to maintaining its purpose. Make a list on the board of these elements.

What does this list tell you about the core meaning of this story?

2. The prodigal son parable ends on a cliffhanger. The father has invited the older son inside to the celebration, but we don't know whether the son will go in. Why do you think Jesus left it open-ended? Do you believe the son will go in?
3. If you had to encapsulate the meaning of the prodigal son story in one sentence (or even one word), what would it be?

4. Challenge your group members to spend time in prayer in the coming week, asking God what they might need to learn from this parable.
 - Has too much of the older brother crept into your action and attitudes?
 - Do you have some younger-son rebellion to come to terms with?
 - Are there areas of life in which you need to show the love, maturity, and wisdom toward others that the father in this story displays?

5. When the lawyer asks, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus does not answer directly but instead tells a story. If you were to give a more direct answer based on what you have learned from Jesus’s story, what would you say?

6. Chapter 3 discusses the issue of limits. The parable abolishes limits surrounding who can be counted as a neighbor, but is the Samaritan’s action toward the victim limitless? Review that portion of the chapter and discuss what you believe the parable teaches about limits.

7. Think of ways in which you can identify with the various characters in this parable.
 - As the chapter discusses, have you sometimes played the part of the priest or the Levite? The victim? The innkeeper? The Good Samaritan?
 - What can you learn from each of these characters?

SESSION 3

Book Portion

Chapter 4: Judge Not

Chapter 5: The Lord's Prayer

Questions of Influence

1. Chapter 4 cites research that shows that a large percentage of people who are not Christians believe the word “judgmental” accurately describes Christians today.
 - What do you think has caused that widespread perception?
 - Do you think that perception is fair? What can be done about it?
2. “Do not judge or you too will be judged” from Matthew 7:1 is one of Jesus’s most famous statements.
 - In what ways has it had a positive influence on the world?
 - How is the world a better place because Jesus taught that message?
 - In what ways has his statement been misunderstood?
3. Review what chapter 4 says about judging and social media. Discuss the ways that the rise and popularity of social media may have increased judgmental attitudes and words in our day.
 - Why does that form of communication so easily turn toxic?
 - What guidelines do you place on your own social media use to keep it from turning ugly?
4. Invite your group to pray the Lord’s Prayer together from memory as you begin your discussion of chapter 5.
 - How many of them know it by heart?
 - Do they remember learning it, or does it feel as if they have always known it?
 - Is there any other passage of the Bible of similar length that such a large percentage of the group would know by memory? If the answer is no, what does that indicate about the importance of this prayer?

5. As a group, watch a video on YouTube of one of the dozens of recordings of the song version of “The Lord’s Prayer.”
 - Review the list of artists mentioned in chapter 5 who have recorded this song. Also look at the many films in which “The Lord’s Prayer” has been used. Ask your group to list other pop-culture examples they can remember of when this prayer has been used.
 - What makes this prayer so powerful? Why do so many filmmakers, singers, novelists, and other creative artists choose to use this prayer, even when those artists are not Christians themselves?

Questions of Application

1. Chapter 4 makes the point that the act of making judgments is unavoidable.
 - What are some examples of that?
 - When do everyday judgments cross the line into the destructive attitude Jesus was warning against?
2. Can you think of examples of when you have been harshly misjudged? Allow a few people to share stories.
 - What impact did this judgment have in the short term and in the long term?
 - How aware do you think the people doing the judging were of the impact of their words?
 - What can those examples show us about how to treat others?
 - Do any of these examples spark your own awareness of ways you may have been unfairly judgmental?
3. Name recent incidents from the news in which judgmental attitudes have played a role.
 - Even as these issues are brought up, what emotions are stirred in your group?
 - Do these incidents help show the relevance of Jesus’s teaching?
4. Read or ask someone in your group to read Matthew 7:3–5.
 - This passage indicates that when we judge, we often suffer from a lack of awareness of our own flaws. What can we do to make ourselves more conscious of our own flaws and less critical of the weaknesses of others?
 - When you are more aware of your own weaknesses, what impact does it have on how harsh you are toward other people?

5. We are often warned that judging is wrong, but chapter 4 also points out that not being *required* to judge can be liberating. In what sense is it liberating not to be responsible for judging other people?
6. The author points out that the Lord's Prayer is so well known and so often recited that it is easy to mindlessly drone through a repetition of it without really *praying* it. Have you found this to be true? Review what chapter 5 says about the value of repetition and the way it connects us to personal memories and the deep traditions of the church.

Do you agree? Is there value in reciting this prayer even in moments when we are not fully aware of what we are praying?

7. Jesus gives his disciples what we now call the Lord's Prayer in response to their request for instruction on how to pray. What important principles about prayer might we take from the prayer that Jesus provides?
8. Chapter 5 analyzes the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase.
 - Did any of this teaching cause you to understand the prayer in a new way?
 - Are there any parts of it that you still find difficult to understand?
9. Read or ask someone in your group to read Matthew 6:10.
 - In what ways has this part of the prayer been fulfilled? In what ways has it yet to be fulfilled?
 - Is the kingdom of God a concept that is hard for modern Christians to understand and embrace? What is your understanding of what it means?
10. Of all the phrases in the prayer, which one might you pray most reluctantly? Which one might cost you the most if you really prayed it sincerely?

SESSION 4

Book Portion

Chapter 6: New Birth

Chapter 7: Love

Questions of Influence

1. As a group, watch a video in which football player Tim Tebow tells his story of what happened when he wrote “John 3:16” in his eye black during a game. One video, called “Tim Tebow Shares John 3:16 Story,” can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILz_9KRwzB8.
 - How do you respond to the coincidences of the statistics that Tebow mentions?
 - What is your response to his decision to use eye black as a way to share his faith during a football game?
 - Can you think of a better verse from the Bible that Tebow could have chosen to represent the essence of the Christian message?
2. Discuss Jesus’s conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. Nicodemus seems surprised or confused by Jesus’s “new birth” imagery.
 - Why do you think he responds as he does?
 - How do you understand Jesus’s statement, “You must be born again”? What does that mean? Why “birth”?
3. Review what chapter 6 says about the three types of imagery Jesus uses in John 3: wind/spirit, birth, and light.
 - What connections, if any, do you see among these three images?
 - Why do you think Jesus speaks metaphorically in these verses?
 - What spiritual application does each image have?
4. Chapter 6 discusses a study that shows that a large majority of people believe they are sinners and are not happy about it. However, more people believe they can fix the problem themselves than believe they need to turn to Jesus to do it. Why are people so reluctant to turn to Christ for rebirth?

5. Divide into groups of about four or five people if your group is large enough. Each group takes a turn giving a line from a song—any song, not just churchy songs—that includes the word “love.” Whenever a group cannot come up with an answer, that group is eliminated. No repeats of lyrics *or* songs. Play until you have a winner or you feel it’s time to move on.
 - Afterward, discuss what the game shows about the pervasiveness of love as a subject matter for songs and other creative expressions. How many of these uses of love give real insight into it, and how many cheapen the idea?
 - What long-term effect does it have on us to have love repeated so many thousands of times in so many different kinds of songs? Does it make us more attuned to love, or does it desensitize us to what love really means?

6. Car companies and other businesses like to use the idea of “love” in their advertising slogans and sales pitches. Even though we might *logically* understand that buying a certain brand of car is not going to bring us love, can these advertising techniques be effective anyway? What deep needs are they tapping into?

7. Discuss the ways that love is at the core of Christianity.
 - Can you think of any book of the Bible, church tradition, or core Christian doctrine that is not touched by love?
 - Do you think that those who are not Christians perceive love as being at the center of what Christianity is all about?

8. Split your group in two. Ask one group to make a list of all the ways that the church’s commitment to love has made the world a better place. Ask the other group to make a list of the ways the church has failed at love. Compare the lists.
 - What conclusions can be drawn?
 - If love is so central to the Christian life, why do Christians so often fall short in practicing it?
 - Critics might say these failures invalidate Christianity itself. What response might be made to that?

Questions of Application

1. Read or ask someone in the group to read aloud 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.
 - Don't these verses sound great? What makes it so hard to live up to?
 - Why is love one of the easiest things to talk about but one of the hardest to practice?
 - In what ways do you find your own desire to be loving undermined?
2. Read or ask someone in the group to read aloud John 13:35. Chapter 7 points out that this verse is not only speaking of what they should do but also what they would be *known* for doing. They should be *stereotyped* by love.
 - In what specific ways could individual Christians and the church as a whole do a better job of loving one another?
 - Do you think love has ever been the stereotype of Christians? Is it now? Will it become the stereotype in the future?
3. *Giving a thirsty person a drink. Inviting strangers in. Giving people clothes. Taking care of the sick. Visiting prisoners.* Jesus's examples of loving behavior are often simple and straightforward. Anyone could do these things. Ask your group to come up with five specific ways they could show this kind of love in the week ahead.
4. Discuss the final section of chapter 7, which reflects on the importance of truly knowing deep down that God loves you. The author believes that deep knowledge of love can make us more generous with our love toward others.
 - Have you found that to be true?
 - How can the idea that God loves you go beyond being a cliché to becoming a central motivating element of one's life?

SESSION 5

Book Portion

Chapter 8: Acts 2

Chapter 9: Romans 8

Questions of Influence

1. Review the statistics from chapter 8 about how many Christians, denominations, pastors, and churches are in the world today.
 - Do you think the believers at Pentecost could ever have imagined that Christianity would become so vast two thousand years later?
 - Are there ways in which these numbers encourage you?
 - What do you think is possible for Christianity in the future?
2. As chapter 8 shows, the time and place of the Pentecost event were not random. In what ways was this event perfectly arranged to launch the church across the world?
3. The early church faced threats from the beginning—both from within and from outside.
 - What are the biggest challenges the church faces today?
 - How confident are you that the church, through the Holy Spirit, will overcome these challenges?
4. In chapter 9, the author urges readers not just to read *about* Romans 8 or to think of the influence of its greatest verses but also to actually read the entire chapter for themselves. Invite your group to experience Romans 8 read aloud together before discussing it.
5. Chapter 9 begins with high praise for the power of Romans 8 and with quotes from prominent Christian leaders over the centuries who also have extolled it.
 - Do you agree that Romans 8 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible?
 - If so, how would you describe what gives it that distinction?

Questions of Application

1. Review the events of Acts 1. After Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, he comes to his followers a number of times and tells them to stay in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They know big things are going to happen, but they don't know many specifics, and Jesus doesn't answer all their questions. Put yourself in their shoes in those days and weeks leading up to Pentecost.
 - What would you be worried about?
 - What would you be excited about?
 - What would you expect to happen?
 - Do you think they expected events to unfold as they did?
 - Today, can you relate to this way that Christ leads his followers, calling for *faith* and for *waiting* but not filling in many details about what is to come?
 - How hard is it to live with so many unknowns?

2. The Holy Spirit made himself known in powerful ways on the day of Pentecost and continues to do so today. Some of those ways are huge and public, while others are small and directed toward individuals.
 - Ask your group to make a list of the many ways and places in which they have encountered the presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - What can they do to make themselves more aware of the Spirit's presence?

3. Review Romans 8:5–13.
 - What does it mean to have our minds set on what the Spirit desires?
 - Why is it so hard to do that? What else is it easier to set our minds on?
 - What can people do to change what their minds are soaked in and set on?

4. Romans 8:17 talks about shared suffering with Christ being an integral part of the Christian life.
 - Is that part often overlooked?
 - Is it avoidable?
 - What perspective does Romans 8 urge Christians to have toward suffering?

5. When it comes to prayer, Romans 8:26 says that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us.
 - In what ways do you need to rely on God not only for the *answers* to prayer but also for the prayers themselves?
 - Why would we not know what we ought to pray for?

6. Romans 8:28 is one of the most famous verses of the Bible.
 - What are some ways in which you have heard it misused?
 - What is your understanding of this verse in the context of this section of Romans?

7. Romans 8:37 calls us “more than conquerors.”
 - Do you believe that is how most Christians see themselves and the church?
 - What does it mean to be a conqueror in the sense that this verse is using the term?

SESSION 6

Book Portion

Chapter 10: *A Child Is Born*

Chapter 11: *The Last Supper and Gethsemane*

Questions of Influence

1. Review the statistics presented in chapter 10 about how many billions of dollars are spent each year in the United States alone on Christmas items such as trees, lights, and cards.
 - Christmas is a holiday supposedly designed to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. That birth has changed the world, but does the holiday devoted to it do almost as much to obscure that momentous event as it does to reveal it?
 - Even with the attention to non-biblical Christmas elements such as candy canes, Santa movies, Christmas trees, and other details that cloud the message of Jesus's birth, are there ways in which the secularized celebration of Christmas might also make people *more* likely to learn about Jesus and be drawn to him? Is commercialized Christmas better than no Christmas at all?
2. One of the most significant days in the earthly life of Jesus was the day he was born. But another momentous day occurred at the end of his life, when he met for a final meal with his disciples, followed by an agonizing time of prayer in a garden not far away. As chapter 11 discusses, the Last Supper has been reenacted billions of times around the earth, and it has even been celebrated on the moon. It is the most famous meal in history. The most famous artistic depiction of Jesus's final meal with his disciples is Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper." Examine an image of this painting together as a group. It shows the disciples' reaction to Jesus's statement in Matthew 26:21 that one of them is going to betray him.
 - What do you appreciate about the way this painting captures the scene?
 - In what ways does it fall short?
3. Ask your group to list the various ways they have experienced the Lord's Supper.
 - Plastic cups and tiny wafers?
 - Chunks of bread dipped in a common cup?
 - Are there practices or settings for Communion that are most meaningful to you?
 - Are there approaches toward it that you find distracting or offensive?

Questions of Application

1. It's easy to compartmentalize the birth of Jesus Christ as being worthy of contemplation only during the weeks between Thanksgiving and the end of December. What is the theological significance of the birth of Jesus Christ?
2. As chapter 10 points out, the stories of other significant women and men of faith are also downplayed even as we downplay Jesus's own birth story. Ask your group to consider who else's story should be celebrated as we contemplate Jesus's arrival as a baby on earth.
3. The genealogies that appear in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are part of the Christmas story but are easy to skip over. Review what chapter 10 says about their significance. What can these genealogies teach us about the role of *waiting* on God in the Christian life?
4. Review what chapter 11 says about how the Last Supper connects the past, present, and future. What are its connections to the Passover meal that celebrates what God has done in the past and the Wedding Supper of the Lamb that is still to come? How important do you think those connections were to Jesus?
5. Review what the author writes about the many tensions that served as a backdrop for Jesus's last evening with his disciples before his death. In addition to being filled with tension, however, that night was also a time when Jesus showed great love and care for his disciples. With that in mind, if you were to paint your own version of the Last Supper, what would you depict?
6. The author says that when he thinks of what happened at Gethsemane, it comes to him not as a continuous narrative but as vivid, agonizing fragments. Ask your group to draw or write a short description of one fragment of the story that stands out most to them. Ask people to share those fragments. What do these moments indicate about what is most important in this event?
7. Jesus's sleepy disciples failed him as he prayed at Gethsemane, and once the soldiers showed up, the disciples would flee. Why did Jesus want them with him anyway as he prayed his agonized prayer?
8. Review what Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. What does his prayer teach us about the purpose and importance of prayer?

SESSION 7

Book Portion

Chapter 12: *The Cross*

Chapter 13: *The Resurrection*

Chapter 14: *No Force Can Stop the Bible—Except One*

Questions of Influence

1. Ask your group whether they have seen any of the films about Jesus's crucifixion mentioned in chapter 12.
 - If so, what impact did these films have on them?
 - Even though the story of Christ's crucifixion has been told in movies so many times, why do filmmakers feel compelled to keep telling it?
 - What effect, if any, do you think these films have on people's faith, even when the films are not made for an evangelistic purpose?
 - The story of Christ's death has also been recreated in plays, paintings, and other portrayals. What is the most powerful or memorable depiction that members of your group have seen? What made it so meaningful?
2. Ask your group to search online for artistic depictions of the crucifixion across the centuries from painters mentioned in this chapter.
 - Which images capture the significance of the event?
 - Which ones fail to do it justice?
3. Ask your group what *object* first comes to mind upon hearing the word "Easter." Whereas the crucifixion has one overwhelming symbol—the cross—Jesus's resurrection, and the Easter holiday that celebrates it, do not. Brainstorm with your group about what symbol might best represent the resurrection.
4. Although Jesus's resurrection was one of the most important events in history, it occurred quietly, without the fanfare and spectacle we might expect from such a momentous event.
 - Why do you think God arranged for it to happen that way?
 - On the other hand, Jesus did spend time with his disciples and was seen by many people before his ascension. Why was it important for him to do that?

5. Chapter 14 lists examples of people from the last several hundred years who have given their lives in order to translate the Bible and spread its message to new readers around the world. Despite the forces arrayed against the Bible throughout history and today, the author writes: *I believe the Bible is unstoppable. I believe that if any power were strong enough to snuff it out, that would have happened already* (p. 184).
- Do you agree?
 - What are the biggest challenges today to the continued availability and relevance of the Bible around the world?
 - What are the most hopeful signs of the Bible's continued spread and significance?

Questions of Application

1. Discuss what chapter 12 says about the scandal and humiliation that the original biblical readers would have associated with the idea of death on a cross.
 - How hard was it for them to come to terms with the idea that the Messiah, the Son of God, would be killed in such a way?
 - How did Paul deal with this bizarre aspect of Christianity in his writings?
2. The actual nailing of Jesus to the cross is not mentioned in any of the Gospel accounts, and nails are not even mentioned until after Jesus's resurrection, when Thomas refers to nail scars in Jesus's hands.
 - Does the lack of a detailed description surprise you?
 - Why do you think the writers left those things out?
 - Are you surprised that we do not even know the shape of the cross?
3. How would you describe the significance of Jesus's death on the cross? What is its meaning? What connection does it have to our salvation?
4. Read or have someone else read aloud Galatians 2:20.
 - In what sense do Christians not simply *observe* Christ's crucifixion but also *participate* in it?
 - What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?

5. Ask your group to reflect on the story of Jesus's encounter with his followers on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection. If you have time, ask someone to read the story out loud (Luke 24:13–35).
 - Why does Jesus keep his identity hidden through much of this episode?
 - Do you agree with the author's assertion in chapter 13 that there is a similarity between Jesus's encounter with his followers that day and the way his followers can know him now?

6. Chapter 13 emphasizes that Jesus's resurrection was *physical*. He was not simply a spirit floating around.
 - Do Christians often downplay or misunderstand the idea that our own resurrection in eternity will be in a physical body?
 - Ask your group to discuss what aspects of that eternal resurrection they most look forward to.
 - Why do Christians so seldom discuss this?

7. Chapter 14 makes the point that the Bible cannot be reduced to the information it contains. As beautiful as it is as a body of literature, its true power is that the Holy Spirit can use it to help the reader begin to know the God behind it.
 - After going through this study, in what ways do you see or appreciate the Bible differently?
 - Even though the Bible is so powerful, why do people still ignore it?
 - Imagine that a friend comes to you and asks why they should bother to read the Bible. What would you say?