



Irresistible

Reclaiming the New
That Jesus Unleashed
for the World

STUDY GUIDE | SIX SESSIONS

ANDY STANLEY

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Irresistible Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Andy Stanley's *Irresistible Video Study*. In the weeks to come, you'll be invited to take an honest look at the state of Christianity today, how it differs from the faith of those who were part of the first-century church, and what needs to happen to help us reclaim that same *irresistibility*. "Modern, mainstream Christianity is fatally flawed," Andy wrote. "These flaws make it fragile and indefensible in the public square."

That's the bad news.

The good news is this: We can reclaim what was once characteristic of those who were part of *The Way*. We can change course and head in a new direction. We can fulfill Jesus' dream for his church. And we can pursue these goals starting today.

As you prepare to begin your six-session experience, read through the following notes.

GATHERING A GROUP

This experience can be completed as a pair, a trio, or a group, but it is intended to be worked through in community, not in isolation. If you're not already in a group, find those friends, colleagues, or family members who might be interested in this subject matter, and extend an invitation to join in.

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Prior to your first meeting to discuss Session 1, confirm the dates, times, and locations of all six sessions so that group members can block time for the gatherings and come prepared to engage.

NECESSARY SUPPLIES

Maximize your experience by ensuring that all group members have the following supplies prior to Session 1:

- This study guide
- Andy’s book, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Zondervan 2018)
- Bible, any translation (this guide uses the New International Version)
- Pen or pencil

FACILITATION TIPS

Help your group right from the start by designating a facilitator who will guide you through the content each time you gather. You might select one person to fill this role for all six sessions or several people who will rotate through the role. However you structure things, be sure to adhere to the following three guidelines for leading a group:

1. *Be prepared.* Prior to the group meeting, review the entire session, as well as that session’s video segment. Make note of the highest-impact questions you’d like to ask in the event that discussion runs long and you don’t have time to cover them all. Work through how you’d answer those questions in advance so you can prime the pump as the meeting unfolds. Plot the major sections of content (see “Session Flow” below) against the time you’ll have so you’re not caught off-guard in the moment.

2. *Be inclusive.* Work to include all personality types in your group. Gently draw out quiet members. Help redirect members who are prone to dominate the discussion. Work to create a safe space for each member to feel seen, valued, and encouraged.
3. *Be thoughtful.* Plan how you will segue from one section of content to the next. Will you offer a prayer before the video plays? Will you allow for moments of silence after the video and before the discussion begins for people to absorb what they've just heard? Think through how to best serve your group, and then resolve to do those things.

SESSION FLOW

The *Irresistible Video Study* comprises six sessions, each of which contains the following six parts:

1. Before You Begin :: A reminder of the chapters from *Irresistible* that will be covered
2. From *Irresistible* :: A centering quote from Andy's book, to be read prior to the video segment
3. Video Notes :: Space for group members to write thoughts and insights from the video segment
4. Discussion Questions :: Questions based on the video content
5. Wrap It Up :: A closing thought from *Irresistible*
6. Between Sessions :: Opportunities for group members to dive deeper into session content between group meetings

THE INVITATION

Near the end of *Irresistible*, Andy sums up the invitation that has been extended to every Christ follower:

In light of what's at stake and who is at stake, would you consider unhitching your teaching of what it means to follow Jesus from all things old covenant? Would you be willing to transfer your faith from a book to the events behind the book? Will you embrace this more enduring, defensible, liberating, culture-transforming version of our faith? That's a lot to ask. But while you're considering that, ask yourself this.

What is the faith of the next generation worth?

What is the faith of your children and grandchildren worth?

I say, everything. I say it's worth any change necessary to ensure the version of faith passed on to the next generation is the enduring version—the faith of our first-century fathers. The version that was harder than Roman steel and tougher than Roman nails. So will you consider retooling how you communicate in order to win some and save some? Will you adjust your language to avoid making it unnecessarily difficult for those who are turning toward God or turning back to God? Are you willing to embrace the realities of the world we live in and let go of cultural assumptions that characterized the world you grew up in?

Granted, these will be hard habits to break.

But break them we must.

The faith of the next generation may depend on it.

Ready to discover not only why this shift is necessary, but also how we can bring this vision to life?

Let's begin.

SESSION 1

Simply Resistible

Modern Bible readers see Jesus as an extension of the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament. Jewish leaders in Jesus' day didn't see him as an extension or fulfillment of anything. . . . From their vantage point, Jesus was introducing something new. On this, they were correct.

Andy Stanley

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A quick reading reminder before you dive in:

Session 1 covers material from the Introduction to Section 1 and the first five chapters in *Irresistible*:

- Introduction to Section 1: Simply Resistible
- Chapter 1 :: The New Standard American Version
- Chapter 2 :: Going Global
- Chapter 3 :: Temple Tantrum
- Chapter 4 :: Splittin' Up
- Chapter 5 :: Recentering the Universe

FROM IRRESISTIBLE . . .

Before playing this session's video, have a group member read the following:

The decline of Christianity in America, the popularity of the New Atheists, and the meteoric rise of the *nones* underscore something that's been true for generations but didn't matter much until now. Modern, mainstream Christianity is fatally flawed. These flaws make it fragile and indefensible in the public square. . . .

The way forward is not complicated, though some will find it controversial. It's not original with me. It's hidden in plain sight in the Gospels and the epistles of Paul. We know it *works* because it already *worked*. Once upon a time, members of a Jewish cult called *The Way*, against all odds, captured the attention and, ultimately, the dedication of the pagan world, both inside and outside the Roman Empire. So perhaps we need to hit pause on much of what we're doing today—which

isn't working all that well anyway—and take notes from the men and women credited with turning the world upside down.

VIDEO NOTES

As you watch Session 1 of the video, feel free to take notes in the space below.

Why doesn't everyone in America go to church?

What first-century Christians knew that we don't

Jesus as greater than the temple

“But all the cool kids have kings . . .”

This study's subtitle refers to *reclaiming* something we as believers once had. What do you think that thing was that kept the early church from being derailed by issues such as these?

6. In the video segment, Andy reviewed ten key events during God's covenantal commitment to Abraham. Have members look up the verse(s) and note the key points in the spaces below.

Genesis 17:15–19

Exodus 1:1–14

Joshua 10:1–13

1 Samuel 9:15–10:1

1 Samuel 16:1–13

2 Samuel 7:1–29

1 Kings 10:26–11:6

Ezra 6:1–12

2 Kings 17:7–17

Malachi 3:1–18

of their temple. It was the lack of an image representing their God. Images were strictly forbidden in Judaism. As we discovered earlier, this particular prohibition was one of the Big Ten.

The notion of worshipping an image or idol is so foreign to us that an empty idol chamber doesn't strike us as odd. But in ancient times, the very opposite was true.

WRAP IT UP

Remind the group of the "Between Sessions" material that follows, offer a closing thought or prayer based on the quote below, and then dismiss Session 1.



**While it could be argued God was silent
in the years of Israel's occupation and
oppression, he certainly wasn't still.**

—Andy Stanley

Session 1

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Following each session, you're invited to go a little deeper with the content your group discussed. In each of these "Between Sessions" segments, you'll find an extended excerpt from Andy's book followed by questions for reflection.

THE EXCERPT

When you read Jesus' description of what would transpire within view of where he was seated, it's easy to imagine the pain in his voice. It was as if he could see the carnage, hear the screams, and feel the panic of mothers clinging to their children.

These were his people. This was his nation. The nation God had raised up from one man for one purpose—to bless the world. But that chapter was drawing to a close. The temple era was coming to an end. God's covenant with the nation had served its purpose. It was no longer needed.

Why?

Because something *greater* than the temple had come.

Something that would make the temple and everything associated with it obsolete. Something new. Something better. Something for the whole world. Ancient Israel was a means to an end.

The end had come.

The new was just beginning.

GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT

➡ Why would God establish a covenant that ultimately would not be needed? Why go through the trouble of allowing the Old Testament twists and turns when “something better” would eventually straighten things out?

➡ Even without them recognizing it, why might God’s nation of Israel have craved something *new*?

In *Irresistible*, Andy notes a few of the old-way remnants that deeply troubled Jesus as he began his ministry here on earth. He wrote:

By the time Jesus reached adulthood, the Jewish temple system was completely corrupt. He thought so anyway. While we’re introduced to a smattering of sincere priests, lawyers, and Pharisees in the Gospels, they are the exception. Jesus’ trial alone is enough to remove any doubt about the state of the state.

The widespread corruption in the religious community is not simply inferred and illustrated in the Gospels. Jesus addressed it directly. In Matthew's Gospel, we find Jesus' description of the men in charge. Here's a sampling:

- Everything they do is done for people to see.
- They love the place of honor at banquets.
- They love their titles.
- They love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces.
- They neglect justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
- They are hypocrites.
- They are full of greed and self-indulgence.
- On the outside they appear righteous, but on the inside they are full of wickedness.

➡ Choose one item from the list above. How might an “old covenant” mindset fuel that manifestation?



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➡ When have you seen this type of behavior still today?

REMINDER: To prepare for Session 2, be sure to read the Introduction to Section 2 and Chapters 6–7 in *Irresistible*.