EIGHT SESSIONS

John

Believe I Am

STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO

MEGAN FATE MARSHMAN

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HarperChristian Resources

John Study Guide
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WELCOME

John

Believe I Am

SOMETIMES the Bible can seem overwhelming. Where do you go for words of comfort when you're feeling overwhelmed, lost, or frustrated in life? What book of the Bible do you turn to for wisdom about the situations in which you find yourself?

The *Beautiful Word Bible Studies* series makes the Bible come alive in such a way that you know where to turn no matter where you find yourself on your spiritual journey.

The Gospel of John, the fourth account of the life of Jesus, is often regarded as one of the most beloved books of the Bible. Written by the disciple John, the writing is chock-full of insights and stories about Jesus that don't appear in the other three gospels. John brings an artistic vibe as he pens the details of the teachings, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus.

John reveals his heart behind his writing: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in

his name" (John 20:31). This passionate Christ-follower wants everyone to know Jesus—whom He is, the depths of His power, and beauty and might.

The upcoming sessions explore the seven "I Am" statements of Jesus, which reveal the heart and presence of God with remarkable precision. The teaching plunges deep into what the Son of God meant when He identified Himself as the Bread of Life; the Light of the World; the Gate; the Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and the Vine.

By diving into this beautiful book, you're invited to let the Holy Spirit lead you into more intimate understanding, adoration, and prayer as we experience life in His name together.

John reveals his heart behind his writing: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). This passionate Christ-follower wants everyone to know Jesus—whom He is, the depths of His power, and beauty and might.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

GROUP INFORMATION AND SIZE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Beautiful Word *John* video study is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, small group, or other Sunday school class. After opening with a short activity, you will watch each video session and participate in a time of group discussion and reflection on what you're learning both from the video teaching and the personal Bible study between meetings. This content is rich and takes you through the entire gospel, so be prepared for a full experience of the depth of Scripture.

If you have a larger group (more than twelve people), consider breaking up into smaller groups during the discussion time. It is important that members of the group have the opportunities to ask questions, share ideas and experiences, as well as feel heard and seen—no matter their backgrounds and circumstances.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND LEADING A GROUP

Each participant should have his or her own study guide. Each study guide comes with an individual streaming video access code on the inside front cover. Every member of your group has full access to watch videos from the convenience of their chosen devices at any time—for missed group meetings, for rewatching, for sharing teaching with others, or if your group is short on meeting time and watching videos individually and then meeting makes the group experience doable and more realistic. We have worked very hard to make gathering around and studying the Word of God accessible and simple.

This study guide includes video outline notes, group discussion questions, a personal Bible study section for between group meetings, Beautiful Word coloring pages, and Scripture memory cards to deepen learning between sessions. Additionally, the leader will need to show the videos either by digital stream/download or on DVD. Streaming video access is included with each study guide.

There is a Leader's Guide in the back of this study guide so anyone can lead a group through this study. A lot of thought has been put into making the *Beautiful Word Bible Studies* series available to all—which included making it easy to lead, no matter your experience or acumen!

TIMING

The timing notations—for example, 20 minutes—indicate the lengths of the video segments and the suggested times for each activity or discussion. Within your allotted group meeting time, you may not get to all the discussion questions. Remember that the *quantity* of questions addressed isn't as important as the *quality* of the discussion.

Using the Leader's Guide in the back of the guide to review the content overview of each session and the group discussion questions in advance will give you a good idea of which questions you want to focus on as a leader or group facilitator.

FACILITATION

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during the activities and discussion. Facilitators may also read questions aloud, monitor discussions, prompt participants to respond, and ensure that everyone has opportunities to participate.

OPENING GROUP ACTIVITY

Depending on the amount of time you have to meet and the resources available, you'll want to begin the session with the group activity. You will find these activities on the group page that begins each session. The interactive icebreaker is designed to be a catalyst for group engagement and help participants prepare and transition to the ideas explored in the video teaching.

The leader or facilitator will want to read ahead to the following week's activity to see what will be needed and how participants may be able to contribute by bringing supplies or refreshments.

SE 1

BELIEVE
I AM

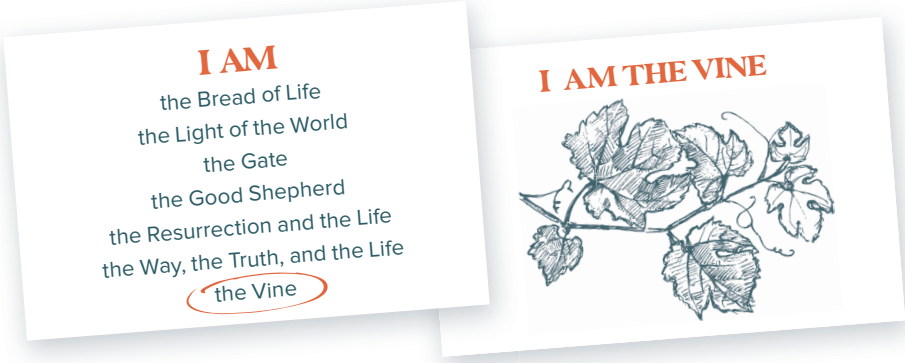
John

opening group activity (10–15 MINUTES)

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

One sheet of blank paper for each person
Pens, markers, and/or watercolors

1. Use the paper and drawing/writing tools to write the words "I Am" on the top of the page. Then consider the seven *I Am* statements of Christ: the Bread of Life; the Light of the World; the Gate; the Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and the Vine. Select the one that is most intriguing to you and draw a picture or write a description of that rich imagery on the sheet of paper.



2. Share your images or word pictures with each other as you discuss the following questions:

   Which *I Am* statement is most intriguing to you?

   Why did you select this image to draw or describe? Are there any details about what you created that are particularly important?

   What do you hope to get out of this study?

watch session one video (21 MINUTES)

Leader, play the streaming video or DVD.

As you watch, take notes while thinking through:

What caught your attention?
What surprised you?
What made you reflect?

- Knowing *about* someone is the first step toward *really* knowing them.
- You're loved, so much so, you don't have to search for it anywhere else.
- If you want to know who the true God is, who exists eternally, look at Jesus, the Son.
- When you know someone's name, they become approachable.
- Signs always point to the purpose, the destination.
- Jesus is not a vending machine or projection of our desires.

SCRIPTURE covered in this session: **John 1:1–5, 14**

group discussion questions (30–45 MINUTES)

"We're not just meant to know a lot about God. We can get to know Him personally. Knowing about someone is just the first step toward really knowing them. Thankfully, God has made Himself known to us through His Word and through His son, Christ Jesus."
—Megan

1. **Read** the phrases below and then place a star ☆ by the one that best describes you now and a circle ◯ around the one that best describes spiritually where you'd like to be. Discuss why you made the selections.

   I've heard of God.

   I know some about God.

   I'm confused by God.

   I have lots of questions about God.

   I sometimes struggle to see the connection between Jesus and God.

   I know a good amount of truth about God but don't know how to spend time with Him.

   I know lots about God but don't experience the benefits of a relationship with Him.

   I feel like I deeply know God, and still want to know more of the fullness of God through Jesus.

2. **Read John 20:31 aloud to the group.** Megan highlights John's purpose when she gives an overview of the gospel. What are John's goals for you as a reader? What do you think it means for you to "have life in His name"? Share a time when you've experienced "life in His name."

3. **Read John 1:1–5 aloud or select a volunteer to read to the group.** What does this passage reveal about Jesus? What's most comforting to you? What's most challenging to you?

4. **Select two volunteers to read John 1:14 and Colossians 1:15 aloud to the group.** Ask the following questions regarding the passages:

   Why did God become flesh to dwell among us?

   What do you think God was trying to communicate about Himself in becoming flesh and dwelling among us?

   What does it say about God that He chose to communicate with us at all?

   What would the alternative look like? What are the ways that God communicates to us?

"Why do we give someone or something a name? It is to identify, to distinguish, to characterize, to describe, to familiarize—but in a sense, it is also to contain, constrain, and even tame. When I know someone's name, they become approachable. They no longer need to be held at arm's length." —Megan

YOU'RE LOVED, SO MUCH SO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEARCH FOR IT ANYWHERE ELSE.

Go around the group answering a selection of the following questions:

On a scale of one to ten, how often do you go out of your way to find out someone's name?

How does knowing someone's name change your level of connection with the person?

What do you normally call God when you speak to Him?

How does this affect your level of connection with God?

In what areas of your life have you been tempted to hold God at arm's length?

And how might learning more about the names God calls Himself draw you closer to Him?

5. Imagine Jesus boldly declaring each *I Am* statement to you. Which of these do you most need to hear and experience today? Why? What steps can you take to become more aware of Jesus in this way?

- **"I am the bread of life" (John 6).**
  Just after feeding thousands.

- **"I am the light of the world" (John 8).**
  Jesus explaining the difference between true and false leaders.

- **"I am the gate for the sheep" (John 10).**
- **"I am the good shepherd" (John 10).**
  Jesus clarifies His sacrificial love for His sheep.

- **"I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11).**
  Before raising Lazarus from the dead.

- **"I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14).**
  Explaining the path to heaven.

- **"I am the true vine" (John 15).**
  Illustrating abiding.

Let's turn our lives toward Jesus, believe Him, and find life in His name.

close in prayer

Consider the following prompts as you pray together for:

- Opportunities to move from knowing *about* God to *really* knowing God
- Stronger, more vibrant belief in Jesus
- Personal encounters with the fullness of life through His name

preparation

To prepare for the next group session:

1. **Read John 1–6.**
2. Tackle the three days of the Session One Personal Study.
3. Memorize this week's passage using the Beautiful Word Scripture memory coloring page. As a bonus, look up the Scripture memory passage in different translations and take note of the variations.
4. If you've agreed to bring something for the next session's Opening Group Activity, get it ready.

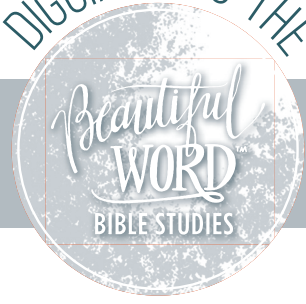
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO THE TRUE GOD IS, WHO EXISTS ETERNALLY, LOOK AT JESUS, THE SON.

— John 20:31

SESSION 1

PERSONAL STUDY TIME

DIGGING INTO THE



John

BELIEVE I AM

IN GREEK, THE "WORD" (V. 1) IS LOGOS, PRONOUNCED (LAW-GAWS). LOGOS IS THE POWER AND PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE. WHILE IT WAS USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH IMPERSONAL AND ABSTRACT FORCES IN THE WORLD, JOHN INTRODUCES HIS BOOK BY SAYING THAT THE POWER AND PURPOSE AND MEANING FOR LIFE'S EXISTENCE IS NOT AN ABSTRACT PRINCIPLE, IT'S A PERSON—JESUS.

DAY 1
John 1-2

Like Matthew and Luke, John offers a rich genealogy, but unlike the other gospels, his genealogy goes back before time began. John's opening words parallel those of Genesis 1:1, "in the beginning." This is a genealogy of eternity, of the pre-existent One. We often consider eternity in terms of moving forward, but Genesis and John hint toward eternity in the past, and a God who existed before the beginning.

1. **Read John 1:1–5.** What characteristics of God the Father's relationship with His son, Jesus, does John reveal right away? How is each one significant to you?

The Apostle John quickly introduces another man by the name of John, who is often known as John the Baptist.

2. **Read John 1:6–18** and fill in the chart below. What stands out to you most about the characteristics and mission of John the Baptist? Of Jesus Christ?

READ	OBSERVE	DESCRIBE
John 1:6–8, 15	Characteristics and Mission of John the Baptist	
John 1:9–14, 16–18	Characteristics and Mission of Jesus Christ	

3. **Read John 1:19–34.** How does John the Baptist stay on mission when it comes to proclaiming Christ?

What empowers you to stay on mission when it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus?

What tends to distract you or pull you away?

JOHN'S OPENING WORDS PARALLEL THOSE OF **Genesis 1:1**, "IN THE BEGINNING."

4. **Read John 1:35–50.** What stands out to you about the loving way Jesus meets each about-to-be disciple right where they were? Fill in the chart below.

ABOUT-TO-BE DISCIPLES	WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU ABOUT THE WAY JESUS LOVINGLY MEETS THEM?
John the Baptist's Disciples	
Andrew and Simon	
Philip	
Nathanael	

Why do you think Jesus doesn't take the same approach for each person?

What are some of the unique ways in which Jesus has met you and revealed His love?

The first miracle Jesus performs in John's Gospel takes place at a wedding in Cana.

5. **Read John 2:1–12.** Why do you think Jesus' mother trusts Him so much?

On the continuum below, how persistent are you in prayerfully asking something from Jesus. Do you think persistence in prayer changes God or changes you? Explain.

❶ ← ❷ – ❸ – ❹ – ❺ – ❻ – ❼ – ❽ – ❾ → ❿

I may ask once or twice and then I let it go.

I'm dogged in determination.

6. **Read John 2:13–25.** Make a list of Jesus' actions in the temple. Circle the action that may have been the most startling to those in the temple.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

OFTEN THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE WHENEVER GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW AND SIGNIFICANT, HIS WORK IS COUPLED WITH A MIRACLE. ONCE JESUS CALLS THE DISCIPLES, HE PERFORMS HIS FIRST MIRACLE, OR SIGN, BY TURNING WATER INTO WINE. THE MIRACLES OF JESUS WILL INCREASE IN POWER, SCOPE, AND SIGNIFICANCE THE FURTHER YOU READ.

What compelled Jesus to be so radical in His response?

What is righteous anger and how does Jesus model this for us?

Take a moment to open your heart to the Holy Spirit. Ask if there are any areas in your life He wants to clean up, make right, or overturn to make you more like Jesus. As you consider your life and what you've noticed about yourself lately, how do you think the Holy Spirit's intercessory prayers on your behalf are being answered in your awareness?

Remember, God is with you on the journey toward being spiritually formed into the likeness of Christ. Making you more aware of yourself might be one way He is drawing you to Himself to transform your life through *His* power and not merely your effort. Write your response below.

7. How might what you've written above be holding you back from experiencing the fullness of life "in His name" (John 20:31)? What can you do about it?

DAY 2
John 3–4

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus readily responds to the spiritually curious. In chapters 3 and 4, the message of salvation is delivered to three very different kinds of people. The first is a Pharisee, by the name of Nicodemus. Because of his religious stature in the community, he approaches Jesus in the night when no one will recognize him.

1. **Read John 3:1–21.** What spiritual inquiries and questions does Nicodemus pose to Jesus?

   What do you think motivates Nicodemus to pursue Jesus?

   What one spiritual question are you really wrestling with right now?

   What's preventing you from exploring that question on your own through prayer and alongside others with loving, faith-filled friends?

2. What does Jesus reveal about Himself in His response to Nicodemus? (Hint: John 3:16)

"THE **WIND** BLOWS WHEREVER IT PLEASES. YOU HEAR ITS SOUND, BUT YOU CANNOT TELL WHERE IT COMES FROM OR WHERE IT IS GOING. SO IT IS WITH EVERYONE BORN OF THE **SPIRIT**."

—JOHN 3:8

Although we can not see the wind, we can see and experience the effects of the wind. The same is true of the Holy Spirit. While we cannot see Him, we can be confident He is always moving. Our task is not to control Him but to open our hearts to whatever He is already doing in and through us.

Practically, in addition to asking, "God what should I do?" we can also ask, "Holy Spirit, what are you already doing?" From there, we can open ourselves to the ways the Holy Spirit might be wanting to use all things to form us more into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:26–29).

What hope and challenges do you find in verses 16–21? Fill in the chart below.

READ	PERSONAL HOPE	PERSONAL CHALLENGE
John 3:16–21		

The opening chapters of John cover crucial encounters at breakneck speed: the miracle at Cana, the cleansing of the Temple, the questions of Nicodemus. Then, the text circles back to John the Baptist and one of his last testimonies before his death.

3. **Read John 3:22–36.** What does John the Baptist say about Jesus?

   How does this echo what Jesus says about Himself in John 3:11–21?

   What parallels do you see between John 3:16 and John 3:36? What additional terms does verse 36 add? What is the connection between *believe* and *obey*?

Do you wholly, deeply believe that in Jesus Christ you experience everlasting life with God? How does obedience reveal the sincerity of belief (v. 36)?

What prevents you from believing more deeply?

To the Jewish, the Samaritans were villains, a despised, second-rate people. The hostility was so bad in the first centuries, devout Jews would walk many miles to avoid stepping on their despised land. Rather than avoiding the territory, Jesus made a beeline toward the Samaritan people and one particular woman.

While Nicodemus approaches Jesus at night for fear of what people thought, now Jesus approaches someone He shouldn't be seen with in broad daylight. But like Nicodemus, this woman is hiding, too. She's got a checkered past, and she knows the safest time for her to go to the watering hole is during the heat of the day when the fewest people will be around.

4. **Read John 4:1–9.** Circle the words below that best describe Jesus' response to the woman at the well.

Snooty	Kind	Graceful	Judging
Cruel	Rude	Patient	Compassionate
Demanding	Welcoming	Loving	Peaceful

How do you think the woman expected to be treated?

Describe the last time you were disarmed by someone's kindness and love.

SAMARIA WAS THE CAPITAL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. OVER THE CENTURIES, HOSTILITY ERUPTED TOWARD THOSE IN THE REGION. THEY DESIRED TO WORSHIP IN SHECHEM RATHER THAN JERUSALEM AND AFTER INTERMARRYING WITH FOREIGNERS, THE JEWISH PEOPLE ACCUSED THEM OF IDOLATRY AND STRAYING FROM GOD.

Describe the last time you disarmed someone by kindness and love.

What prevents you from doing this more often?

5. **Read John 4:10–26.** How does Jesus tenderly expose and respond to the shame in the woman's life? (Hint: vv. 16–17)

Do you think Jesus exposes and responds to the shame in your life as tenderly as He does to this woman? Why or why not?

What does Jesus reveal about Himself in this passage?

To worship God in spirit and in truth is to worship the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Worship is a response to the truth of all that God is with all that we are. True worship is a response that is initiated by the work of the Spirit in our hearts to the truth about whom God is or what He has done—in and through His Son.

What does it look like for you to worship the Father in spirit and truth?

6. **Read John 4:27–42.** How does the woman demonstrate her gratitude and excitement toward believing in Jesus? (Hint: vv. 28–30, 39)

What does a woman serving as the first and very powerful evangelist to the Samaritans communicate about how Jesus views women?

Before the close of John 4, Jesus demonstrates His love and power to yet another kind of person. After meeting a religious Pharisee in the night and a shamed Samaritan woman in broad daylight at the well, He now encounters a heartbroken Gentile father on the border of deep grief.

7. **Read John 4:43–54.** What do you think it was like for a royal official who often gave marching orders to receive marching orders from Jesus? (Hint: v. 50)

Why was the royal official quick to obey?

Why is this second sign or miracle of Jesus significant?

THE WORD *BELIEVE* APPEARS AROUND ONE HUNDRED TIMES IN JOHN.

How does this miracle foreshadow Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)?

DAY 3
John 5–6

Jesus journeys back to Jerusalem for a feast. Along the way, He passes by the pool at Bethesda, where He has compassion on a man who has been sick for thirty-eight years.

1. **Read John 5:1–17.** What does Jesus ask the man in verse 6?

   Since most people desire their health, what do you think Jesus was *really* wanting to know from the man?

2. What's the biggest area you've struggled with in your physical, mental, or emotional health?

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS WAS LONGER THAN MANY PEOPLE LIVED IN ANTIQUITY.

If Jesus asked you the same question in verse 6, how would you respond?

3. **Read John 5:18–47.** What are the main claims Jesus makes within this passage? Why do you think these would anger the religious leaders?

SCRIPTURE	JESUS' CLAIM
John 5:18	*Example: God as His father; making Himself equal with God.*
John 5:24	
John 5:27, 30	
John 5:34	
John 5:36	
John 5:37	
John 5:46–47	

JESUS DOESN'T LOOK TO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR AFFIRMATION. RATHER HE LOOKS FOR PRAISE THAT COMES FROM THE FATHER.

(V. 44)

4. **Read John 5:39–40.** What is the difference between reading *about* God and actually *knowing* God?

5. When have you been tempted to place more emphasis on reading about God than really knowing God?

   How did you recenter your focus?

6. Reflecting on this week's personal studies, what challenged you the most to really believe in, trust, passionately follow, imitate, and pursue a relationship with Jesus?

7. **Read John 6** to prepare for the next session. Summarize what happens in this chapter in two to three sentences.

How have you experienced Jesus as the Bread of Life?

What are you hungry for in life?

In what areas are you most satisfied with God right now?

reflection

As you reflect on your personal study of John 1–6, what are the BEAUTIFUL WORDS the Holy Spirit has been highlighting to you through this time? Write or draw them in the space below.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Megan Fate Marshman is an international speaker at churches, conferences, and university chapels. She is a leading voice to this generation. She has devoted her life to loving God and overflowing His awesome love to others.

Megan is finishing her Doctorate in Ministry as she serves as a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church and the Director of Women's Ministries at Hume Lake Christian Camps. She also shepherds women at Arbor Road Church. She enjoys adventuring all over the globe with her boys, sharing the love of Jesus.

Megan lives in Lakewood, California, with her two boys, Foster and Jedidiah. www.meganfate .com.

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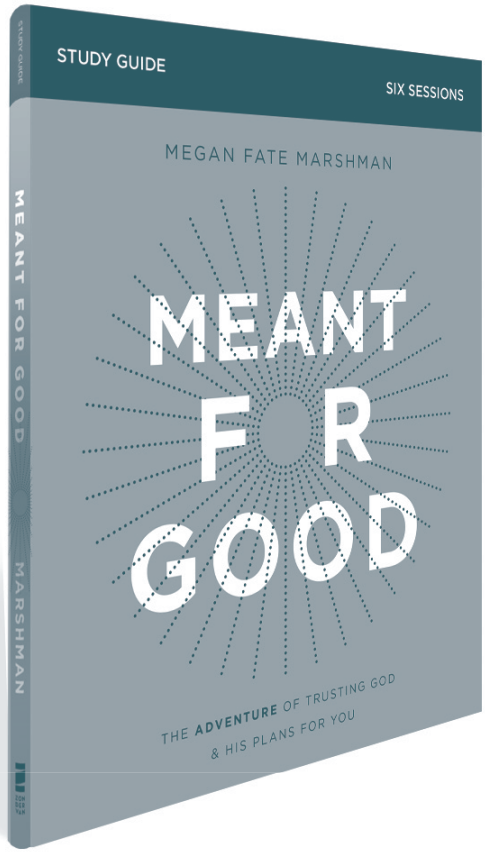

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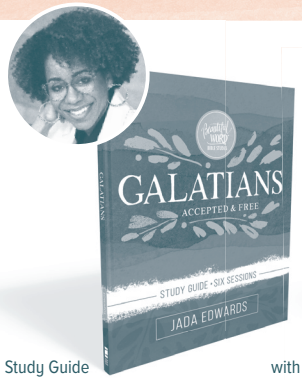

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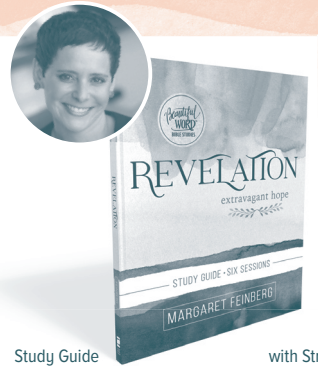

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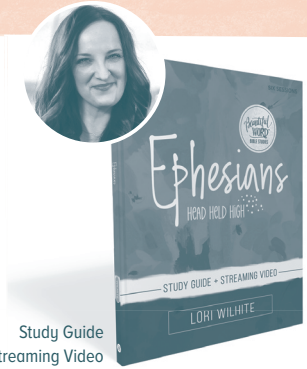

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Thanks for helping others grow their faith!

YOU CAN KNOW A LOT ABOUT JESUS AND NOT KNOW HIM AT ALL

We're not meant to simply know a lot of facts about Jesus. Truly knowing someone requires personal knowledge coming from being with someone over time and building trust. Knowing about someone is just the first step toward truly knowing them. It's the same with God: we come to know Him personally when we spend time with Him, when we build trust in Him, when we share our life with Him.

Join Megan Fate Marshman in this eight-week invitation to respond to and really get to know Jesus in a personal and intimate way. This study through the Gospel of John will focus on dissecting His seven "I Am" statements, where we come to learn what Jesus wants us to know most about His character and love for us.

This study guide includes:

- Individual access to eight streaming video talks from Megan
- Group discussion questions and an opening group activity for each session
- In-depth personal Bible study between sessions
- Reading plan through the entire Gospel of John
- Scripture memory cards and coloring pages

SESSIONS AND VIDEO RUN TIMES:

1. Believe *I Am* (21:00)
2. *I Am* the Bread of Life (32:00)
3. *I Am* the Light of the World (23:30)
4. *I Am* the Gate and the Good Shepherd (25:00)
5. *I Am* the Resurrection and the Life (29:30)
6. *I Am* the Way, the Truth, and the Life (26:30)
7. *I Am* the Vine (29:00)
8. Find Life in His Name (32:00)

Streaming Video Access Code Included*

WATCH ON ANY DEVICE

DVD also available, sold separately.

The **Beautiful Word Bible Study Series** helps you connect God's Word to your daily life through vibrant video teaching, group discussion, and deep personal study that includes verse-by-verse reading, Scripture memory, coloring pages, and encouragement to receive your own beautiful Word from God. In each study, a central theme—a beautiful word—threads throughout the book, helping you connect and apply each book of the Bible to your daily life today, and forever.

As an international speaker at churches and conferences, MEGAN FATE MARSHMAN is a leading voice to this generation. She has devoted her life to loving God and overflowing His transformational love to others. She's finishing her Doctorate in Ministry as she serves as a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church and disciples women at Hume Lake Christian Camps and Arbor Road Church. Megan lives in Southern California and loves adventuring and sharing the love of Jesus with her two boys.

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